

# Motivation

Motivation is a combination of the reasons for doing something, and the willingness to perform well or succeed in doing it. It is an **internal energy** or **drive** that affects the initiation, direction, intensity, and duration of the effort put into a task or goal, or more generally into work. Motivation cannot be observed directly, so must be inferred from behavior.

Motivation theory holds that there are two types of motivation: **intrinsic** and **extrinsic**. Intrinsic motivations are inherently rewarding for their own sake (interest, enjoyment, etc.), while extrinsic motivations relate to outcomes or incentives separable from the activity itself. While there is no 'right' sort of motivation and everyone is different, intrinsic motivations or extrinsic motivations that are more **autonomous** (i.e. self-regulated and congruent with self) are generally more likely to predict **wellbeing and growth**. The VetSet2Go project found that vets typically stated multiple and diverse motivations for their choice of career, including:

## Intrinsic

- passion for animals
- love of learning or science
- challenge and problem-solving
- varied and interesting job
- interacting with people
- enjoyment and satisfaction
- childhood dream

## Extrinsic

- help animals and animal welfare
- help people through their animals
- contribute to society and community
- job opportunities
- outdoor / non-desk job
- status and respect
- decent income

## What they said

*"I'm really passionate about wanting to do the absolute best for my patient and client ... I really like to keep clients happy and have a good rapport with them and ... just do the best for the animal." (Recent graduate)*

*"The clients [...] especially farm-wise, trying to help the clients to problem-solve and get to where they want to get to ... with the small animals there's like a lot of emotional motivation for the clients where you just very much [...] try and stand in their shoes and say to yourself, what would you want to achieve out of this situation if it was your dog?" (Recent graduate)*

*"... I guess the customer services side of things, I find it quite satisfying, just when I am improving the lives of the people and the animals and things like that." (Recent graduate)*

## How is motivation recognised?

### Perceived by you:

- Pleasure, excitement or stimulation gained from veterinary tasks and challenges
- Intrinsic interest, passion or 'love' for doing veterinary work
- A sense of vocational calling or meaningful purpose
- Strong belief in the veterinary 'mission': helping animals, helping people, contributing to society
- A feeling that your work is valuable or rewarding

### Perceived by others:

- Energy, enthusiasm, or passion
- Interested and engaged
- Self-motivated without need for direction or inducement
- A positive relationship with work
- Consistent drive to succeed and perform to the best of your ability
- Good work ethic

The diversity of these motivations shows that, although **animal-related motivations** are commonly stated (e.g. love of animals; helping/healing animals), motivations related to human interaction and **helping people and society** are also important. Many vets are also motivated by the **problem-solving challenges** of their work and love of **continual learning**. Importantly, many of these motivations align with job characteristics known to promote job satisfaction, meaningful work, and wellbeing.

### Why is motivation important to employability?

Since motivation drives productivity and work effort, beneficiaries of your work such as employers, clients and colleagues will value the extra energy and effort generated without the need for external inducement. Motivation also influences many other employability factors, including **commitment**, **diligence** and **continual learning**. Perhaps most importantly, intrinsic and autonomous motivation has been shown to be a key factor supporting **psychological wellbeing** and **resilience**. In the longer term, sustaining motivation is important for job satisfaction, and preventing exhaustion and burnout.

*"My motivation from day-to-day is just that **people are really thankful** when you do fix their animals, or you provide a solution for something that they have dealt with for years ... just knowing that you're **helping people** is a good motivator everyday." (Recent graduate)*

*"He was very keen to do whatever came in, and it was him saying, 'Can I do that?' ... he was **keen to go further**." (Employer of recent graduate)*

*"I've just always had a **real interest** in it and been quite passionate about wanting to help animals and learn more about how everything works." (Recent graduate)*

*"In terms of making me want to stay being a vet, it's the **challenging cases that you can get to go home** when everyone else in the practice thought that they would not go home." (Recent graduate)*

### Possible strategies to enhance your motivation

#### Stop and reflect:

It is easy to forget your deeper motivations, so take the time to get back in touch with the bigger picture. Ask yourself, "Why did you want to become a vet?"

#### Focus on the positive:

Focus your reflection on motivating successes, rather than setbacks. Read the thankyou cards from clients, rather than dwelling on that case that didn't quite go to plan.

#### Remind yourself:

Find creative ways to keep in touch with what motivates you. Create a poster, picture board, or mantra to keep this at the front of your mind.

#### Set specific goals:

Motivations become (re)activated by setting specific goals. If a desired outcome seems overwhelming, try breaking it down into smaller, more achievable, goals (milestones). Reward yourself for achievement to provide positive reinforcement.

#### Challenge yourself:

Vets by nature are intelligent, highly-driven people who can

get bored easily. Challenge yourself to learn a new technique, read up on a case, attend CVE events – or a hobby outside of work.

#### Pay attention to wellbeing:

Motivation is both a predictor and a product of wellbeing, so pay attention to other aspects of wellbeing and life satisfaction. Try to leave work at work and find time to switch off. Physical exercise, meditation, mindfulness, and gratitude exercises can all increase motivation.

#### Get the work settings right:

Are you finding the right level of variety, discretionary control, clarity, responsibility, challenge, learning, connectedness, feedback, recognition and reward at work? If not, make changes yourself or talk to someone who can.

#### Share with someone:

Motivation can be increased by talking about it with like-minded people. Deliberately seek out to a mentor, colleague or friend who has a positive work outlook, and remind each other about what motivates you, and goals you want to set for yourself.

#### Further Resources:

- Cake, M., Mansfield, C.F., McArthur, M.M., Zaki, S. & Matthew, S.M. (2017) An exploration of the career motivations stated by early career veterinarians in Australia. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education* (accepted for publication)
- Shilcock, M. (1999) Motivation—why and how? *In Practice* 21: 397-401
- Gazzard, J. & Boyle, C. (2010) In search of better job satisfaction. *In Practice* 32: 118-121