

CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

Vetcor Cultivates High-Potential Leaders with EQ

Vetcor, founded in 1997, has grown from a small network of veterinary hospitals to a leading community of over 900 locations across the United States and Canada. With nearly 3,000 veterinarians and a workforce of more than 16,000 employees, Vetcor supports general veterinary practices dedicated to providing compassionate, high-quality care to over three million patients annually. Despite its rapid expansion, Vetcor maintains a commitment to preserving the unique culture and identity of each local practice while fostering a shared vision of growth, collaboration, and exceptional service.

THE CHALLENGE

Like many in the industry, Vetcor faced a critical shortage of qualified veterinarians amid what Chad Harris, DVM and VP of Veterinary Leadership, refers to as a “veterinary supply crisis.” In addition to recruitment challenges, Vetcor sought to elevate its approach to leadership development—moving away from outdated leadership philosophies and toward more meaningful and impactful leadership skills development that would foster a workplace culture grounded in emotional intelligence (EQ).

AT A GLANCE

Challenge

- Elevate the organization’s leadership development program to improve communication skills, increase employee retention, and build a leadership pipeline

Solution

- Year-long Emerging Leaders Program designed to build future leaders
- Emotional Intelligence Appraisal – Self Edition
- Mastering Emotional Intelligence Level 1
- Monthly sessions on key leadership topics, such as stress management, conflict resolution and authentic leadership
- 6-Month EQ Retest

Results

- Participants report greater emotional regulation, improved communication skills, and real-world leadership growth.

“We wanted something that would not just impact our people professionally, but personally. We knew we needed to reduce HR issues, improve communication, and give our leaders the tools needed to advance in their careers.”

— Chad Harris, DVM and VP of Veterinary Leadership

THE SOLUTION

Vetcor partnered with TalentSmartEQ to implement a scalable emotional intelligence training initiative that could support leadership development, enhance communication, and improve employee retention.

TalentSmartEQ worked with Vetcor to develop a custom curriculum for Vetcor's Emerging Leaders Program, a year-long program aimed at developing future leaders within the organization. A cohort of high potential leaders are selected each year to participate in the program. The Emerging Leaders Program includes 12 sessions, one per month, with two technical classes taught by Vetcor staff and 10 sessions led by TalentSmartEQ's expert facilitator.

Key elements of the program include:

- **Pre-Work to Assess EQ:** Each participant completes the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal®, prior to the start of the program, to assess their current EQ, and identify strengths and areas for development.
- **Kickoff In-Person EQ Session:** Each cohort begins with a face-to-face event, kicking off the program with Mastering Emotional Intelligence® Level 1. Mastering EQ® Level 1 provides an overview of emotional intelligence and the 4 core skill areas – Self Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Management. Participants use the data from their assessments to develop personalized action plans with goals and strategies to build their EQ skills.
- **Virtual Monthly Training Modules:** Classes are then held virtually each month, covering additional leadership development topics, including:
 - Stress Management
 - Handling Difficult People and Conversations
 - Authentic Leadership
 - Communication Skills
 - Leadership Effectiveness
 - Conflict Resolution
 - Active Listening
 - Building Sustained Relationships
- **Retesting:** Participants take the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal® Retest after 6–8 months to evaluate their progress and adjust their development plans.
- **Routine Check Ins:** Even after the program ends, participants engage in one-on-one check-ins with leadership, including Dr. Harris, to discuss progress and challenges and ensure their new skills and learning are sustained.

Cohort sizes have ranged from 30 to 45 participants, and the program is designed not only to teach EQ skills but also to create a safe space for vulnerability, openness, and personal growth.

“ Our participants really open up. The vulnerability shared during the sessions creates a powerful shift in the group's dynamic, and people really engage with the material. ”

— Chad Harris, DVM and VP of Veterinary Leadership

THE RESULTS

The impact of the EQ program has already been felt across Vetcor:

- **Increased Leadership Mobility:** In just a few months, 5 to 10 participants from the initial cohorts have moved into new leadership roles.
- **Improved Emotional Regulation and Communication:** Dr. Harris has observed a noticeable decrease in frustration and an increase in productive conversations among participants.
- **Sustained Impact:** Unlike many training programs that fade after the final session, EQ skills continue to be applied in daily interactions.
- **Personal Impact:** Participants have shared how EQ training has positively influenced their personal lives—one even credited it with helping save their marriage.

“ We’re seeing people put what they’re learning into action—and that’s the most encouraging part. This training isn’t something that fades; it’s changing how they think, lead, and connect. ”
— Chad Harris, DVM and VP of Veterinary Leadership

LOOKING AHEAD

Vetcor views emotional intelligence as a long-term strategic investment. They have plans to continue the Emerging Leaders initiative annually, with the goal of tracking its impact over the next five years and beyond.

Even executive leadership has taken notice. The Chief People Officer, after attending the first in-person session as an observer, was so impressed that he attended every subsequent session.

“ He’s been through countless leadership programs, but after that first session, he said it was the best program—and Josh the best facilitator—he’d ever seen. ”
— Chad Harris, DVM and VP of Veterinary Leadership

At Vetcor, emotional intelligence is more than a training—it’s becoming a cornerstone of the culture. Through strategic leadership development and a commitment to human-centered growth, Vetcor is building a future where emotionally intelligent leadership drives retention, engagement, and success.