

My career-defining moment: Adrian Pratt

In 2001, an industry job saved my veterinary career. After six years in clinical practice, I had failed to find the job of my dreams. I was disengaged, disenchanted and looking for a way out. I was lost on my personal development journey.

Why was I in such bad shape? I'd worked for some good employers and learnt how to be a great clinician, yet at the same time I had worked for some bad employers and been exposed to the underbelly of veterinary business. I had seen so many ways how not to run a vet clinic, how not to motivate and develop staff and I knew there had to be a better way. I just couldn't see what that was.

My stresses and strains were spilling over into my personal life and this period also coincided with a realisation that being a clinician wasn't how I saw myself being employed for the next 30 years.

What did I find in industry that changed my perspectives? I found a business with a culture, products and people I could believe in and that illustrated the wider world in which a veterinarian could find fulfillment through work.

If this sounds like a familiar story, it's because retention of vets in clinical work is still a hot topic. However, for the individual, I hope this story is inspiring and reassuring, because a veterinary career outside of clinical work is just as valid and just as fulfilling.

How did I get the job in industry? I speculatively applied for a job as a field-based veterinary adviser at Hill's Pet Nutrition.

A recruitment consultant took me through a screening interview, coached me through the process and ensured I was thoroughly prepared. It was unlike anything else I'd ever done and it was the first time I was exposed to psychometric testing and a proper interview process that tested teamwork, competencies and cultural fit.

I remember very clearly just how right it felt. The people, the environment, the work and the opportunities just made sense and I could see the path. I was fortunate to be offered the job and I spent the next 14 years of my career at Hill's.

Working for Hill's, a Colgate-Palmolive Company, illustrated the commercial world to me, trained me in business and people management and gave me a professional development framework. The company seriously addresses personal development and leadership through its performance management and development framework, supported by core values, code of conduct and leadership values. Having these values and practices shape my career has been phenomenal.

My industry role equipped me with a wide knowledge of the veterinary profession and the different working environments in which vets find themselves. It has also left me with a large network of colleagues and a broad commercial skillset.

So in my 22nd year post grad, where is my profession now? Markedly improved, I am glad to say. I'm even more proud to say I've had a small part to play in that, through the work of the company I was employed by. I've never looked back at clinical work and yet I'm a vet every day of the week in some way.

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