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>> Hello, and welcome to the podcast, Navigating the Veterinary Profession. We're your hosts, Amy Snyder.

>> Andrew Rotz.

>> Amanda Bates

>> Today is our follow up podcast on interviewing. In the last episode we discussed interviewing, the why, the how, and the what. Today we're going to discuss the no-no's and how to handle those really uncomfortable conversations.

>> Yeah, so I'm really excited to talk about this because as much as we would like for interviews to go perfect, we know that there are all kinds of things that just go like completely left, and so I'm going to pose a question to our resident DVM in the room. For those who are listening out there, you have certainly interviewed in your career, particularly for, you know, clinical positions. Can you tell us about a time where that interview just didn't go the way it should have?

>> Yes, certainly. So I always [inaudible] that I have some of the worst interview experiences, not in so much as they turn out badly. I've been able to secure jobs, so don't worry about that.

>> That's good.

>> Congratulations. [Laughter]

>> But I have always had these very awkward and odd things that have happened to me. However, probably the worst interview as we were getting prepared for this show and I was thinking about those was one that I sort of alluded to in our last session, so the interviewer who constantly revered to me as "Little Lady," but to set the stage even more broadly, I was interviewing for this position. It was January. It was in Virginia, and there had been quite a big snowstorm that had come in, and it was supposed to snow for the entire day of the interview. I did not have a lot of time to reschedule this interview. My time off was very limited. So it was a go on this day or potentially not be able to interview for the position. So I traveled sort of midway to a friend's house. I spent the night there because it was snowing, and I knew there were going to be a lot of snow on the road, and I was supposed to be at the interview at 7:30 in the morning. I got up at like 4:00 in the morning because I still had another two hours or so to drive, and I wanted to make sure I had plenty of time because, again, snowing. Got there half an hour early through the snow.

>> Good for you.

>> Clinic was even closed when I got there. I will say that I got Brownie points for arriving because when they finally got there and realized I was there, they were quite impressed that I had shown up, that I had driven that far and through the snow and had arrived on time, and then things quickly went downhill from there. [Laughter] So it was a mixed animal practice. So we were spending some time in the clinic, and we were spending some time on the road, and the interviewer, although very nice, did multiply things that were disconcerting to me, starting by referring to me as "Little Lady," and actually kind of introducing me as such when we went out onto farm calls.

>> Oh, wow. [Inaudible]

>> Oh, that's a different level.

>> That was fun. Yeah, that was fun. "So this Little Lady is up from blah-blah-blah interviewing with us today," Yeah, that was nice, and then it proceeded into all of those inappropriate questions that you're never supposed to ask during an interview. So, "Are you married?" "Are you going to have kids?"

>> Wow.

>> And I quickly realized within about, gosh, probably half an hour to an hour of being there that this was absolutely not going to be the position for me. Yet I had signed up for an entire day. [Laughter]

>> Strap on that smile.

>> That was fun. It was good.

>> So, here's my question. What was it that-and you identified a lot of things-but what was it in that process where you immediately or when you knew this practice wasn't going to be a fit for me?

>> Yeah, that's a great question. So I think that first thing was just in the respect of how the interviewer addressed me. That was something that I just couldn't tolerate at all, and so that was the red flag that went off, and there were other things, and I don't remember all of the details because this was some time ago. There were other things about the way the practice was set up, the facilities and so forth, that I also was not comfortable with, but there were-the way in which I felt as though I was not being truly respected and introduced was the main thing that sort of threw up a red flag.

>> Yeah, I know. I think that's super important because I always talk about gut instinct, right, when students email me, and they will go to a practice, and they'll go, "You know, there are some things that are really great about this practice, but there are other things that are just, like I can't get over," and so we have these conversations, right, about is it-is it a personality thing? Is it a people thing? Is it a technique thing? Like what is it? And is it one of those where it's a non-negotiable, right? I mean, respect is a big thing because if you think about it, you want to be respected by the owner and you want to be

respected by your clients, and so if you look like you're not being respected in some way, that has a potential to like transfer over to the people who are going to be paying for your services.

>> That's a tough environment to put yourself into every day, too.

>> Yeah.

>> So.

>> Yeah. So let's talk about some of those, some of the things that were brought up because I think those are common questions that we're starting to see as we're getting into interviewing season. So one of the things that was asked was marital status and family status in terms of whether or not to have children, right. So even looking at your own life, obviously you've been a practitioner, what are one of the things-what are the things that you would suggest that students who are going through, how do they answer that question or have you answered that question in the past?

>> Yeah, so I think that as I always tell students, I believe that my answer to that question has evolved as I have evolved. So early on in my career, long before I was married, long before I ever wanted to have children, this was a question that I certainly chose to dodge and to not answer directly. I will say that now as a mom of two children and finding that that's very important, I have chosen to engage in that question. Although I know that it's not appropriate, I want to engage in it simply because I want to know their preferences for family life, and if that's a non-starter for them, I would love to know that before I take a job that's not going to work for me. So I think that whenever I talk to students about how to answer those questions, I have two pieces of advice. One, engage the question and answer it straight out. So answer what they're asking. If that works for you, that is an option. Just because they can't ask it doesn't mean-just because they're not supposed to ask it, we should say legally, doesn't mean that you can't answer it if you want to or choose to. So now in my position, if someone asks me, you know, "Are you married, "Do you have children," "Yeah, I am married. I have two children, and while work is incredibly important to me, it is also important to me that I have time for my family. So tell me how your industry-or not how your industry-how your organization views work/life balance." So I not only answer the question, but then I flip it back on them and ask for how they're going to support me in that role as both a working individual and as a mom. If you don't want to engage in the question, if you don't want to answer the question directly, that is absolutely 100 percent fine, and then my suggestion becomes to think about what the underlying question really is and dive down and answer that. So, for example, when I was first starting out my career and didn't have children and didn't think that was going to be part of the equation, I would answer the question by saying, "You know, family and children really aren't something I'm really focused on right now. What I am focused on is starting my career and getting into my profession, and I'm really excited about joining a team that will allow me to continue to learn and grow as a veterinarian. Tell me more about x, y, or z that applies to the practice."

>> And you can flip that around. What does your mentorship look like? How can I expect you guys to bring me along in that career journey? So, absolutely.

>> Exactly. So I think, you know, any time you encounter those problems, those questions, it's really important to understand yourself and your own personal values and how much you want to answer, and then if you choose not to answer the question directly, to look at what the underlying question is in that situation and answer that, and then the last thing I always encourage students is when an interviewer asks you an inappropriate question, how does that reflect on that interviewer, and is that the kind of person that you want to be working for? Sometimes I will give interviewers the benefit of the doubt, and say that some of them, they're not malicious. They really don't understand. They should, but they don't understand that that's not appropriate. Some of them I do find that there is a more-sinister is a strong word-but there's a deeper reason they're digging into that question, and I think that reflects poorly on that organization.

>> No, I think you brought some really good points in, and I like what you said about flipping, right. Both of you have actually said that, because there are things also as a student and as an interviewee you're trying to get, and so you figure, all right, you're going to ask me this question. Let me use that as a launching point to your point about mentorship, right, because that's a really popular thing that I think our students are always looking for, and so really talking and tying that with work/life balance and then what's my place in this organization, and how do you support? I think that's a great launching pad for that. We're talking a little bit from the interviewer's side, right, but what are some of the things, I think as we move onto our discussion, about what the interviewee shouldn't bring to the table? Are there things that either of you have stood out because there's some things in my mind, but I want to see what comes up in y'all's minds.

>> Yeah, so in some of my previous roles, I have been the interviewer, so on the other side of the table, and there are a couple of things to keep in mind as an interviewee, right, that the-that is going on in the interviewer's brain, right. To them, this is a business transaction. This is-they shouldn't necessarily care about your family life, right, in terms of the interview. Once you build a rapport and you're coworkers and you're getting along socially, that's a different story, but at the interview, it's relatively businesslike. So oftentimes employers don't want to hear about personal problems necessarily unless you're using it in an anecdote to share about how you overcame it and this is how you developed a solution for that thing, right, but, you know, a lot of what's on our students' minds is their student loan balances, and that understandably could come up or you could, as an interviewee, feel like that might be relevant to the conversation, and I'm just here to say it's not from an interviewer's perspective. They understand that it's probably in your situation, but really this doesn't come down to how much you're able to pay down on your student loans and how quickly. This is more along the lines of is this a good job fit? Is this a good employment relationship? And the loan equation shouldn't really come up. It just

really shouldn't. Other things that kind of stood out when I interviewed people, again, it wasn't for this industry, but, you know, not really understanding what the company did or specific products that they used, things like that, are really important to understand because if you ask a question that's way out in left field or maybe you're figuratively playing football and I'm playing baseball, like we're just not talking the same language because you haven't done the research that you need to. That doesn't reflect greatly on you as an interviewee in that situation. So, again, just kind of owning whatever information that you can on that company, on that job prospect, on that industry specifically because a lot of you, you know, might not be practicing veterinarians. You might be going into research, or you might be working for the government, which they're not all the same, right. They're in the same general theme, but the actual nuts and bolts of the job are very, very different. So, you know, it's just always important to be able to try to get as much perspective from the relevant resources as possible for each individual job.

>> And I would agree. That goes really well into what I kind of find as my big no-no, and that's showing up to an interview and not having questions to ask of the organization that's interviewing you. When people show up and I interview them and they have no questions for me, I really take that as a bad sign that they haven't done their research, that they're not as engaged in this position, and so I always encourage anyone who's going into an interviewing situation to come to that table with a few prepared questions. Obviously, as you interview, you will probably think of others, but come with a couple based on your previous research or previous interactions.

>> And I was going to say, so you both sort of linked it up. So you talked about the student loans as being a no-no, and you talked about having questions prepared, which that then comes into the salary stuff when I talk to students, right. So often the student loan questions come in tied to salary, right, and benefits, and that's often a question that gets [laughter], they have a question. It just may not be the time for that question, and salary is-it's a sensitive topic, right, how we discuss money in the United States and knowing what your worth is and especially as a new grad, right, because no matter what industry you're in, you don't really know your worth yet because you just haven't had the experience, and I always say, "You know, you haven't been tested out in the wild yet." So it's an open field there, and so when it comes to money, across the board I tell students, research. Know what a standard for your industry, your space, your focus area, whatnot, for the location that you want to be in, right, and have a range. Don't have a finite number because there's a lot that goes in that Andrew will tell you that later on at some point in figuring out how to make the numbers work, but on the employer's side, I know there are some who have experienced an employer going, "Well, what are you looking for?" And sometimes it's really casual how they ask them, right, and I think that some of the students have been able to flip it back on them and say, "You know, to your point, they've done their research, right. I'm just trying to get an idea of what this job entails, what my responsibilities are, and all that information," and that's what they said to the employer, but if the employer still kind of pushes the process, I say, "All right, make sure

you go into any, every interview with a range so that if you just feel like your back is just up against the wall, metaphorically or not or whatever, right, that you have a range that you are comfortable with that is based on reality. That's the key part.

>> So that's a great idea. I love having a range as well, but what is the range? Are we talking a \$5,000 spread, a \$20,000 spread? What do you guys think of as being that spread for the range?

>> I think it's in line with the range based on your research. For example, a \$5,000 spread, if you're talking the difference between \$200,000 and \$205,000, that's a pretty miniscule spread percentage wise, but when you're between 50,000 and 55,000, that 5,000 difference goes a long, a much longer way. So it's definitely relative to where you're at. You know, are you post-residency? You're looking in the six-figure range. Are you, you know, some of the lower paying parts of the industry?

>> I typically have students look between, and this is just me in general, somewhere between the seven and ten, and that's a pretty big spread, but I have found that employers have definitely come within it, right, because I-and I will be selfish because I'm advocating for the students, right. So I'm looking for as much wiggle room as possible, right.

>> Agreed.

>> My fear about giving them a smaller spread is that they don't have as much negotiating room to go where they can, and-but I keep that spread in line with where they are and where they're going, right. So you're not going to have 120 to 130 when you're a new grad coming out of clinical practice. You're going to be in Hickory, North Carolina.

>> Right.

>> Like that doesn't make sense, right, but I like to keep it something realistic, you know, for where they're going, but the biggest thing I will keep saying this with the money, and I've seen students attempt to do this, have a range. Don't have one number because if you've got one number, what happens if you don't get it, or what happens if they could have gone higher but you low-balled yourself?

>> Agreed. So I think that range is really key, and I would agree with you, Amanda and as well, Andrew, I like to kind of go wide on my range. So I usually like to say that about \$10,000 spread because it gives you a really big playing field, if you will. You have a lot of wiggle room there. The other thing I often like to do in that question is to flip it back and to ask more about the total compensation package. So that's the other way that I kind of get around. So salary is definitely a very important part of compensation. I would also like to know more about the benefits you offer. So a way to totally dodge the question yet get more information.

>> Right, and there's a lot to that, and that's something that we can talk about in a more finance-centric podcast, you know, employment

benefits, etc., but you-the other perspective of this is maybe the employer is off base with what they're expecting to pay a new associate, too.

>> Yes. [Laughter]

>> So, right, and that's not uncommon.

>> Yes.

>> So, you know, that's another aspect of your job, Amanda, is working with the employers on some of that stuff, helping them understand, you know, kind of what current market rate is.

>> Yeah, agreed. I think that's a great point, Andrew, because what we have seen is that the salary, the starting salary particularly, for veterinarians coming right out into practice has continually risen over the past five years, and so there are employers who have not been seeking an associate in some time, and are fundamentally-are truly shocked by where things have gone. So understanding that that might actually be something that's shocking. So that's always why I like to base that estimate on my research, so actually saying, "Based on looking at the AVMA data, based at looking at other veterinarian positions in this geographic location, it seems that a reasonable starting salary is between x and y." I think it helps you to cushion the blow a little bit for those practitioners.

>> And they can do their own research, too.

>> And they will oftentimes, and I've had students say that as well, where they've come up with a number, the employer has said, "Oh, that number is different than mine. Where did you get your information from?" And then they come back to the table with both of their data points and then are able to negotiate from there. I think the last thing that I would say, and I think we can all agree on this, for the love of God, don't say, "To pay back my student loan, I need to make x." [Laughter]

>> Employers hate that, and they have told me that as much. So [laughter]-

>> What are some of these other resources though that the students and employers can go and find, right. Is Glass Door a reliable resource, right, or you mentioned AVMA.

>> I think that's the big one. I was going to, not to cut you off, but I think that's a big thing is that the AVMA is such a great resource for that. That's where I think everyone should start just for an industry understanding.

>> Agreed.

>> I don't know if there are any other ones.

>> So I do think that the AVMA is a great place to start, particularly if you are a new graduate or if you are in your sector, a small animal medicine, equine medicine, food animal medicine, in general practice. Where it gets a little trickier is when we get into specialty medicine and into smaller sectors of our industry, and in those situations, what I really encourage people to do is talk to others in your industry. So, for example, if you are finishing up your residency in cardiology and you are looking at a academic position, I would then go to additional faculty and ask what's typical for a faculty position, or if you're going into the private sector as part of a specialty hospital, I would go and ask others. So this is where forming your network and really starting to reach out because the data is harder to get for some of those sectors. So really understanding who knows the industry well and can give you the insider look.

>> So I would say to that point, all the associations that are attached to those.

>> Agreed.

>> Those are the folks I would start with, and say, "Hey, I'm new. This is where I'm starting." Obviously there are great folks who are mentors and have been in the field for a long time because, right, there's only so much information we can provide, I think, on a general scale, but if you're doing something really, really niche, those are going to be the people to lean on, and they're going to know because there are not as many of them, so--

>> They're the ones doing it.

>> Right.

>> And this would apply not only to those of our listeners who are finishing a portion of their learning or a portion of their training and going into a sector, but if you are further along in your career and you are transitioning from one type of job to another type of job, so I can speak to that in transitioning from being in the private sector and private practice for 12 years and then coming into academia, that was a totally different world for me. So the research that I needed to do preparing myself for trends was very different.

>> Yeah. Well, you guys, I think, provided a whole bunch of awesome insight when it comes to the no-no's of the interview process. I know we've sort of added on, but this stuff is all entangled, right, and it all builds on each other, and so hopefully our listeners would have taken away something that's really powerful to be helping them as they navigate their interviews, but what's maybe one last piece of general advice you'd give everyone as they set out in interview season?

>> So, do your research. Understand the industry that you're applying into, that you're trying to break into. Understand what that industry looks like, what the trends in the industry are, and then understand the organization specifically that you are looking at. Do your research on that organization and come prepared with your own questions.

>> I would also say you need to be yourself, and the reason not only being true to yourself, but you need to make sure that you being you fits into that environment. So when you're interviewing, don't be somebody that you're not necessarily. Obviously, be professional, but make sure that, you know, that organization adheres to your personal and professional values and goals because if you're in a place where those things aren't true, you're not going to be in that place for very long whether that be your choice to leave or their choice for you to leave. So I would just say be true to yourself and really kind of just be introspective.

>> And I guess the final thing that I would add is really watch it with the over sharing.

>> Yes.

>> Because not everything, even though we're telling a co-member, the key word is cohesive professional story whether you're asking questions, whether you are answering questions from an interviewer, do not share more than what is relevant, right, because I [inaudible] who saw it on interviews, it can be a little tough when you're hearing a whole bunch of information that has nothing to do with the job or what's currently going on. So, with that, thank you for all of y'all's feedback. Awesome.

>> Thank you guys for listening. We'll see you next time.

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