

What Associates Want:



Crafting an Effective Help Wanted Advertisement

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In October 2015, the American Veterinary Medical Association introduced the phenomenon of “excess capacity” in the veterinary industry. Simply put, its data seemed to indicate there were too many veterinarians, and not enough demand to meet this supply. However, this year discussion revolves around the high volume of help wanted ads, dwindling number of job seekers, and the resulting difficulty practices are having attracting associate veterinarians.

The experience in Ontario closely mirrors that in the United States. OVMA began tracking the number of help wanted advertisements for associate veterinarians in January 1997. While the number of help wanted ads typically fluctuates, in January 2015, it hit an all-time low of 28. The chatter was there were too many veterinarians and not enough jobs.

Then, the trend reversed with breakneck speed. From January 2015 to January 2016, the number of help wanted ads jumped to 66, then reached 106 in January 2017. In May 2017, the number of help wanted ads hit an all-time high of 139.

From 2007-2010, revenue growth remained stable, at four to six per cent annually. However, in 2011, the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis finally caught up with the Ontario veterinary industry. For the following four years, revenue growth faltered, with 2012’s annual revenue shrinking by two per cent.

On the heels of those difficult economic times, the number of help wanted advertisements began to dry up—many practices likely became hesitant to take on the expense and risk of hiring an associate veterinarian.

Signs of life returned in 2015, as revenue growth jumped back to an annual rate of six per cent, then to

Figure 1. Number of help wanted advertisements for associate veterinarians posted in OVMA classifieds.

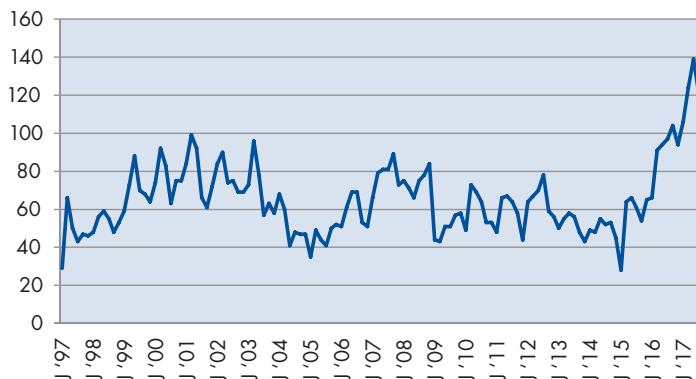
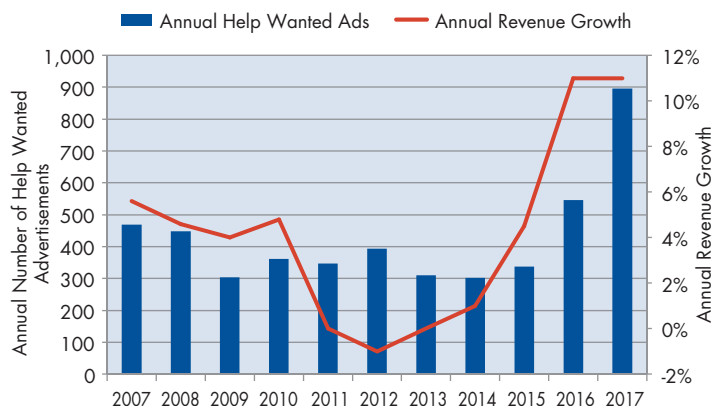


Figure 2. Annual number of help wanted advertisements for associate veterinarians posted in OVMA classifieds, and 12-month revenue growth for Ontario companion animal hospitals (2017 revenue data is trailing 12 months to October 2017) from 2007-2017.





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on-call responsibilities. Forty-six percent of all respondents said that including information about this in a job advertisement would attract their attention. Many expressed a desire to know the number of scheduled weekly hours, what kind of emphasis is placed on work-life balance, and that there are no on-call responsibilities.

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Location was the next most important topic for job seekers, with 35 per cent indicating this response. Associates indicated a strong preference to know both

where the hospital is, as well as the hospital name, so that they can do their own research on the prospective employer. Compensation wasn't far behind, with more than one-third of respondents saying they want help wanted advertisements to include information about remuneration. Many expressed a desire to know more detailed information, beyond the advertisement simply promising "competitive compensation".

Topics such as team and culture, benefits (continuing education, vacation time, OVMA dues, etc.), medicine and equipment, and mentorship, were further down the list of priorities for associate veterinarians.

However, what veterinary hospitals include in their help wanted advertisements doesn't always line up with what associate veterinarians are most interested in. The word cloud graphic in this article shows the most frequently used words in associate veterinarian job ads on OVMA's website.

Advertisements commonly focus on a practice's equipment and team, and lack clear information on location, schedule and compensation.

Some include a cursory mention of these important topics, but aren't detailed enough. For example, several ads include phrases such as "competitive salary", "balanced schedule" and "above average benefits". But these are all subjective assessments, and depend heavily on one's personal perspective. Perhaps the employer and prospective employee have different ideas about what a balanced schedule entails.

Rather than using subjective phrasing, a hospital can employ objective measures in their help wanted advertisement, so associate veterinarians have more information on what to expect. Instead of stating that a competitive salary is on offer, indicate the numerical range of this compensation. Provide the number of weekly hours the associate will be scheduled for as a substitute to professing good work-life balance.

By providing these details that most interest associate veterinarians, hospitals can ensure their help wanted advertisements stand out from the rest. With more than 130 ads currently posted on the OVMA website, and competition for applicants heating up, exploiting every advantage is key.

A horizontal bar chart with a light blue background. The y-axis lists seven factors, and the x-axis represents percentages. Each factor is represented by a dark blue bar with its corresponding percentage value labeled at the end of the bar.

Factor	Percentage
Work-Life Balance/Schedule/On-Call	46%
Location	37%
Compensation	35%
Team/Environment/Culture	28%
Benefits	24%
Medicine/Equipment	24%
Mentorship	10%