



## Investing in RVTs – Where the Smart Money Is

By OAVT Staff

The veterinary industry is always evolving and changing; new and innovative procedures, practices and products are constantly being introduced. Veterinarians are not just looking at these changes through the lens of their own professional development, but also through how they will impact the practice, their clients and, of course, animal health and welfare. RVTs should be using the same lens – how does continuing education contribute to personal and professional development? Can intelligent use of CE promote a win-win-win situation, where the RVT **and** the practice **and** the animal benefit?

RVTs complete CE because it is required to maintain their legal credential. The entrepreneurial RVT also looks at the bigger picture – they know that strategic learning has more value. They develop goals that will answer their own needs and interests, but will also enhance the practice. Quite simply, an RVT with advanced skills and knowledge is good for business. This has been demonstrated most recently in ACER Consulting's study of the value an RVT brings to Ontario clinics, where it was found that each extra RVT per vet increased gross revenues per vet by over \$78,000.<sup>1</sup>

Combining the needs and wishes of an actively engaged RVT with the needs and wishes of the practice owner is an excellent investment.

Many practice owners are willing to support continuing professional development opportunities for staff members. A motivated, forward-thinking RVT will recognize this, and create a proposal based on the following considerations:

- Is there an aspect of the practice that could be enhanced, and would it fall within my scope?
- Does this area of enhancement sync with my own interests and strengths?
- If I wish to pursue CE related to the niche that I've identified, what will the commitment be in time and expense?
- Can I demonstrate that my new skills will result in a healthier bottom line and a better practice?

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<sup>1</sup> Exploring the value that Registered Veterinary Technicians bring to Ontario companion animal practices, ACER Consulting, 2019

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Once these questions have been answered, the RVT can then engage in a conversation with the practice owner, illustrating how a financial commitment from them will translate into a positive outcome for the business. Don't hesitate to discuss how everyone – the practice, the clientele, colleagues and animals – will benefit.

Let's consider some scenarios demonstrating the value of employers investing in CE for RVTs.

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## **Scenario #1**

You've been working at your clinic for 6 months, but you've been an RVT for 10 years. Although your accredited college program included 70 hours of veterinary dentistry training, you spent two years in an ophthalmology specialty practice prior to joining this team. You have expressed an interest to your employer in taking a dentistry course which addresses any changes in dental procedures over the last decade. Your employer thinks this is a great idea and would love to support you.

### **Option 1**

Based in the US and costs **\$975 USD**, for a weekend course excluding food, accommodations, and transportation.

### **Option 2**

Two online modules, which cost **\$165 CAD** each.

### **Conclusion**

You and your employer discuss the options, and decide that the online delivery provides the best option, because of your previous 70 hours of dental education. Your employer invests \$330 in your education. At the end of the coursework, you feel confident that your skills are current and reflect best practice. The clinic experiences an increase in revenue, because you are able to perform dental cleanings more frequently and efficiently, with minimal supervision.

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**Scenario #2** – You work with a veterinarian who loves orthopedic surgeries, and would like to do more of them. You see the impact that physical rehabilitation has on patient healing, and mention to your employer that you're interested in taking a program in physical rehabilitation. You propose setting up a new service at your facility, offering physical rehabilitation for post-surgery patients. You point out that having physical rehabilitation services in house will increase client loyalty and retention, while helping to accelerate the recovery process. The employer sees the benefits of the proposal, and asks what you would need to accomplish it.

### **Option 1**

\$4746.56 – 2 semesters / 1 college year

### **Option 2**

Based in the US and costs \$5598 USD / \$7300 CAD, for multiple online courses, and an in-person clinical practicum excluding food, accommodations, and transportation.

### **Conclusion**

You and your employer discuss the options. You determine that the best course is Option 2. You have a family, so cannot move away during the time it takes to complete the program offered in Option 1. Your employer contributes \$4300, on the condition that you remain employed at the practice for the next two years. You

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apply to the RVT Advancement Fund through the OAVT, and are awarded \$3000, which is applied to the practicum portion of the certification.

You are completely rejuvenated by the course work, and upon finishing, develop and implement a physical rehabilitation program for your employer's orthopedic patients. Your clients are delighted to have this service available, and take full advantage of your expertise.

You and your employer determine that \$60/hour is a fair price for the sessions. If the treatment plan recommends that the patient attends 10 sessions at \$60/hour, each patient will generate \$660 in income. Seven patients later, your employer has been repaid! Before you know it, your employer wants to expand the service to include a wider range of pets in need of physical rehabilitation.

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**Scenario #3** – You've been working at your practice for seven years, and feel that you have what it takes to be an excellent Practice Manager. That day has finally come! You get situated in your new office, complete with crisp new business cards, ready to do great things but ... roadblock! You have no management experience. You're not totally confident in the hiring process, you're not sure what you're legally or ethically responsible for, and completing payroll is terrifying. Suddenly, this is all your responsibility! You approach your employer to let them know that, while you're excited to be in this new role, you feel that formal training is essential to your success.

## **Option 1**

Veterinary Practice Management Certificate program through a college, completed online - \$799 per course, 6 required courses = **\$4794**

## **Option 2**

Individual online courses delivered through a local college = **\$2290**

## **Conclusion**

You and your employer discuss the options. You decide that the VPMC program offers the best value. Your employer invests \$4794 for your tuition, which they are then able to include in their business tax return. You learn how to perform the accounting, marketing and HR skills demanded of a good Practice Manager. You streamline scheduling for appointments and staff hours; update the practice's social media and online presence, and implement performance reviews. Client experience improves, and because of improved marketing and word of mouth, new client numbers spike, resulting in a very happy practice owner who can focus on veterinary medicine.

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Gaining new skills and knowledge through CE isn't just a requirement of registration, it opens the door to career paths which challenge RVTs to excel as pivotal members of the veterinary team.

Discussing your CE aims proactively with an employer demonstrates a willingness to contribute to the well-being of the practice; asking an employer to participate in your ongoing professional development by providing financial support invites them to become a partner in your evolution. The return on this investment will far outweigh the cost.