Our Story
You were made to save animals.

We take care of the rest.
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How It All Started

I still remember the first day that I walked into our first companion animal hospital – McLean Animal Hospital in February 2006. Dr. Bill Hanson and Dr. Don McLean had just called an all staff meeting to announce that the practice was being acquired by my wife, Dr. Michelle Cutler, and I. There were teary eyes around the room and I could tell that everyone was frightened about what the future would hold.

When it came time for us to speak, all we could do was assure everyone that we were there because of how great the hospital was. It was the heritage of the practice that made it successful, and we were not going to change that. In the weeks leading up to the sale, Dr. Hanson and Dr. McLean kept emphasizing the importance of making decisions that were always in the best interest of the hospital. That meant focusing on three key areas: patient care, client service, and supporting the team.

Fast forward to today. Every decision we make and every initiative we undertake starts with those three basic principles, and are evaluated based on answers to three fundamental questions: How does it impact patient care? Will this improve client service? How will this impact the team? These are the foundations upon which our guiding principles are built. Our patients, clients, and employees rely on us to act in an ethical and responsible manner, and anything that we do that does not support them is something that is contrary to the fabric of our organization.

Our company is built on leveraging the talent and expertise of our veterinarians. The role of our head office is to support our veterinarians so that they have the best teams, equipment, and environment to make decisions that they feel are...
Every decision we make and every initiative we undertake starts with three basic principles and are evaluated based on the answers to three fundamental questions: How does it impact patient care? Will this improve client service? How will this impact the team?

in the best interest of the patient. We don’t get involved in the practice of medicine, we don’t make our hospitals use certain products, and we don’t enforce protocols. We listen to our employees and try to create a community of collaboration, so best practices are shared amongst our hospitals, rather than being forced down on them.

With the tremendous amount of growth that our organization has experienced comes both challenges and opportunities. Just as a growing practice needs to make decisions on when to onboard new veterinarians, new support staff, add a phone line, or move to a larger building, a growing business like VetStrategy faces similar challenges. Sometimes processes built for a business of a certain size need to be tweaked or entirely reengineered to accommodate larger numbers and run smoothly. That’s why we are always evaluating our successes and failures to ensure we can better support our hospitals.

At the same time, growth provides opportunity for us to add to the services we provide. Over the past few years, we have added a marketing team, real estate and asset management resources, a team in charge of culture, continuing education, training, recruitment and retention, while investing heavily in building our field support team.

We now have almost 20 full-time staff dedicated to ensuring our acquisitions and transitions run smoothly.

We are constantly looking at industry trends and trying to stay on top of new technologies and tools that can support our hospitals. Once again, all of these things are done with our three guiding principles at the forefront.

It is hard to believe that in 2018 we eclipsed the 100 hospital mark in Canada. There have been ups and downs, successes and failures, but what has remained constant is that everything we do is anchored by our guiding beliefs which start and end with the interest of our patients, clients, and teams in mind. Looking back, I am most proud of the fact that virtually every team member we have picked up along the way is still a big part of what makes our company work. I can say with confidence that VetStrategy has made a difference in the lives of people who have dedicated themselves to this industry.

Running VetStrategy is both a privilege and an honour. I feel incredibly lucky to be surrounded by such a terrific group of caring and dedicated people who have chosen a path that is focused on the health and well-being of animals. I look forward to what the next few years bring!
Our Guiding Beliefs

**PATIENTS**

**INDIVIDUALIZED CARE**
We do what is right by our patients, providing them with individualized care to meet their unique needs.

**PATIENT ADVOCACY**
We are pet-passionate individuals working together to advocate for our patients so they can live long, happy and healthy lives.

**CLIENTS**

**EMPATHY**
We understand what is at stake and empathize with our clients as they seek our knowledge and guidance.

**CLIENT SERVICE**
We work as a team to provide exceptional client service and consistent communication with our clients.

**PEOPLE**

**CAREERS**
We encourage and support our team members and provide them with opportunities to develop their skills and grow in their roles and their careers.

**PRACTICE FREEDOM**
We believe in leaving the medicine to our medical teams, allowing them the freedom to do what they think is right for their patients.
About VetStrategy

We bring the know-how and support, so the medical team can focus on what really matters: their patients.

VetStrategy owns and manages veterinary practices across Canada. We are the only 100% Canadian operated organization of its kind with over 200 locations from coast to coast.

Our business model is simple. We work with our veterinarian partners to acquire ownership in veterinary hospitals, and then help in the management of these practices. This allows the medical team to focus on practicing first-rate medicine, and allows the clinic’s staff, clients, and patients to benefit from experienced business operators and managers.

We recognize that the success of the practices we acquire is based on a certain philosophy and reputation in the community. Although there are some inevitable changes, maintaining clinic individuality and refraining from a cookie-cutter approach are very important to us.

Everything we do from a management perspective is done to gain trust and improve client service. Whether it is our commitment to responsible pricing, our client appreciation events, or our new client advocate program, we want to ensure that clients’ needs are met. Our success comes from supporting the teams in our hospitals.

We strongly believe in providing all team members with opportunities to grow and develop in their careers. Whether through continuing education or enhanced roles and responsibilities, a rewarding workplace matters.

Great medical care is the cornerstone of any hospital. We believe in leaving the medicine to our medical teams, while we work to ensure that the clinics have the tools and resources required to provide patients and clients with the care they deserve.
Our Journey

- **2006**: First Hospital in Ontario
- **2008**: 3 Hospitals
- **2009**: First Hospital in Alberta, Held First Medical Summit
- **2010**: 4 Hospitals, 8 Hospitals
- **2011**: First 24-Hour Hospital, Official Introduction of Our Guiding Beliefs
- **2012**: 10 Hospitals, 13 Hospitals
- **2013**: First Hospital in New Brunswick, First Hospital in British Columbia, First Hospital in Saskatchewan
- **2019**: Reached 100 Hospitals Across Canada
- **2020**: 22 Hospitals, 34 Hospitals, 41 Hospitals, 66 Hospitals, 104 Hospitals, 139 Hospitals, 200+ Hospitals

- **2006**: Held First Medical Summit
- **2009**: First Hospital in Alberta
- **2010**: First 24-Hour Hospital
- **2011**: First Cat-Only Hospital
- **2012**: First Hospital in New Brunswick
- **2013**: First Hospital in British Columbia

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Our journey started slowly and steadily, building a network of 34 clinics within the first nine years. In 2016, we changed course, and as a result, we have seen a 300% growth in the number of hospitals within the past three years – now with presence in nine of the ten provinces across the country.
Sharing Knowledge and Expertise

“Our commitment to continuing education supports one of our guiding beliefs – to enable our people to progress in their careers and provide quality medicine to their veterinary patients.”

Dr. Michelle Cutler
Medical Director

As Medical Director, there are three key areas of focus:

1. Developing and moderating the continuing education curriculum
2. Working with industry partners to share and introduce new products, services, and R&D themes to our network of hospitals and clinics
3. Reviewing and assisting with medical or client cases

Continuing Education Curriculum

We believe in developing our people and their careers, and our commitment to continuing education programs fully supports this guiding belief. At the beginning of each year, we establish key medical topics that are driven by staff input, to include in our continuing education curriculum.

Like many veterinarians, I wanted to be a vet since I was a small child. Rescuing injured birds and tending to our family menagerie of pets only fostered my love for animals.

After graduating from the Ontario Veterinary College in 2000, I worked in small animal practices in and around Toronto for 15 years. It was at this time that an opportunity arose within VetStrategy that would transition me from general practice to my current role as National Medical Director. Although a daunting change, it was one I was very excited about.
Understanding areas our veterinary team members want to learn more about or improve upon is fundamental in providing content that is both interesting and educational. Once I have these insights, we partner with speakers who are leaders in their field to facilitate engaging sessions to our network of doctors and veterinary team members. The content is delivered via RACE® approved webinars during office hours, allowing staff to maintain their work-life balance while fulfilling their continuing education requirements. Our webinar content also shifts depending on themes happening in the industry. For example, we are hosting sessions related to cannabis use in pets, a frequently requested topic with the recent legalization of cannabis in Canada.

**Industry Partnerships**

To keep our hospital staff current with trends and updates within the industry, we work with our partners to introduce new products, services, and research and development initiatives. We provide webinars to share this information, allowing our teams to interact and ask questions to better understand the benefits for their patients. Whether it is a new pharmaceutical product, a new label claim, a diet or laboratory tool, our partners provide the information to our staff to keep them up-to-date and on the cutting edge of trends and changes within the industry.

**Case Review**

Assisting and reviewing cases when there are problems or concerns is a role I take very seriously. Fortunately, these situations do not occur often, but on the occasion when there is a difficult client or adverse patient event, I am there to support the hospitals.

As part of the VetStrategy family, a clinic is never alone when dealing with difficult situations. I am always available to help improve client interactions, patient care and team morale by providing the necessary guidance and support, so we can achieve these goals together.

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* American Association of Veterinary State Boards Registry of Approved Continuing Education (RACE®)
It’s no secret that medical technologies have been experiencing major advances for many years, propelled by the sophistication of computing, research in genetics, and the evolution of the pharmaceutical field. As health professionals, we find ourselves constantly exposed to these new tools, treatments and diagnostic methods.

Among all these advances, echocardiography is no exception. As an area of particular interest, here is an overview of the echocardiographic examination “standard” in 2019.

Two-Dimensional Ultrasound (2D)
This essential basic tool, is often the starting point for echocardiographic examination. These are the “classic” images with which we are familiar, allowing us to view in real time the movements of the myocardium, to evaluate the general morphology of the heart and to perform certain measurements of the chambers/walls of the heart.

Pulse/Continuous Doppler
The principle of Doppler refers to the change of frequency of ultrasound reflected by a moving body. These tools allow us to measure the speed of blood flow in different regions of the heart/vessels, complementing the 2D exam.

Doppler makes it possible to highlight anomalies of blood flow secondary to abnormalities, morphologies (e.g. subaortic stenosis) or functional (e.g. diastolic dysfunction). The measured blood velocities are shown on the screen by a velocity-time graph.

Colour Doppler
A third type of Doppler is a graphical representation of the direction and speed of blood within the heart chambers or vessels. The shades of blue and red are traditionally found in the direction of blood flow. These images are superimposed on traditional 2D images, bringing a real-time image of the movement of the heart as well as the circulation of blood. This impressive and more “intuitive” Doppler mode is useful when detecting abnormalities of the blood circulation in the various heart chambers as it will detect valve leakage (e.g. mitral regurgitation) and abnormal communications (e.g. inter-ventricular communication).

3D Echo
With its appearance in 1974, the three-dimensional echo has grown significantly over the last decade. The 3D echo finds are useful in multiple areas including cardiology, allowing to better visualize and
describe certain lesions (valvular, ischemic, neoplastic, anatomical defects) as well as to obtain the calculation of volumes of certain cardiac chambers.

**Tissue Doppler (TDI)**

This relatively new technique is now part of standard echocardiographic examination. This modality, as its name suggests, allows the measurement of the movement of cardiac tissue (muscle) rather than blood (see Pulse/Continuous Doppler section). This makes it possible to obtain direct and precise measurements of the cardiac muscle’s speed, deformation (strain) and rate of deformation (strain rate). Clinically, this results in an early diagnosis of various cardiac assignments such as dilated and hypertrophic cardiomyopathies.

**Speckle Tracking**

This latest tool is gaining popularity and availability. Briefly, the principle is based on an advanced function to identify small specific regions of the heart muscle, to recognize the “graphical approach” of these regions and to follow them (tracking) during contraction/relaxation of the myocardium. A detailed analysis of the function of the ventricle at multiple points is obtained, with displacement and even myocardial torsion analysis. We are now far from traditional two-dimensional analysis.

The progress of recent years is therefore reflected in a more detailed and precise analysis, an increased understanding of the movement of the normal or sick heart, and especially the possibility of early detection of various diseases.
“I chose VetStrategy because of their Canadian roots and their reputation for retaining staff and not altering practices. There is no dictating of medical practice or control over which drugs to use.”

Dr. Mike Steen
Hillcrest Animal Hospital
ONTARIO
The team at VetStrategy were very supportive when I wanted to relocate back to Toronto to be closer to family.

Since graduating from veterinary school in 2013, I have worked at two hospitals. Each one has provided me with the knowledge, support, and training to succeed. During my career, I have had exposure to different aspects of veterinary medicine – starting as an associate, then accepting locum shifts at various types of practices, to my current role as a lead veterinarian.

Through VetStrategy’s continuing education program, I was able to complete a canine rehabilitation course. The knowledge I gained has been an asset with respect to orthopedic case management, and our senior patients. Learning about medical management in my role has provided me with the insight on how a practice operates.

We also have many students and new graduates who visit the hospital. As a mentor, it is fulfilling to help them learn and grow. I recently had the opportunity to travel across the United Kingdom to meet with veterinary students. As a graduate from UCD Veterinary Medicine in Ireland, I was able to provide insight to the students on how to transition back to life in Canada as a veterinarian. It was a great feeling being able to relate to the students and help to calm their fears of life after school.
Veterinary Technicians:
For the Love of Animals

“Nothing is more rewarding than saving the life of an animal, caring for them while they recover, and watching them light up when they are finally reunited with their loved ones.”

Monique Leblanc, RVT
Riverview Animal Hospital
NEW BRUNSWICK

The inspiration and journey into the veterinary industry started with my dog, Veruca. Every time we went to the vet, the passion and dedication the technicians showed towards my dog was heartwarming. During those visits, it became evident that becoming a veterinary technician would also be my career path. After graduating from Oulton College in 2014, I joined Riverview Animal Hospital. Regardless of how busy this 24-hour emergency and referral hospital gets, the staff members work as a team, supporting one another through all the challenges and triumphs.

Whether a patient visits us for an emergency or simply a vaccine appointment, a veterinary technician is involved every step of the way. Even after the hospital joined the VetStrategy network, there was no interference with medicine or protocols – we are able to continue to treat our patients the way we know best.

Some of my daily duties include: talking with our clients to gather preliminary history of their furry family member, discussing nutrition, taking vitals, drawing blood, processing tests, conducting X-rays and CT scans, preparing for surgery, filling prescriptions, making client follow-up calls, discharging patients, and ensuring that clients understand the doctor’s instructions. We are the superheroes of multi-tasking!
I am fortunate to be in a position where I can help ill and injured pets return to their regular lifestyle so they can enjoy long and healthy lives.

As a veterinary technician whose primary focus is orthopedics, I find my job highly rewarding. My typical day is divided between surgery and appointments. In the morning, I am admitting surgical patients, inducing and maintaining general anesthesia and pain management, keeping meticulous records, and helping with recovery.

In the afternoon, I am aiding the veterinarian in examinations, follow-up appointments, diagnostics and treatment plans.

Not only do I love providing care for the patients, but their owners as well. Often times, complex orthopedic surgeries can be daunting and I take great pride in educating our clients about procedures and guiding them through the necessary rehabilitation.

I am grateful to work with veterinarians who approach anesthesia, pain management, and treatment plans with a collaborative mindset. Every veterinarian I work with respects my knowledge, experience, and input on a patient’s well-being. Working in a team-oriented environment, we all understand that despite our different roles, we all have the same goals – to prevent disease, to heal the injured, and to ensure a high quality of life for our patients. Being part of VetStrategy, our hospital maintained the culture we created before joining the network. This is thanks to our common values of respect, knowledge and teamwork.
After starting my studies at a veterinary technician college, I began my career in the animal industry as a kennel attendant at a local shelter. I then worked at a veterinary practice as a client care representative, moved into a veterinary assistant role, and helped the hospital with their website, promotions, and more.

During this time, the practice joined the VetStrategy network, and soon after, I was presented with an opportunity to join head office as a coordinator. In this role, I helped with marketing initiatives, benefit inquiries, and transitioning new hospitals.

The next step in my career development came with the chance to move into a transition specialist role. Having been through a practice transition myself, I understood the emotional experience involved and knew I could contribute to the process.

In my current role as manager of transition services, I work closely with transitioned hospitals and incorporate their feedback to improve their experience. I can uphold what I appreciate most about VetStrategy – respecting the heritage of each practice while doing what is right for clients and patients. It was these guiding beliefs that led me to where I am today.

“My career journey has taken many turns, but with VetStrategy’s support, I have found my calling.”

Andy Mocha
Manager of Transition Services
In the Clinic: The Life of a Practice Manager

Candice Pacholuk
Practice Manager
Van Isle Veterinary Hospital
BRITISH COLUMBIA

In the world of veterinary medicine, no two days are alike. As a practice manager, my role is to oversee all aspects of the hospital. It often involves floating into several positions throughout the day to support the needs of my team, our clients, and the practice.

Every day I get to witness this remarkable show that starts as soon as the curtains go up at 8 am. It takes us on an unpredictable journey filled with proud first-time pet owners, wagging tails, stressed and often vulnerable clients, success stories, life-saving procedures, and gut-wrenching heartbreaks.

Even after 18 years at Van Isle, I still have those moments where I look at my team in awe. They are superheroes. As their manager, it is my role to support and encourage my team along the way. Being a part of VetStrategy has given me the opportunity to build a connection with other managers within our network. Just a phone call away, we leverage each other’s skills and experiences from all across Canada.
Although our company has grown tremendously over the years, our guiding beliefs continue to live. What made us successful in the early days, and continues today, was based largely on respecting the heritage of the hospitals we acquire. Part of that is honouring the reputation and relationships that exist within each practice and their local community.

Culture is created by the people within the four walls they work in. As we grow and add more locations to our network, we want to balance the culture that exists within the hospitals with the “connectors” of culture that we all share.

Regardless of the many roles within our company (i.e. veterinary technician, veterinarian, marketing, accounts payable, etc.), we all share a passion for animals. This is our “connector” and the reason why we each chose to be a part of this industry.

We are a humble organization focused on serving our hospitals; and our hospitals are focused on serving the community through the medical care they provide to their patients and the services they provide to their clients.

We will continue to grow and evolve as a company while remaining focused on making decisions through the lens of what is right for the owner and their pet. This helps ground us in the work that we do and the people and pets that we serve.

I am honoured to work with people that give their all each and every day. Not everyone can say they are a part of a culture that is founded on respect, empathy, and passion for the work they do. At VetStrategy, we know our purpose is having a direct impact on the pets and their owners – and that is pretty special. Our hospital teams were made to save animals; we take care of the rest.
It all began in 2002 with a visit to the local SPCA branch in Comox Valley, British Columbia. The team at Van Isle Veterinary Hospital in Courtenay adopted a cat named Oscar, who quickly became their clinic greeter. He adapted quickly to his new role and environment, and had a special gift of knowing when a little compassion was needed for both clients and patients alike. The team decided to start a charitable fund to help sick or injured pets in need, which they appropriately named the OSCAR Fund. Unfortunately, Oscar passed away in 2013, but his namesake lives on across the country, as it has become our national support fund across all VetStrategy clinics.

Established in 2012, OSCAR stands for “Offering Subsidized Care for Animal Recovery.” Each VetStrategy clinic is in charge of managing the OSCAR Fund, a program that helps with the veterinary treatment of patients in their own practice, but whose owners are financially unable to support the costs. In addition to collecting general donations, local fundraising initiatives over the past years have included selling OSCAR-themed chocolate bars, pet photos with Santa, nail trims, bake sales, garage sales and community barbecues, to name a few.

Commitment to community is very important to us. Through the OSCAR Fund and support of other local animal organizations, we want to make a difference in the lives of those who provide unconditional love, each and every day.
At VetStrategy, we are committed to strengthening hospital operations to support our growing network. Our focus is to provide the resources and support needed to allow hospital staff to focus on their clients and patients. We regularly ask ourselves where we can add the most value; we review best practices and share them across our network of hospitals; and we evaluate and reassess based on how each initiative at the hospital affects the clients and patients.

Regardless of our current state or our future growth, an important aspect remains constant – with every hospital that becomes part of our network, we value and respect the heritage of the hospital and are committed to maintaining it. A perfect example of this is the renovation and expansion of Aurora Animal Hospital, completed at the end of 2018.

As this project unfolded, we worked with the previous owner of the hospital, Dr. Bill Hansen. Our relationship with Dr. Hansen dates back to the very first hospital added to our network, and he has continued to stay on as a key member of our team.

During the renovation, our goal was to be purposeful while maintaining the heritage and culture of the

Aurora Animal Clinic
ONTARIO
practice. The larger space with improved workflow and a refreshed waiting area now offer clients and patients the comfort and care they need.

The renovation and expansion of this hospital has been beneficial to our clients, patients and staff, and has also meant a significant enhancement for the community and surrounding area.

When approaching a new opportunity, we consider three timeframes. First, understand and value the past. Second, live and think in the future. And third, act in the present. With these timeframes in mind, we empower staff to make medical decisions that are in the best interest of their clients and patients, support streamlining and best practices while building to sustain growth.

We are constantly inspired by our hospitals and their respective teams, and strongly believe that together we will continue to make a positive impact in the lives of our clients and patients for years to come.