



VETERINARY RESIDENT
ROADMAP TO INTERVIEWING

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Hi!

My guess is that you are quite excited and somewhat relieved to be starting the 3rd year of your residency. Congratulations are in order. I am here to provide some insights into the process of finding a hospital where you not only thrive, but that can set you up to achieve your professional goals.

I have been recruiting for veterinary specialty hospitals for over 24 years. The biggest change in this time period, besides the pandemic, has been the significant increase in corporate presence.

In the industry today, I am seeing more smaller, privately owned hospitals starting up across the country. These hospitals are able to offer great work/life balance, flexibility in many areas and competitive compensation. So although smaller, do not count them out.

It is my role as an independent recruiter to share information with you about my clients across the country. I work with many privately owned hospitals, but also some corporate groups. I learn as much as I can about my clients, their culture, their team, their mission, core values and other attributes which are important to being a team member. I believe in my clients and I am honored that I have the opportunity to work with them.

I also consider it an honor to work with veterinarians as they consider new opportunities. I also strive to understand what makes them tick, their goals, their dreams and the needs of their families.

Here are the truths that my business is founded on:

We believe that animals make the world a better place.

We believe that veterinarians make the world a better place.

We believe in saving and helping animals.

We believe in giving to charities that rescue animals.

In closing, IT'S GOING TO BE GREAT!

Sincerely,

Laura



The Art of the Interview

10 INTERVIEWING TIPS

1

Be 5 to 10 minutes early, but no more.

Plan to arrive early at the hospital for your interview, it will give you a little extra cushion and relieve the stress of being late. However, if a candidate arrives too early, it can add stress to the Veterinarian/Interviewer as many people are uncomfortable with people waiting for them.

2

Be Prepared.

More than likely an interview agenda has been sent to the candidate. The candidate should research the veterinarians with whom they will be interviewing or if the candidate is working with a recruiter, this information will be provided. This information will help candidates identify areas of common interest between the parties, which creates a more comfortable atmosphere.

3

Dress Professionally.

First impressions are very important. Being overdressed is better than being underdressed. A coat/sport jacket is recommended for both men and women. No blue jeans, no sandals. No heavy perfume or cologne. Many people react to strong scents and nothing can shorten an interview like a headache.

4

Leave your Cell Phone in the Car.

Not only are cell phones a distraction, many professionals consider it disrespectful for a candidate to check their cell phone at various times throughout an interview. A candidate needs to be focused during an interview.

5

Firm Handshake and Direct Eye Contact with Everyone.

These mannerisms are important as they convey confidence, friendliness and respect. No eye contact can make people uncomfortable as if the other person is hiding something. This will translate into how a veterinarian interacts with clients.



The Art of the Interview

10 INTERVIEWING TIPS

6

Listen.

Do not talk too much. It is important to listen to what the hospital team is saying. Sometimes candidates get nervous and talk too much. This means they are not listening and often reveal too much information.

7

No Negative Talk.

Hospitals do not want to hear negative comments about a candidate's former employer or colleagues. If a candidate were to do this, it is likely this candidate would also shed the next hospital in the same light. Furthermore, today, veterinary hospitals want to hire positive people, not negative.

8

Be prepared to Talk about Past Mistakes.

No one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. Hospitals want to hear about a few of those mistakes, how the doctor accepted responsibility for those mistakes, what they learned from a difficult case or a difficult client, and what they would do differently. Many veterinarians will ask candidates to talk about this.

9

Bring a Short List of Questions.

Candidates should have a short list of questions to ask at the end of the interview, such as protocols for client and RDVM communication, paperwork and other such concerns. This shows that they have done their research, that they listened throughout the interview and that they are interested. However, not too many questions. Be respectful of the Veterinarian/Interviewer's time.

10

Do Not Ask About Compensation.

This is a huge red flag for prospective employers. They want their veterinarians to be excited about their work, the team and the hospital, not how much money they will make. This will be addressed at a later stage. If a candidate is working with a recruiter, the recruiter will know this information in advance.



Post-Interview Thank You Notes

SHOULD YOU WRITE ONE?

Absolutely. After interviewing with a hospital, the prospective employee should write a thank you note to the key individuals who were involved in the interviewing process. This should be done no matter what, even if the candidate does not want to work at this hospital, a thank you note should still be written. Nothing makes an impression like a hand written thank you note or NOT writing a thank you note!

In many cases, the hospitals have paid for the travel and lodging expenses of the candidate. Furthermore, it takes time to prepare for the on site interview. The doctors are also not seeing patients while they are interviewing candidates and for a busy specialists, this is significant.

The thank you note should be handwritten and addressed individually to the doctor(s) and/or hospital administrator and others who were instrumental in the process. A quick note will suffice and it will not be forgotten. The same holds true for those candidates who do not write a thank you note, it is not forgotten.



The Importance of the Work Place Environment

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Throughout my years of helping multi-specialty practices build their teams of veterinarians, I have seen that the most important factor in a successful placement is **work place environment**. Why is this?

It is very simple. Some veterinarians thrive in certain environments and in others they are stifled. What happens when a doctor is in the right environment? Wonderful things start to happen. This veterinarian will begin to achieve professional goals, they will start to think big, they will formulate plans and ideas, and they will enjoy their work immensely. They will thrive, they will smile. They will be a team player, clients and staff will love them. And overall, the practice will grow because of this.

I have found that many veterinarians do not realize when they are unhappy or when the fit is not quite right. Some doctors can stay in a less than ideal position for many years without realizing that there is a better fit out there. What happens in this environment? Typically, the veterinarian's performance declines. There is no spark. There are no new ideas. The doctors get frustrated easily, they have less patience, they smile less and there are no lightbulbs going off.

So take a minute to evaluate; are you smiling enough?



How to Research Hospital Culture

QUESTIONS TO ASK

It is important to ask questions about circumstances in which people's values and unarticulated norms come into play. These questions are taken from a podcast in our series, "Is Veterinary Medicine Ready for a Chief Culture Officer?"

What is the Mission Statement and Core Values?

What happens when there is a conflict?

What happens when there is a performance issue?

What happens when someone leaves the hospital?

When a client complains, how is the handled and by whom?

How are emergencies handled when they walk in the door?

What is the turnover rate among specialists, emergency veterinarians, technicians, nurses, front office in addition to other staff?

Is there a dress code?



The Offer Letter

W H A T T O E X P E C T

A short introductory paragraph extending a warm welcome to the potential employee is included at the beginning of the letter. This is often followed by:

- Location of Employment - if more than 1 hospital
- Primary Responsibilities of the Position
- Work Schedule/On Call Schedule
- Compensation - Salary/Production Bonus/Flat Salary
 - It is important to understand if there is a guaranteed base salary. For production bonuses - there can be a flat percentage across the board or some hospitals pay different percentages depending on the service and/or medications. It is also important to understand if there is negative accrual. Flat Salaries are also an option. They are typically higher than base salaries and no production percentage is paid.
- Estimated Starting Date
- Length of Contract
- Signing Bonus
 - This will include an amount, the date(s) that it will be paid and any stipulations as to why the candidate might need to repay it i.e. the employee ceases to work for the hospital before a specified date.
- Relocation Assistance
 - Most hospitals pay for new the new doctor's relocation, but there is typically a limit.
- PTO - Paid time off and the option for unpaid time off.
- Time allowed to Study for Boards
 - If the employee will be studying for boards, the amount of time allotted for this and the compensation during this time will be described
- Monthly Stipend
 - Some hospitals are now offering a monthly stipend to residents for the remaining months of their residencies.



The Offer Letter

W H A T T O E X P E C T

- Equity
 - This can happen in two ways. The equity can be “gifted” to the new doctor as part of the compensation. Another option is that most hospitals will provide a structure for the doctor to buy shares of the entity.
- Benefits
 - Brief description of what benefits are provided and for programs the employee is eligible. Typically, a benefit summary is attached.
- Continuing Education
 - A specified amount of money for continuing education programs and the time allotted. It is important to know if this is included in the PTO benefit mentioned above.
- Dues and Fees
 - This will include an amount for dues and fees. Some hospitals delineate this as “discretionary funds.”

Always acknowledge receipt of the offer and thank the hospital. Let them know of your plan to review the offer and when you might be responding.



Understanding Negotiations

WHAT TO EXPECT

Negotiating is not a bad word. It is expected in most situations where an offer is extended by a veterinary hospital to a veterinarian. From what I have seen over the past 20 years, is that most privately owned veterinary hospitals have become much more flexible as to how their compensation packages are structured. I believe that this is a positive for the industry as it allows veterinarians the opportunity to be compensated in a way that works best for them and their families.

I can offer tremendous insight as to what the salary ranges are in today's market, a range of production percentages, signing/relocation bonuses and what is typically included in a benefit package. I also do negotiate on behalf of the veterinarians with whom I work if they prefer.



Before the Negotiation

T I P S

- Prioritize what you would like to negotiate. Have an idea of where you would like to end up.
- Start with negotiating your salary first and then move on to the benefits, one element at a time.
- It is important to know that you usually cannot negotiate the entire job offer.
- Begin at the top of your predetermined salary range. Aim high, but be realistic.
- Remember that a negotiation is about listening to each other and respecting the needs of both parties. Avoid demands, threats and defensive behavior. The outcome should benefit both parties.
- Respect the others position. Make sure you hear them clearly.
- The tone should be conversational and not confrontational.
- Never give an ultimatum.
- Never back the hospital into a corner.
- It is best to take at least 24 hours to reflect upon the offer.
- It is best to negotiate over the phone, not via email.



The Negotiation Process

T I P S

- Always acknowledge that you have received the offer and thank them for it.
- Make positive comments about the hospital, the position and the team.
- Highlight your enthusiasm for the position.
- State clearly what you have questions about in the offer. Provide insight as to why you would like to make the change(s).
- Reinforce the value you will bring to the company, the impact you will make and the potential revenue you will generate.
- If the hospital is reluctant to meet your salary request and you are still within your minimum range, move on to other aspects of the compensation package.
- Be sure to include a few benefits in your proposal that are less important to you and that can be dropped as a concession to the employer as salary negotiations continue.
- If the employer cannot initially agree to your compensation requests you can discuss and agree on a guaranteed review within a specific time period, usually 3 or 6 months. This salary review should be stated in writing as part of the job offer.
- Know when to stop and consider the best offer on the table. To carry on beyond this point could cause ill-feeling and damage any future relationship.
- Get the final offer in writing and make sure it is signed by the appropriate person who has the authority to make the offer.



Multiple Offer Evaluation Analysis

Veterinary Career Services	Offer from:				
Offer Evaluation Worksheet					
Financial/Benefit Package					
Base Salary					
Production Percentage					
Sign-on bonus/when paid					
Health Insurance					
Vision Insurance					
Dental Insurance					
Professional Liability Insurance					
Continuing Education: Time allowed/Budget					
Vacation/PTO					
Professional Dues					
Monthly Stipend					
Deadline for Offer Decision					
On Call Compensation					
Study time for Boards					
401K/Retirement Plans					
Stock Options					
Work Environment					
Mentor Availability					
Number of Colleagues in Department					
Number of Technicians per doctor					
Other Specialties Offered					
Hospital Mission Statement					
Schedule					
On Call Responsibility					
Travel Requirements					
Career Growth Opportunities					
Organization Structure - To whom do I report?					
Most Attractive Aspect of Position					
Least Attractive Aspect of Position					
Does this position help me reach my long term goals?					
Hospital Culture					
Team Collaboration (Rank 1-5)					
Intellectual Challenge (Rank 1-5)					
Lifestyle (Rank 1-5)					
Average Tenure of Veterinarians					
Average Tenure of Technicians/Staff					
Do My Values Align with those of Hospital?					
Why do Most Veterinarians leave this hospital?					
How does this Hospital give back?					
Who do I go to when there is a problem?					



Multiple Offer Evaluation Analysis

Veterinary Career Services	Offer from:					
Hospital/Equipment Description						
Working Conditions/Adequate Space						
CT Scan						
MRI						
Rehabilitation Department						
Equipment Needed for My Job						
Life outside the hospital						
Cost of living index						
Can my hobbies be pursued?						
Distance to closest international airport						
Private/Public Schools						
Length of Commute to Hospital						
Traffic Considerations						

**Please contact Laura at: laura@lwaadvise.com
for a link to the interactive analysis sheet.**



Working with Laura: Interview Process

WHAT TO EXPECT

1. Interview with Laura Anderson

During this interview, Laura will focus on learning about the candidate's top priorities in a position and a hospital. She will also ask questions about the candidate's personality and in what type of environment they feel they would thrive in. Laura will ask about their lives outside of the hospital, including what hobbies they plan to pursue and any priorities for their families.

2. List of Opportunities

Laura will prepare a list of opportunities for the candidate that best fit their needs and preferences.

3. Candidate Feedback & Phone Interviews

After the candidate has reviewed the hospitals, they will give Laura feedback as to which positions they would like to pursue. Laura will begin to arrange phone interviews with the candidates and the hospitals. She will speak with both parties after each phone interview to determine next steps.

4. Onsite Interviews Scheduled

If all parties are interested, an onsite interview will be scheduled at the hospital. Laura will work with everyone to coordinate this. Most hospitals will also invite the candidate's significant other to visit the area as well, although they will not be invited to the interview.



Working with Laura: Interview Process

WHAT TO EXPECT

5. Follow-up

Laura will follow up with both the hospital and the candidate after the interview. If the candidate is interested in receiving an offer, Laura will convey this to the hospital and any specific information the candidate would like to see in the offer.

6. Offer Review

The candidate will receive an offer from the hospital. If there are questions, they have the option to speak to Laura or if they prefer, they are welcome to speak directly to the hospital. Laura will share her thoughts on the offer and provide any help with negotiating that is needed.

7. Employment Agreement Review

Once the offer letter is accepted, an employment agreement will be forwarded to the candidate. Laura will also assist in negotiating if needed.

8. Ongoing Support

It is a priority for Laura to keep in touch with candidates after they start their new positions. She will continue to provide support as needed.



Current List of Clients



Animal Cancer Care Clinic - Fort Lauderdale, FL



Allied Veterinary Specialists - Daytona Beach, FL



Tarheel Veterinary Surgical Specialists - Raleigh, NC



Tennessee Veterinary Surgical Specialists - Nashville, TN



Hill Country Veterinary Surgical Specialty - Boerne, TX



Mobile Veterinary Specialist - Austin, TX



Animal Surgical Center - Oceanside, NY



Bark City Veterinary Specialists - Park City, UT



H-Town Veterinary Specialists - Houston, TX



Current List of Clients



Northstar Vets - Robbinsville, NJ



Pieper Veterinary Specialists - Middletown, CT



Evolution Veterinary Specialists - Lakewood, CO



MedVet for Pets

CONTACT LAURA TO GET STARTED:

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