



Motivating Team Leaders to Buy

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The veterinary nursing team is requesting a new digital dental radiography machine. They argue the new machine will allow them to take more radiographs, help more patients, and drive more revenue to the practice. The veterinarians and practice managers are not convinced the expense is warranted.

The saying *You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink* applies to people, too. The human power of persuasion may not work on horses, but identifying different human values and motivations can help tailor an argument and promote action.

German psychologist Eduard Spranger developed this principle when he identified 6 human values in his book, *Types of Men*, written in 1914 and translated into English in 1928.¹ These values (see **Spranger's 6 Human Values**) describe why people do what they do and how they can be persuaded to take action in a way that does not go against their beliefs or ideals.

TEACHING TARGET

IDENTIFYING THE MOST PROMINENT *HUMAN VALUE* OF THE PRACTICE MANAGER OR VETERINARIAN CAN HELP TEAM MEMBERS COMMUNICATE AND ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE.



Following is an explanation of each human value and ways to communicate with a manager with that style. By understanding both the value and the complementary communication style, a team member or group of members will have a greater chance of success when they approach the manager.

Aesthetic

An artist who is interested in form and harmony is an example of someone who possesses the *aesthetic* value. A manager with this value likely is sensitive, has a passion for beauty and nature, enjoys new experiences, and strives to achieve balance.

His or her life is centered around the experience and not the end result.

Focus on patient comfort with a manager who exhibits aesthetic values. A new digital dental radiography machine can improve patients' dental experience, allow best practice protocols that support pet health, and improve the overall experience by eliminating the need for chemicals and radiograph storage and decreasing radiation exposure.

Individualistic

Many politicians possess the *individualistic* quality. Politicians are usually considered people who want power

Spranger's 6 Human Values¹

- Aesthetic
- Individualistic
- Social
- Theoretical
- Traditional
- Utilitarian.

Understand that persuading the practice manager to buy a new piece of equipment is marketing.

Descriptions of Human Values

AESTHETIC

- Sensitive
- Loves beauty & nature
- Lives for the experience, not the result.

INDIVIDUALISTIC

- Wants power & recognition
- Independent & assertive
- Goal-driven.

SOCIAL

- Values people & society
- Selfless & giving
- Passionate about causes.

THEORETICAL

- Loves to learn
- Motivated by knowledge
- Needs detailed information.

TRADITIONAL

- Believes in order
- Has strong beliefs & principles
- Slow to accept change.

UTILITARIAN

- Often a workaholic
- Rejects wastefulness
- Focuses on the bottom line.

and recognition. They are independent, assertive, and goal-driven, determined to control their own, and others', destiny. They deliberately plan and pursue winning strategies.

A manager who exhibits this individualistic value may be the hardest to convince that he or she should buy a new piece of equipment. The nursing team should appeal to him or her by emphasizing the importance of the decision and the recognition management will receive based on the new machine's positive impact on the practice. The team should recommend the purchase, but be prepared to compromise and let the manager take the lead in the negotiations.

Social

A manager with the *social* value is described as selfless, always giving of him- or herself (eg, volunteering), driven to help others achieve their potential (eg, mentoring), and caring about the community and society. He or she likely is passionate about causes such as ending world hunger.

This manager may already consider the dental health of patients an important cause, but even if not, convincing him or her should be easy. The appeal should include the benefits to patients and clients (ie, patients will receive better dental care and enjoy better general health;

clients will appreciate that their pets will enjoy longer, healthier lives).

Theoretical

The *theoretical* value is simply a passion for knowledge. The practice manager who possesses this value may be described as someone who has shelves upon shelves of books because he or she loves to read and attends as many presentations as possible to learn as much as possible when he or she attends conferences.

Persuading a manager with the theoretical value requires homework. The nursing team will need to research all the digital dental radiographic equipment available on the market and determine which one best fits the needs and budget of the practice. They should summarize the findings, provide all the facts and figures, and explain precisely how the purchase will benefit the practice because this manager is motivated by knowledge. They should give the manager a detailed rationale, including how the purchase will solve the problem (ie, they cannot treat enough dental patients, practice better medicine, and improve the bottom line without the new equipment). Once the pitch has been made, they should be prepared to provide specific answers to the manager's questions.

Traditional

The manager with *traditional* values likely believes in order. Examples of people described with this value include members of the Marine Corps, who are described as *Once a Marine, always a Marine*, and those with strong religious beliefs and high ideals. A manager with traditional values also often has strong beliefs and principles and advocates for causes with a long history.

These managers may be slow to accept change, so the team should help them believe they are promoting a cause and show how the change will advance that cause. The appeal should focus on how the new dental radiography machine would allow the practice to improve and update protocols, improve patient care, and gain more loyal, satisfied clients.

Utilitarian

In the author's experience, most practice owners exhibit a strong *utilitarian* value; they work hard and expect it to pay off. Such owners and managers are described as practical, efficient, and driven to maximize resources; they reject wastefulness and focus on return on investment (ROI). They are often considered workaholics.

To appeal to managers with this value, focus on financial benefits—

calculate the ROI of the dental radiography machine and emphasize the bottom line.

ROI calculators can be found online,² or use this simple calculation based on a \$15,000 cost and \$18,720 estimated annual revenue:

$$\begin{aligned} \$18,720 - \$15,000 &= \$3,720 \\ \$3,720 \div \$15,000 \times 100 &= 24.8\% \text{ ROI} \end{aligned}$$

An ROI of \$3,720 (24.8%) in the first year is considered excellent. Estimating the life of the dental radiography machine over 5 years results in a return of \$78,600 (\$18,270 x 5 years – \$15,000 original investment). Present the data, backed up with the calculations, to emphasize the ROI. Make comparisons (eg, \$15,000 in a bank account earning 1% interest will return \$150 the first year) because this manager will need numbers to be persuaded.

Conclusion

People who work in marketing often say, *Everything is marketing and everyone sells*. Understand that persuading the practice manager to buy a new dental radiography machine is marketing. Learn which value describes the manager and what is likely to motivate him or her. Such understanding can improve communication and provide an advantage when negotiating (eg, change in protocol, new hiring policy, new product, new equipment). Before long, the practice may not only have a new digital dental radiography machine but also more patients with improved dental health, more satisfied clients, and more revenue. ■

References

1. Spranger E. *Types of Men*. Lebensformen; Halle (Saale): Niemeyer; 1914. Translated into English by Pigors PJW. New York, NY: GE Stechert Company; 1928.
2. Return on investment (ROI) calculator. easycalculation.com. <https://www.easycalculation.com/excel/roi-calculator.php>. Accessed March 2016.



TEAM TAKEAWAYS:

Veterinarians & Management Team: When the practice team understands the differences of each team member and what drives them, they will be able to work together and compromise to find solutions that satisfy everyone's ideals and beliefs.

Nursing & Client Care Teams: Learning to recognize which of the 6 human values describes owners and managers can help team members make an argument that motivates and promotes action.