

## CHANGING WORLD: ARE YOU CURRENT?

Many people like to proudly discuss the years of “experience” they have in their field, however, does this mean that these 20 years of experience is equivalent to 20 years of learning or simply one year repeated twenty times? Age and wisdom don’t automatically coincide. To stay on top of our game we must continuously learn! I always say a good day is when I learn something new.

When I graduated from veterinary school 35 years ago, they presumed that our veterinary knowledge would turn over every 5 years. This meant that if you were not updating your knowledge on a consistent basis, you would be antiquated in 5 years. More recently they have figured that our knowledge turns over every 2 years. Due to this new finding, we are now required to take anywhere from 10-20 hours a year of education (varies across states) to be able to renew our state veterinary licenses.

Updated research, new treatment options, and innovative ideas are constantly challenging and evolving the old way of thinking. It is no different in other industries either (including the grooming industry) some just turn over faster than others. Medicine and technology are the areas that are constantly advancing. Think about the computer or the phone that you were using 5 years ago versus today.

How do we keep up and stay current? First, it must be made a priority. We all have busy lives and work hard to make a living, which often doesn’t leave much time for continuous education and attending tradeshow. The only way to stay current is by MAKING time. Second, you must be willing to make the investment of not only time (often away from business) but also money to ensure that it happens. Third, you must be able to accept ideas and implement them into your skill set. Knowledge is worthless unless you apply it.

Personally, I always get rejuvenated by participating in events and listening to the latest information because it gives me the ability to offer more to my clients. I have found that any money that I have put towards education has been sufficiently justified by the advancement in my knowledge. I consider education as a key investment in my future because I have more to offer to my clients.

Is all education beneficial? Absolutely not! When looking for education options you need to choose your sources well. If the information taught is primitive and outdated, it is of no benefit to you. If time is limited, why would you want to waste it on something that is not current? It is also important to pick resources that have proven results or can back up the education that is being provided. You will find a lot of classes with a teacher that doesn’t implement their own recommendations/advice, achieve the results they claim, or at times doesn’t even have the credentials to be talking about the subject matter presented. Is that who you want for your mentor?

When we discuss education (especially in the scientific world) it comes in different forms. I classify it in three different categories: academic based, research based, and clinical base. Academic would be like attending college. You learn all the theory and all the correct classifications, but usually lacks in day-to-day practicality. I can learn the anatomy of a dog or all the layers of the skin, but I am not always taught how to apply the knowledge. Most practical learning is not done during college. It is applied when you establish a career.

Research based education is when a researcher looks at a small part of the picture to see its effects. The problem with this is in most cases the big picture is not given. For example, research says that colloidal oatmeal can be soothing and moisturizing. This is wonderful, but when we mix oatmeal with detergents and other chemicals the research doesn't tell us how they interact and results can be skewed. Colloidal oatmeal in a harsh shampoo means we still have a harsh shampoo. If the research was the complete answer to the problem then any shampoo with oatmeal in it would be soothing and moisturizing. There are many different oatmeal shampoos. Do they all yield the same results? As professionals, we must take what we learn in research and efficiently apply it in our field. If you are in the beginning stages of learning, how do you do that?

The last type of education, and the one I prefer, is the clinical type. Which means if you attend a tradeshow or read an article over the weekend, you will be able to take the knowledge home and start implementing it Monday morning. I found that my time was limited in practice, so I wanted to be as judicious as possible. The other types of learning are enjoyable, but not always the best use of my time. It really boils down to what you prefer. It is important to research or get feedback on how the course is structured to know if it will suit your needs.

#### TIPS FOR KEEPING CURRENT

- 1) MAKE TIME AND INVEST IN YOUR EDUCATION
- 2) PICK A LEARNING STRUCTURE THAT IS MOST PRACTICAL FOR YOU
- 3) DECIDE ON THE TYPE OF EDUCATION YOU ARE LOOKING FOR
- 4) PICK RESOURCES THAT ARE CURRENT, NOT ANTIQUATED
- 5) MAKE IT A GOAL TO LEARN THINGS DAILY
- 6) APPLY WHAT YOU LEARN

Staying current is not something that just happens. It takes action and dedication. The further we fall behind, the harder it is to catch up. Make it a priority to find quality resources and dedicate a few hours a week (or day) or one tradeshow a year to keep yourself up to date. As I told my veterinary staff, seminars are not the only place you can find education at tradeshow. Never underestimate what the vendors bring to the table. Just never stop learning!