

Central Line: The AAHA Podcast Transcript

Episode Title: Helping Teams Find Their Why

Guest: Senani Ratnayake BSc RVT

0:00:18.9 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line! I'm your host, Katie Berlin, and I'm here with a good friend of mine. I wanted to invite her to the podcast because I want her to be your friend too.

0:00:30.7 Senani Ratnayake: I want to be your friend.

0:00:31.7 Katie Berlin: This is Senani Ratnayake. For those of you who are listening and not watching, we are actually in the same room, which is very exciting. Senani and I have known each other for a few years now, and because you are Canadian...

0:00:47.7 Senani Ratnayake: I am.

0:00:48.1 Katie Berlin: Shout out Canadians!

0:00:48.8 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah!

0:00:50.0 Katie Berlin: Because you're Canadian, a lot of us in the US don't see you speaking at some of our events where we get so much exposure to certain speakers, and I just... I think that is a travesty. I think everybody should know what you're working on and hear your stories because you're just doing such wonderful things in the profession. So thank you so much.

0:01:10.3 Senani Ratnayake: Thank you. I'm just super excited to be here. Yes, let's get into it!

0:01:18.0 Katie Berlin: All right. It's a big privilege to have you here, and I definitely want to get into a lot of what you're doing, but before we get going, would you mind just giving everyone an introduction to who you are, what you do for a living and why you're here sitting and talking to me today?

0:01:35.1 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah. My name is Senani Ratnayake, and... I'm looking at the microphone, but really you're out there, so I'll tell you what...

0:01:41.9 Katie Berlin: This is our first live recording, so it's a little...

0:01:44.6 Senani Ratnayake: We don't know what to do with ourselves.

0:01:45.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah, we're figuring it out as we go.

0:01:48.5 Senani Ratnayake: My name is Senani Ratnayake. I am an RVT and I graduated in 2002, I'm from Waterdown, Ontario, Canada.

0:01:56.8 Katie Berlin: Whoop – Canadians!

0:01:58.2 Senani Ratnayake: Canadians, let's talk about Canadians. We're all so...

0:02:00.2 Katie Berlin: Oh, we will.

0:02:02.5 Senani Ratnayake: I graduated in 2002. I worked in practice, the smallest I worked in there were five of us, largest there were 170 of us, so I've done both ends of the spectrum. I did some dermatology referral, general practice, companion animal and loved all of it. I love veterinary medicine. I found my passion because I actually also kind of like people too, and I know that's weird for some people.

0:02:26.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:02:27.5 Senani Ratnayake: I love animals and I also find people fascinating creatures. I like the social experiment that we are. And so I found my passion in realizing that I was actually pretty good with the communication aspects. I remember working in emergency very early in my career and having the tenured, experienced emergency vets come to me and say, "You need to go and present this estimate because it's \$6000 and I can never get them to say yes." And I honestly didn't even understand half the line items, but I knew what the clients might need to hear in order to make that decision. So I ran with it and I was able to get them to agree to things and be compliant with things that really senior vets couldn't do, and I realized that there was something in that. I have been very passionately talking about communication and leadership topics now for many years. I think the first conference I spoke at was around 2003, 2004.

0:03:22.5 Katie Berlin: Wow, that's... It seems like that was yesterday, but it was not yesterday.

0:03:25.9 Senani Ratnayake: This was not yesterday, and it was literally talking about team medicine from the trenches from a lot of my early work. Everything always had this caveat of the technicians perspective or something, because I always felt like it wasn't good enough, what I was doing, to just be like, "Here's what I think," and have that be stand-alone. So I always have this little caveat of, "But it's just my idea." I think the first conference I spoke at, there were about 12 people in the room maybe, and we were in the basement of the conference hall, it was the Saturday last spot - you know you've made it when. And now I'm lucky enough that I can fill a room. So it's been good.

0:04:08.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that's progress, man.

0:04:10.1 Senani Ratnayake: It's been good.

0:04:11.0 Katie Berlin: I really feel like that is a huge indicator of progress!

0:04:15.1 Senani Ratnayake: People come, people sit on the floor. It's so great.

0:04:16.7 Katie Berlin: Yep, you got to give it time.

0:04:18.5 Senani Ratnayake: Not the last two years, let's be honest, but it's been really nice. So yeah, I was lucky enough to be able to work in practice and work in industry - I worked for Hill's Pet Nutrition, I worked as a consultant for several years, I got to work with an incredible team at Veterinary Purchasing in Ontario and support hundreds of independent hospitals in Ontario with different projects and working with their teams, and now I work at an organization called Vet Alliance and work with independently owned hospitals across Canada, but also corporate hospitals

with that strategy and that's been tons of fun. We have an incredible team of people, so I get to do that and I still get to live my passion through my own consulting company, Motivatum Consulting, which we'll probably talk about today. But yeah, I'm lucky enough that I have a great organization that I work for that lets me do both and lets me do cool stuff like this, so it's been pretty cool.

0:05:13.5 Katie Berlin: I love to hear that. Okay, so first of all, you're really busy.

0:05:18.2 Senani Ratnayake: A little busy.

0:05:19.0 Katie Berlin: That's a lot of stuff, you have a lot on your plate. And I really feel like that is a theme among many of our guests - they have a lot of plates in the air at the same time, and that's a learned skill for sure. But I love that you're finding ways to integrate all of your passions together and I also really love hearing about employers who are cool with their team going out and doing other things and making their way in the profession on their own as well as for them.

0:05:50.8 Senani Ratnayake: It's nice to be able to... It's all one profession, we're in it together. So anything we can do to strengthen relationships, help make people better regardless of where they work, what they're doing, what type of work they're doing... This isn't just for companion animal, this could be people working in shelters, people working in lab and research, everyone's got a role to play. We're all in the same industry doing stuff, so it's nice to be able to reach out and connect with people like that, right?

0:06:15.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, for sure. So you're Canadian.

0:06:19.8 Senani Ratnayake: I am Canadian.

0:06:21.3 Katie Berlin: And I just have to say to any Canadians who may be listening, I don't know what is in the water in Canada, but all of the Canadians that I've met are amazing.

0:06:32.1 Senani Ratnayake: We have incredible vet professionals in Canada; we are very lucky. I think there's a collaborative spirit. I can make lots of excuses for why we're great, we're also very polite. It's true. Not all equally so. Let's be honest, right, guys. No. Honestly, it's nice. I think we really tend to look out for each other, and I think that that's good. I think as a profession, we all need to get a little bit better with that as a skill.

0:07:01.5 Katie Berlin: Agreed.

0:07:02.8 Senani Ratnayake: So I will say with love to the Canadians and everybody else: we all need to look out for each other a little bit more on the floor, day-to-day, on a busy day. But generally speaking, as people, Canadians are pretty awesome, and we have a whole pile of good ones in vet medicine. We're very lucky.

0:07:21.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah, agreed. I think that's definitely true, and we should take advantage of that more as you say.

0:07:27.1 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, and embrace it. I'm going to especially shout out Ontario RVT's here, only because I am an Ontario RVT, and I'm a past president of the association, and we love our little group up there. And I say up there, because I'm not up there right now.

0:07:44.8 Katie Berlin: That's right.

0:07:45.0 Senani Ratnayake: You can call that out.

0:07:46.1 Katie Berlin: That's true.

0:07:46.2 Senani Ratnayake: We are sitting in a hotel room.

0:07:48.1 Katie Berlin: We are in the Westin Poinsett in Greenville, South Carolina. So this is not my bedroom, or Senani's bedroom.

0:07:57.0 Senani Ratnayake: This beautiful lamp.

0:07:58.6 Katie Berlin: Yes, it would not be this neat if it was my bedroom. We're here for the Uncharted Veterinary Conference, and that's why we're getting the chance to do this live. But we have a lot of wonderful Canadians that I've met in this group, and I'm hoping that we'll get to see more of them in the future. I would never have met you guys if we hadn't had opportunities to connect this way.

0:08:23.2 Senani Ratnayake: It's true. Our paths wouldn't have crossed.

0:08:25.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, and that would be a real shame because we all have so much to share and regardless of international borders, our issues in the profession, our strengths and our problems are so familiar.

0:08:38.0 Senani Ratnayake: There's so much that we can relate to. And we all just want to be better. We want to be more progressive, but we also want to take care of ourselves, we need to be resilient. The shortage doesn't end at the border - we have staffing issues on both sides of the border, we have culture issues on both sides of the border. So I think it is really good to be able to share best practices and be progressive together.

0:09:02.4 Katie Berlin: Well, I'm so glad that you made your way down south.

0:09:06.8 Senani Ratnayake: Well, thanks.

0:09:09.0 Katie Berlin: Clearly, the big event was to have this chat.

0:09:11.9 Senani Ratnayake: Obviously. No offense, Andy Roark, if you're listening - hey. Yes. Katie, I came here for you.

0:09:19.4 Katie Berlin: I know.

0:09:20.6 Senani Ratnayake: It's convenient that there's a conference happening at this hotel.

0:09:25.3 Katie Berlin: Let's dive in. Today, I really wanted to talk about something that I associate you with because of talks that I've heard you give here and elsewhere. You've done some work with vet teams, helping them find their why.

For anybody listening who is not familiar with it, Simon Sinek, who's a very popular speaker and author, wrote a book called *Start With Why*, and a follow-up called *Find Your Why*, and he's written a bunch of other books too. They're all good, so you should check them out. This, I feel like, is the catalyst - his books and talks, he's got a great TED Talk too. That kick-started the question "Why do we do what we do?" His books talk a lot about businesses and brands forming around why they do what they do, but you've talked about the why a lot in veterinary medicine and I was wondering if you could share a little bit about how that came about.

Also, if you could, share what your why is, because I think that's really important to understanding who you are.

0:10:29.8 Senani Ratnayake: For sure. It is a really, really great piece to look at. Simon Sinek has his books that Katie mentioned that are amazing. But then also if you're not a book reader or the audio book listener, you can watch his TED Talks; his TED talks are also great. There's the TED talk where he talks very specifically about starting with why, and he gets into the why, the how, the what. And ultimately he talks about how people don't care what you do, they care why you do it.

And that's the piece that we have to think about in vet medicine. Now, what's interesting is when I started talking about the why and running team workshops, it actually wasn't because of Simon Sinek. My why is actually related to the logo of Motivatum Consulting.

The logo of Motivatum Consulting is a bunny chasing a carrot. And in my mind, as I was working in practice - because I love bunnies, in case you don't know. Bunnies are my jam. I always pictured people as having a carrot, and I have to figure out what that carrot is and dangle it in front of them to get them to do what I want. And so in my mind, everyone was just bunnies running around chasing their carrots.

0:11:44.9 Katie Berlin: That would be such a cute world.

0:11:46.0 Senani Ratnayake: Well, it's a great world. You should come live in my world. But it allowed me to kind of see people differently and frame my questions differently and talk to them differently, and so when I started really getting into teams and team workshops and doing more of the private consulting where I was working with teams one-on-one, I would always find it fascinating, because I'd sit down with someone, someone that was identified as a toxic team member, identified as someone that wasn't good in some way, not following the rules or getting along well with other people, whatever it was. And as we'd get talking, we inevitably would get into some kind of a personal story, something else that was happening or that had happened, something that triggered how they felt about the situation, and even right down to "they don't do well with large dogs because..."

And I was like, but if you could just tell your team this, then everyone would have more empathy for you, we'd be able to cut you some slack. And so, to be honest, when I first started doing this work with the teams it was about, "What is your carrot?" And I would send everyone a letter, and we'd go through this process, and it was so cool because you would see people start to actually relate to each other.

For me, my why is actually a bunny story also. I very early on in my career.. or not in my career! As a high school student! I begged and begged for a dog.

0:13:08.3 Katie Berlin: So *very* early?

0:13:09.2 Senani Ratnayake: Very, *very* early in my career - five years ago! - I was the kid that wanted a dog, wanted a dog, wanted a dog, was always told no, and then finally one year my parents were like, "Fine, we'll get you a bunny." And knowing nothing about pets, a dog would have been smarter. We all know that.

0:13:27.5 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I was just going to say that was a wrong move.

0:13:28.4 Senani Ratnayake: "Let's choose something really difficult to take care of." And we did all the wrong things. We went to the pet store, looked at the big glass cases, tiny baby bunnies falling all over each other, and I picked the bunny that was sitting in the food bowl, sitting right in it eating all the food, and so...

0:13:45.1 Katie Berlin: That would also be my bunny.

0:13:46.3 Senani Ratnayake: Right? So I got this bunny, it spent the night in a recycling bin because we couldn't get the cage together, it was like the stereotypical what not to do, get the rabbit starter kit from the pet store. And I named her Nibbles, because I thought that was a brilliant name. Later on in my career I realized not so much, that wasn't really the most progressive name.

But anyway, it's one of those stories. We had Nibbles for a few years, never took her to the vet, didn't understand that we should or could or anything, because she was fine, she ate, she drank, pooped a lot, it was great. And then one day she wasn't. One day she wasn't. And she had a swelling on the side of her face, and it became a thing, and for the first time we chose to go to the vet and she actually was quite ill for a period of time, and I was able to manage the situation, but then I went away to university.

And I left her with my mom and my brother, and they were trying to manage the situation and she continued to get worse, and so at Christmas time, we made the decision to euthanize her. And there were so many things at that time, our regular vet wasn't available, so it was a different vet that we ended up seeing that day, and we had this experience and it wasn't anyone's fault, but it wasn't the experience that I had imagined for ourselves, and it was a really hard time in our lives.

Who knew so much could come from this little bunny? And I went back to school and I was pre-med at the time, and I had always thought I was going to be a pediatrician, but then I found out that babies have parents who talk back. I didn't realize that I actually did like people at that time, so for me, that was kind of like, "Oh, hold on a second."

0:15:34.6 Katie Berlin: For many of us that comes later.

0:15:35.8 Senani Ratnayake: Right? Yeah, yeah. And so all of a sudden I started really looking into, so how do you take care of a rabbit properly? And how do you euthanize a rabbit in a way that is compassionate and humane? And all of these things. And of course, I went to the library at university and every book was based on the meat rabbit industry. It was not ideal. And so I started looking into careers in vet med and found myself applying to vet tech schools, and it was a whole thing, but honestly, the reason that brought me into vet med was this desire to make it better for

people, the desire to make it better for pet owners, to make sure their experience was in every way what they wanted it to be or needed it to be and things like that.

So that's kind of the thing that keeps me going, that's my carrot. Now it's just a little different in that I am still so intent on the client experience, but I don't impact the client experience every day. I'm not working with pet owners every day. My job now is to work with the team so that they can impact as many clients as possible, and I get to impact all kinds of teams and try to influence how many people - so it's just reach now, it's just different that way.

0:16:51.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, it's I think of it as a pyramid, if you reach this many vet team members who reach this many clients a piece, you end up actually indirectly reaching...

0:17:00.5 Senani Ratnayake: That's the whole point.

0:17:00.6 Katie Berlin: ...so many more pet owners than you could if you were just seeing one person at a time in an exam room. And I love that so much. I'm sorry that your why started out because you lost Nibbles. We've all, I think, every kid who ended up in vet med probably has a Nibbles in their...

0:17:18.2 Senani Ratnayake: Everyone's got that. There's some kind of..

0:17:19.8 Katie Berlin: In their background.

0:17:20.7 Senani Ratnayake: Or the Nibbles that was a stuffed toy because they were never even allowed to have the pet, everyone's got that.

0:17:29.2 Katie Berlin: But I do think that even though you weren't people focused at the time intentionally, I do find it really interesting that you gravitated right towards "I want to make this experience better," even from the very beginning when you were focused on taking care of the animals too. Most vet techs that I know didn't start out that way.

0:17:53.7 Senani Ratnayake: No.

0:17:54.1 Katie Berlin: A lot of vet techs, I feel like, choose that route rather than the veterinarian route because you get so much patient contact, so it's really interesting to hear about somebody who was pre-med and then chose to go to vet tech school in order to impact the client experience.

0:18:11.1 Senani Ratnayake: I was just lucky in that I ended up volunteering in the practice where we took Nibbles - and shout out to her if she ever watches this - Tammy, if she's out there...

0:18:23.4 Katie Berlin: You go Tammy.

0:18:24.3 Senani Ratnayake: Tammy was an incredible RVT and made a really big impression on me and did all the things, literally all the things, and was a fully utilized technician, and had I volunteered in another hospital where the technicians weren't allowed to do certain things, maybe I would not have appreciated the scope of that role. Maybe I would have thought, "Well, you have to be a doctor to make a difference, you have to." But it was Tammy who we always talked to, it was Tammy who we always saw, she's the one that was always explaining stuff to us, she was nice to us

all the time, and it was just like she had this cool job.

So I think that's part of it too, unfortunately; depending on where someone who's excited about vet medicine has that first experience, their co-op, does their placement, we forget how we influence people's decisions later on. It's like, "Oh, that's the high school student?" We were all the high school student once, and so they may look at you later, you may never know, but they may have that in the back of their head where they're like, "I want to be like that person when I grow up."

We have the ability to influence people, even when they're just in the practice getting in our way as the high school student. We have to remember that, because I could have had a totally different experience and been like, "That's it, I'm going to Guelph, I'm going to be a vet." And I don't know if I would have gotten in, but I could have had my sights set on that and that just wasn't what I wanted. I really liked the hands-on stuff, and I'd seen her do it, so I just assumed everyone did it that way, and it wasn't till after I graduated that I found out that it was very different practice to practice.

0:20:01.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Absolutely, and I feel like that's a common denominator with all the technicians that I've talked to for this podcast, at least, where they've stretched that role to so much more than you would see on paper when you're like, "What does a vet tech do?"

First of all, the paper that says what a vet tech does would be like eight papers, not one paper - the number of things that you guys do - but also the potential for how much you can affect the profession, whether it's in an exam room, one family at a time, or in a bigger way, like you're doing now. All of the technicians that I've talked to on this podcast had a technician that they learned from or who mentored them or who they saw as an example, doing that same thing.

And that's why I think it's so important that we have people like you and like Tasha McNerney and Alison Gottlieb. You're really paving the way for other technicians to say, "What else can I do with this degree, and what kinds of situations can I look to find myself in where I can really make a difference?" I just love that so much.

0:21:15.7 Senani Ratnayake: I think it's our responsibility. Now, when there were people doing this before us, there weren't podcasts, and there wasn't social media. And you couldn't do a virtual conference on Zoom and have people literally from around the world hear you. I would have just been in Ontario doing my thing. I'm sure everyone has, like you said, a mentor or someone, whether or not they even meant to, that influenced them. We think of the people that came before us, and then we try to do things to make other people around us better, and yeah, I think it's our responsibility to remind everyone to just be great and treat people in the way that will inspire them to be better. I think that's important.

0:22:00.5 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:22:00.7 Senani Ratnayake: Because later on in my career, I got bullied. I know what that feels like too. I know what it feels like to feel like you're the worst technician in the building and things like that. And I had some not-so-great experiences. And it could, depending on how resilient you are or what kind of person you are, or what's inspiring you to be there... it could make you be like, "Maybe this isn't for me, maybe I'm not cut out for this," and you move on and you pick a new career, you pick a new profession, and then we lose people who are really passionate, who really care, right?

0:22:37.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Well, very cool. So let's get back to talking about the why, because all of that is very important for why, and that's why I wanted to... Every opportunity we have to advance all the roles in vet med, we need to do it because the vets are just little specks in the spectrum of what the vet team does, and we historically have gotten all the credit.

0:23:06.9 Senani Ratnayake: Vets are important too.

0:23:09.5 Katie Berlin: Yes, and... I would have been totally useless without the rest of the team.

0:23:12.1 Senani Ratnayake: Yes, all technicians and support team members everywhere would like vets to remember all the times we've bailed them out of stuff. Just saying.

0:23:21.3 Katie Berlin: Yes, I've had vet techs literally save me. Pick me up by the armpits and pull me out of the way of a biting dog. Thank you, Christina. I remember that. Or the time a vet tech actually grabbed a cat before it scratched my eyeball.

0:23:35.5 Senani Ratnayake: Oh my gosh.

0:23:37.1 Katie Berlin: It actually moved the contact on my eye, it was very dramatic. Anyway, so shout out. Back to finding your why, because you have done workshops with vet teams to talk about what their whys are, and I'm trying to picture a lot of the vet teams that I've known sitting in a room and all talking about their whys. It's powerful and a little scary. It's hard to picture, if that hasn't been something that your team has worked on.

0:24:13.1 Senani Ratnayake: It gives me goosebumps. I'm smiling, and I'm also tearing up a bit. I can literally put myself into several different treatment areas and rooms and reception areas where I've sat in a circle and then just watched magic happen, but it's not easy, it doesn't come naturally to everybody. Normally what I do is I send a letter out to everyone in advance, and I'm going to tell you this because I really do hope that people out there, hopefully someone listening to this appreciates that you can do this with your team if you're a practice owner or manager. We just tell everyone, "Go and find an object or a photo that reminds you of why you first wanted to work with animals, what inspired you to first want to work with animals, but don't tell anyone what it is, and bring it."

And then we just go around the circle and everyone tells their story, and it is always going to be that at first, there's someone that will go, "Okay, I'll go."

0:25:13.8 Katie Berlin: You know who you are...

0:25:16.8 Senani Ratnayake: You know who you are. You're like "All right guys, I got this one for everybody, I'll go first." Some people are really willing to talk about it. Sometimes you have to push them a little. They'll tell a story and you're like, "That's not your real story." "No that's the story I got." And it's like, "That's the story you've got. But I think you're avoiding telling us the real story." And then they'll go quiet and then usually something comes out, right?

There's always going to be someone that's shy, there's always going to be someone that finds it uncomfortable, but we'll joke about it. I'll be like, "I don't want to voluntold anybody, but I will pick

the person who's not making eye contact right now. You know who you are. You can't even look at me now, and I can come and get you.”

Sometimes someone will start crying before it's even been their turn because they're thinking about what they're going to say. And I'll say, “Okay, Katie is going to go and we're all going to face the other way and no one's going to make eye contact with Katie,” and everyone looks at the floor, looks up at the ceiling. And Katie goes and it's like, “I'm not looking at anyone, I'm just telling my story.” It's pretty cool.

What happens in the room is people tell incredible stories. Sometimes they show you photos of when they were little, a family pet, a grandparents farm; they have stories of large animal vets who would come out to the farm, and there was this relationship. “My granddad would chat with the vet. My grandma would make tea, we'd all hang out and... And it looked like such a cool job.”

So there are these incredible stories, but I've also heard such sad and powerful ones - ones of parents who did or didn't want them to get into this profession, parents who passed away before they saw them actually get into the profession. I don't want to share too much of some of the more sensitive stories because people will know I'm telling their story, and I want to keep that private to them. But even now, I feel it in my chest to have heard them. And it's a privilege to be able to hear people's stories like that and have them really dig deep. People have brought stuffed toys, people have brought paw prints of pets that have passed away.

I often start by telling the story about Nibbles and I get into much more detail, of course. It's a really powerful piece, and you start to see literally as people are telling their stories, you start to see walls break down a little bit, people start to see people on the team who maybe they weren't as connected to with a different lens. It humanizes people, it's relationship, it's connection - we work together. Yes, we're a team.

Sure, maybe some people are just groups of people. I would argue they're not working as a team, but that's another podcast. Simon Sinek - people don't care what you do. They care why you do it. Why does each person on the team do what they do? Because frankly, some people show up and they're in it the way I'm in it, and they're so passionate about what they do and they care so deeply, and we see that that impacts every behavior, every action, every word, that why impacts how they do certain things. And then there are other people who genuinely love animals, but they have other priorities, and so their why is different and that also impacts how they choose to do certain things. And so we see it play out, and it's good for us to be able to understand that of each other, right?

0:29:02.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah, absolutely. As you're talking, I'm picturing people that I've worked with that... I wish I had asked them, I wish we had that format where I could have found out why - not only why they're in vet med and why they chose the role they're in, but also why they might do things a certain way that I might have seen as strange or a little bit difficult. There's always a reason. And it just never occurred to me to dig.

0:29:28.7 Senani Ratnayake: And sometimes it's because you're not seeing something they see. And sometimes it's because they don't have as much information as you. So then you can say, "Oh, well, have you ever thought about this? Or “Something I've seen is this, or the reason I do it this way is because this is this is this for me.” And they're like, "Oh, I didn't know that." And so it helps both of you and whether you both decide to continue doing it your strange ways, but now have

better understanding, or whether we find some kind of middle ground or at least a better appreciation for the other person - I think often we can be reactive and especially right now, we are busy, but we're not making time for things that matter.

And these things matter. Where we think, "Oh, we don't have a moment to spare," it is ruining how the rest of the day plays out, the rest of the week plays out, the relationships between us, because we're actually not stopping to prioritize our relationships with people we spend more time with than people at home.

0:30:31.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah. That's a really good point.

0:30:33.3 Senani Ratnayake: So that networking piece, that connection piece is critical to our success. If we're going to be successful as a profession, understanding who people are as people, why they do what they do, why they're here, why do you want to be here? Why are you on this team? Like, that stuff matters, right?

0:30:51.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:30:52.5 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah.

0:30:53.1 Katie Berlin: Have you ever met anybody who did not have a why?

0:30:55.3 Senani Ratnayake: That's a great question. I've met people who think they don't have a why.

0:31:00.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah, good answer.

0:31:03.1 Senani Ratnayake: Because they think their why is supposed to be an animal answer, and they get nervous even as they hear other people, and it's like sad story after happy story after sad story, a childhood pet, a misdiagnosed pet, a cat who drowns in a pool, and now I know better. There are so many stories like that that I've heard, and they don't think they have a why because they don't have a story like that. "Well, I never had pets growing up." Okay, somehow along the way, you still chose this, right?

And even veterinarians, even veterinarians would say, "Yeah, well, I tried to get into med school and then..." Okay, but you still could have defaulted to something else. And you have to kind of push and dig. And there are CSRs who join us, vet assistants who join us, who were looking for a job and love pets. And so they just kind of showed up. "I don't know, I love animals, I guess. I don't know." But your why doesn't have to be animal related. Your why might be your family at home now, and it's okay to do this job so that you can make money to do things for the people around you, to take care of yourself. To get things for yourself, to pay your own bills. That is totally an acceptable thing.

0:32:16.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Okay, one more time for the people in the back. It's okay to want to make money in veterinary medicine.

0:32:24.6 Senani Ratnayake: 100%.

0:32:25.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:32:25.3 Senani Ratnayake: So, let's caveat it. It is okay to want to make money. It is also really important that you show up knowing what your value is.

0:32:36.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:32:37.8 Senani Ratnayake: Like - I am frustrated right now, I see people asking for more and more and more, and it's not that you're not worth it. And I may get hate mail for this one, let's see. It's not that we're not worth it, but it's also like - This is a give and take. Like you're asking someone to invest in you. Why? Are you showing up as your best self now, are you doing the CE, are you treating the people around you well, are you looking for opportunities to mentor the people around you? Make sure you've checked those boxes, because if you can help the business, the hospital, to be successful, that's where the money comes from for us to all get paid more.

We have to work collaboratively together, again, understand each other's whys, bring it to the table, and then elevate the whole thing so that that money is there so that we can re-invest in our people and take care of each other in that way. And that kind of speaks to: the clients also have a why.

0:33:31.1 Katie Berlin: So understanding the...

0:33:33.3 Senani Ratnayake: The client's why. Getting to understand what it is that they want. We try to sell people on our why all the time. I have this perception of value talk I do, and I talk about the why, and I talk about when we try to get someone to spay their cat, and we go over all of these incredible medical reasons, lots of medical reasons why we should spay a cat. But there's nothing like having a conversation with someone and talking about, "So your cat's going to start to have these sort of weird behaviors, this, this and this, they might get a little bitey. In the middle of the night, if you notice a little bit of... "

[vocalization]

0:34:10.7 Senani Ratnayake: It's totally normal.

0:34:11.4 Katie Berlin: Oh my god, that was really good.

0:34:12.4 Senani Ratnayake: Nothing to worry about. You're welcome. Nothing to worry about. That's normal. That will pass. Watch people's faces. Mask or no mask, I promise you, they're like, "So tell me about the spay thing again, what is this? What are we doing?" No one needs this overnight, you know what I mean? Because if you've worked emergency, you get those calls, someone's like, "I think my cat is dying. She's doing this thing right now." And you go through all the check boxes and you're like, "Oh yeah, no, that's... She's fine."

0:34:46.9 Katie Berlin: She is fine.

0:34:48.2 Senani Ratnayake: She's fine, she's feeling so good right now. Overpopulation, of course. We don't want more kittens. I mean like we all want more kittens and puppies, but for all the good reasons, not for the reasons of just we have too many. Yes, fine. But the client's like, "Yeah, but I live in an apartment. She's never going to see any other cats."

0:35:10.5 Katie Berlin: Which is valid.

0:35:12.1 Senani Ratnayake: And it is. My argument goes nowhere. We're making the wrong arguments, it's not the things they care about.

0:35:27.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:35:28.9 Senani Ratnayake: What might they care about, what are their Whys? Because the argument is there, it is the right thing for the pet. But we're selling them on the wrong things. What's their value proposition? That starts with their why. And that's why we need to get to know our pet owners better as well, and it doesn't take long. These are not 30-minute conversations. Right? It's just us being more curious. Everyone should be more curious.

0:35:58.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:36:00.2 Senani Ratnayake: Honestly.

0:36:00.2 Katie Berlin: And as a profession, we are curious people. You don't get into vet med because you want the same old, same old all the time. We had to do so much learning, and even on the job every day, our CSRs may not have had to go to vet or tech school, but they have to learn so much to do that job and constantly be asking questions and finding out more - so that curiosity, I think, is a common denominator amongst most of the professionals I know. Using it to learn more about our clients is a really, really good piece of advice.

0:36:31.8 Senani Ratnayake: You want to help the pet...

0:36:35.4 Katie Berlin: ..you have to help the people.

0:36:36.6 Senani Ratnayake: You have to understand the people, they're the ones that are going to say Yes or No. We can't help the pet unless the person says Yes or No. We have to get over that now. That's our gateway - our gateway to helping the pet. We know all the right things to do and they won't let us do them. We have to work with the client, right? And they have a why. And it's the reason we complain about, "Oh, the kid at the pet store sold them the..." It's because they got right to why.

0:37:00.9 Katie Berlin: Right.

0:37:01.0 Senani Ratnayake: I worked derm referral. We would do workup for hours, days. They come, they do the thing, we put them on a plan, we have like a 12-week plan. And then they come back and say, "So the guy at the pet store said, they have this food, it also has green peas in it. But he saw a German Shepherd with an ear infection just like Casey's, and it cleared right up." And I'm like, "We see ear infections. This wasn't our first ear infection." Apparently, we needed to state as a dermatology referral service, we too have seen German Shepherds that get ear infections in one ear chronically, and we know that this plan will support... But we skipped all of that because we were like, "Well, obviously we're professionals..."

0:37:44.3 Katie Berlin: They must know.

0:37:44.9 Senani Ratnayake: "They must know." And some kid went, "Oh yeah, ear infections. Oh, I've seen it work, this food is magical." And it has green peas, and maybe the one I recommended had green peas too or whatever the ingredient of the whatever is. And all of a sudden, they've made this case and they've made eye contact and listened and heard and sounded so empathetic. And the client after spending all the money with us and believing in us has said, "I just wanted to come back and educate you and tell you there's this magic food out there." And I'm kind of...

0:38:13.7 Katie Berlin: Right. And they bring you a brochure.

0:38:14.6 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah.

0:38:15.8 Katie Berlin: I love it when they bring me brochures.

0:38:16.8 Senani Ratnayake: Right?

0:38:17.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:38:18.2 Senani Ratnayake: And it's like - clearly they did not realize that we did hear them, we had a plan. We didn't tell the story properly.

0:38:24.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that's huge.

0:38:27.5 Senani Ratnayake: And that's where learning to tell that story really came from for me. And I was very lucky, I had good mentors - shout out to Berney Pukay, who can tell a story, if anyone has met him. Instantly, people would fall in love because he would tell a joke, tell a story, make people feel comfortable, and next thing I know, I thought we were way off topic, and it took four minutes, but now everything he's asking them to do, they're like, "Yeah, okay. Sounds like a plan." And so it's one of those things where we're getting to see people as people, appreciating everyone has a why.

One of the things we do, Katie, when we do that exercise, we get a picture from everyone. It's so cool too, especially when older team members like the vets, the technicians... I say older, it's okay. We're all old now.

0:39:18.2 Katie Berlin: Everything's relative.

0:39:18.9 Senani Ratnayake: We start passing around the picture. Yeah, it's like, how old is it? Is it black and white or older? Is it Polaroid old? Well, how old is that? We pass it around and we get to see people as little kids or see parts of people's lives we would never otherwise get to see. We take all of those and we put them up on a board, put it somewhere - not public facing, this isn't for the clients - these are our carrots. This is for when someone yells at you or has a bad day. Then you go to that board, and you remember why you're here. Maybe it's a box of Kraft Dinner, because you promise yourself you'll never be broke again. I don't care what the thing is, right? It's, oh yeah, that's right. Okay, I have to finish this day out and rock it, right? It doesn't matter what it is.

But all of us are here because we're trying to fulfill something inside of us. We are. And it's okay if

it's not an animal-related thing, it doesn't matter. This is just how you've chosen to live out whatever your why is, right?

0:40:20.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Do you think there are teams that are not prepared to do this work? That have pre-work to do before they have these discussions together? Or do you think these discussions *are* the pre-work? Do you think that every team could draw that out of each other at some point during that conversation?

0:40:37.3 Senani Ratnayake: I think that it's a challenging question to answer, because I want to say every team should be able to do this, but I know realistically not all managers and practice owners and team leads are prepared or have that leadership style or skill set yet that lends itself well to facilitating conversation. So I guess some tips would be - because I would love to see everyone try a version of this, if nothing else - I think some tips would definitely be to make sure that no one talks over top of each other, that there are some ground rules for this meeting. When one person is talking, they have the floor, and if they say, "Don't look at me," that's fine, but they still have the floor.

And you have to listen to understand. Not listen to reply - really hear them, and try to really connect with their story, not be giggling. There have been times where in passing around photos, we've fallen into a trap where now so and so's photo has made it to here, but this person's now started, and these two start giggling because they're like, "Oh my God, look at the thing," so we've actually had situations where I was like, "Hey, we need to not pass around the photos yet, we'll do that at the end," because respect is everything in this exercise. Right? Respect is everything...

0:41:51.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Even just perceived disrespect could be a problem.

0:41:56.1 Senani Ratnayake: Exactly.

0:41:56.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:41:56.9 Senani Ratnayake: We're asking people to share a part of themselves, and we have to create safety for that. I would say there are teams where maybe it's not quite safe enough. So yes, maybe there are some hospitals that aren't quite ready for this. But the flip side is, this might be one of the things that allows us to break down some barriers.

So it needs to be something we understand the value of, but we take it really seriously. This isn't something you cram into a half an hour, that ends up being 20 minutes, or an hour that ends up being 45 minutes between phone calls, and people leave at different times, and we go answer the door and sell a bag of food. This is not that kind of exercise. This is phones off, no one's at the door, everyone is here, we do not exclude anybody. The Saturday evening kennel person does this too.

0:42:49.8 Katie Berlin: Love that.

0:42:51.6 Senani Ratnayake: This is everybody, because we respect everybody, and it takes all of us. It takes all of us to do it, and then the leader has to facilitate this one - who's going to go next, oh my gosh, and encourage each other. And have the box of tissues...

0:43:06.1 Katie Berlin: Oh my gosh, the tissues are so important...

0:43:08.9 Senani Ratnayake: Have the tissues ready.

0:43:09.9 Katie Berlin: Yes, sometimes it's the people you don't even think would ever cry, right? Because being deep in here...

0:43:15.0 Senani Ratnayake: The ones that make me like this, it's people who I did not expect to have this like crazy... some of the stories I've heard are intense. And they start talking and you feel it in the room. Everyone goes, wait, what?

But some of them are funny. We cry till we laugh, and laugh till we cry, honestly. And I remember once, this is an okay story to tell, I think - I remember someone saying, "So this is my dog, Maggie." And instantly, everyone in the room, I'm choosing a different name on purpose, but everyone in the room went, "Now it makes so much sense." And everyone's laughing, and I'm completely missing it.. I was like, What's the joke? Like, what's wrong with the name Maggie? Well, all the passwords on the computers are like Maggie247...

[laughter]

0:44:04.7 Katie Berlin: And no one ever knew why...

0:44:04.8 Senani Ratnayake: No one knew who Maggie was... But even just little things, right? Like people saying, this is my childhood dog, and all of a sudden everyone going, that's why you like Cockers so much. It's making those little connections, just understanding each other.

So it is something that I truly believe in from a culture perspective. I've done this with a team where there were people on it who had worked together for 20 years, and still managed to tell stories the other people in the room had not heard.

0:44:36.8 Katie Berlin: Oh, that's amazing.

0:44:37.1 Senani Ratnayake: And that's quite powerful. Yeah.

0:44:39.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah, yeah, we do get stuck talking to people that we see every day about the same things over and over.

0:44:45.4 Senani Ratnayake: For sure.

0:44:45.6 Katie Berlin: And not ever digging in. And then it can feel awkward to ask a personal question.

0:44:51.7 Senani Ratnayake: Yes.

0:44:51.8 Katie Berlin: Having a context where it's expected to share personal information is really powerful.

0:44:56.3 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, we are carving out the time to do it.

0:44:58.6 Katie Berlin: Yes.

0:45:00.4 Senani Ratnayake: But leaders have to show that this is something that they are committed to and believe is important. If they don't start with that and lead by example, then no one else will be bought in. It's like, "Oh great, now you're making us do this thing," and that's not good.

0:45:14.3 Katie Berlin: And that could be leaders of the practice, like a practice owner or manager, but also probably those team members who are always seen as leaders, there's always the...

0:45:23.7 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, great point.

0:45:24.3 Katie Berlin: ...the ones who when they say yes to something, the tide turns.

0:45:29.2 Senani Ratnayake: They're influencers.

0:45:30.5 Katie Berlin: Exactly. That's the word. And it may not be in the new TikTok sense...

0:45:36.4 Senani Ratnayake: I hear it's a trendy word now.

0:45:37.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, yeah.

0:45:37.8 Senani Ratnayake: The OG influencers...

0:45:40.2 Katie Berlin: Yes, the OG influencers who just... You know who they are in your clinic, it's like if they adopt something, the team is going to come around, even if there's resistance at the beginning. And having them involved in this, I think, can be so helpful, especially if maybe it's a little bit of a discussion before the meeting happens...

0:46:01.4 Senani Ratnayake: It's buy-in, right? It's buy-in.

0:46:02.5 Katie Berlin: Yeah, exactly.

0:46:04.5 Senani Ratnayake: I mean, I think this is the thing though. This isn't something you push on the team. Even with this, you start with why. "Hey guys, do you want to try this thing that we've heard that is supposed to make us better as a team? It might be kind of fun. We'll do it together, everyone's got to pitch in on this one, but let's see, it could be something different. It's not a lunch and learn, we're not going to talk about protocols or COVID or curbside or any of...whatever, we're going to do something a little different. Do you guys want to try it? Should we try it? Let's just see. Maybe it helps us get better. What's the worst that could happen? Let's all just commit."

They need to want it also, and we need to make sure we're explaining why we think this is so important. Starting with why on this one is very important. "I'm not doing this for me, I'm doing this for us. I want everyone else to do this for us too." And telling them flat out, there's going to be ground rules for this one. We want you guys to really be your most authentic self, and that might be a little bit scary even with people you've worked with for years, because we don't talk about that stuff. To your point, it's not, "Hey, we got a 15-minute break." Maybe that's like three minutes in the end. It's not like I'm like, "So, tell me about that time you were five." That's not what happens.

0:47:21.1 Katie Berlin: Right. You're not on a couch here, like let's all figure this out...

0:47:24.9 Senani Ratnayake: I've literally had someone that brought - I don't think she'll mind me saying this - the painting that hung above her grandparent's couch, I think it was, of their original dairy farm... Like legit brought it in, frame and all. I have seen cool things, and it's incredible, because I say be creative, I say bring your most authentic thing, but I don't really give them much more direction than that.

I remember someone brought their dog and on their dog, they put little slips of paper, and was the names of I think all the other dogs that she'd ever had. This is one of those things where there are no rules, you can be loose with the rules. Some people are like, "Well, I don't have just one thing, I have three." Okay, fine. Right? "Well, have one thing from before, but I have a new thing now." Great. Cool.

0:48:22.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:48:23.5 Senani Ratnayake: Great, I don't care.

0:48:24.1 Katie Berlin: You're always changing, ever evolving...

0:48:26.4 Senani Ratnayake: Right? Because I think we do all have that original why, Nibbles is my original why. But that girl, I'll show you... I'm gonna show you a picture, I've got it here for you, Katie.

0:48:36.2 Katie Berlin: Okay. So anyone who's listening and not watching, you should tune into YouTube just to see it.

0:48:41.3 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, tune in to YouTube, share the picture...

0:48:42.5 Katie Berlin: Oh my gosh.

0:48:44.4 Senani Ratnayake: But, let's see...

0:48:45.2 Katie Berlin: Can you just...

0:48:46.1 Senani Ratnayake: Can you see that, guys?

0:48:48.3 Katie Berlin: Oh, it looks so cute.

0:48:51.4 Senani Ratnayake: So that's Nibbles, and that girl, that girl... Right?

0:48:53.2 Katie Berlin: This is... It's a very cute picture of a young Senani.

0:48:56.6 Senani Ratnayake: Young me.

0:48:57.5 Katie Berlin: Even younger than now...

0:48:58.7 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, young...

0:49:00.7 Katie Berlin: With Nibbles.

0:49:01.2 Senani Ratnayake: With Nibbles. But Nibbles was her why, And then she became a technician, but I'm not that girl anymore. For better or worse, I'm not that girl anymore. So yeah, my why has evolved, because I have evolved as a person, right?

And now my why, ironically, is more the people... It's you guys, right? Legit, it is actually the people in this profession now, and how can I influence better animal care and health care and well-being and all of those things. My why is different now, but my original is still that bunny, right?

0:49:37.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah, it all goes back to the bunny...

0:49:38.6 Senani Ratnayake: Sure, goes back to the bunny.

0:49:40.6 Katie Berlin: It all goes back to whatever is in our past that is the bunny, yeah.

0:49:44.8 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah.

0:49:45.7 Katie Berlin: So, I'm... We'll let you go here in a second, but I wanted to ask you something, because I think it's really important. When we go to these conferences, I think everybody has this experience, you go to the conference and you learn all these cool things, and you hear all these inspiring people talk, and you come back to your practice and you're like, "Guess what I learned??" and then you have this whole list of things that you want to do immediately, and your manager or your practice owner or whoever all the words are fountaining out to is like, "Okay, cool, but no though," because money or time or resources, or they don't agree with it, or they don't understand the value in it.

And that's natural because we're all really stretched thin, and we all have so many things on our plates. So if you weren't there hearing the inspiring speaker yourself, maybe you don't see the value in implementing any of those changes or talking about them further. So somebody who's in that position, who hears this podcast and says, I love what she's talking about, I want to do this at my practice, but for whatever reason, they don't think it's going to happen in the way you're describing, a meeting where the world is shut down and everybody shares... Is there a way that that person in whatever role they're in in the practice, can kind of push a little pebble down the mountain to see if it'll start more of a landslide, and maybe start a why movement?

0:51:12.6 Senani Ratnayake: Start a why movement? Want to do that?

0:51:14.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I think you are doing that. I think that's what we're doing.

0:51:20.2 Senani Ratnayake: It has begun. I have been that team member that's like, I have an idea...

0:51:25.7 Katie Berlin: Same. Yeah.

0:51:26.7 Senani Ratnayake: Yeah, well, and we've bonded over this before, right? I have an idea.

I know this is something that will be powerful. And then we get told no. I think the most basic starting point is, figure out what your why is. Really sit down with yourself, write a letter to yourself, remind yourself, this was my thing. And here I am now, and how does what I do now fulfill my obligation to that original thing? Because that's my test for everything. Would Nibbles be proud of me?

0:52:01.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, aww!

0:52:02.4 Senani Ratnayake: Would that girl, that girl in the picture, be like, "Oh, you did it!" Or is like, "Come on, sucker let's go. What you got now?" It is that kind of thing where we have to always be thinking about first understanding our own why, so if you haven't done that activity for yourself, do it for yourself, write a note to yourself, list it out. If you're not a journal person, you don't have to journal, but you can just sit and think about it, you can talk to someone else about it. Even if it's someone outside of our profession, a friend, or someone like that. Just to say, "So I heard this thing. I listened to this awesome podcast with Katie from AAHA. And it made me think about this, and I've been thinking about it, and this is what I've come to the conclusion of. And I'm excited about it."

Just verbalizing it sometimes can make us more powerful, make us more resilient, gives us a reminder, it's that kick in the pants. Sharing it with people on the team. The nice thing about this is, if you're listening to this now, you haven't gone to a conference. This is something anyone can listen to from anywhere at any time, so maybe share it with a few people on the team to say, "Okay, I'm starting my own why movement. I want you guys to listen to this and get a sense of if you think this is something we could do. We could do it by department." I wouldn't suggest doing it only by department and then leaving it there forever, but there are some hospitals with big teams. If you've got 12 RVTs, first of all, congratulations. Second of all...

0:53:26.0 Katie Berlin: Shout out, Shiloh Veterinary Hospital, I believe has over 12 CVTs.

0:53:30.4 Senani Ratnayake: So if you've got all kinds of technicians, awesome. If you have a really incredible vet team and there's multiple vets, awesome. You could do it with just that group first to connect yourselves, and maybe through that experience, everyone says, "Actually that was really... that was quite powerful. We need to let other people in on it."

It loses the surprise element a little bit, because now that smaller group has heard the whys here, and now we're going to repeat it. There's some power in that first time, there's some power in the first time we say it out loud in front of other people. Honestly, when I tell that Nibble story authentically with a team, I often end up in tears. There are many people who have seen me cry because they know my heart is firmly on my sleeve, and I'm not good at talking about this stuff without getting a little verklempt, right?

0:54:17.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:54:19.3 Senani Ratnayake: But there's power in that. And so doing it by department, you lose a little bit of that power, but sharing it with the leadership and remembering again, what is your leadership's why? As you mentioned before, is it money? Is it that they don't want to close down? Those are the things you need to combat, by not just saying, "This is a great idea, I think our culture needs it. I think our team could work better." If they believe the culture needs fixing that badly, the

team needs to be better than badly, then this would be a priority, but if that doesn't resonate for them as far as what are the priorities, then they won't make it a priority.

So what is that person's priority, what is their why? If we can make the argument for, if we can do this for an hour, everyone is willing to stay an hour late and get paid for the hour, we think everyone will be more productive. They'll work better together, we'll actually generate more revenue, because we'll be less squabbly. We'll maybe understand the concept better, we'll listen to our clients better, they'll be more compliant.

I can 100% make a case for how this will improve revenue, this will improve profitability, the stronger the team, the better the business, there's no argument for me that doesn't land there, right? We have a strong team that works well together that is all rowing in the same direction, all with different whys, all in different hows, but we're focused on those goals. We make magic every time, pets benefit, every time, pet owners benefit every time, business, the money, it comes.

That's how the money comes, I believe that. But without the people, we have nothing. I 100% believe that. So yeah, if your practice owner, manager, whomever, is focused on finance, then you have to make the finance case for why this matters. If they're focused on there's not enough time, if you have enough people on your team that's like, "No, I'd do it, I'd take that hour because I think it's important," cool.

If it's that important to us, are we willing to do it for that hour, because you should be. I'm not saying you shouldn't get paid for your work, you should always get paid for your work.

0:56:35.5 Katie Berlin: Yeah, and I think we've all worked for that person who... You have to explain to them in terms of the bottom line. You can't quantify it, you can't say, "We're going to make this much more money if we do this." But it stands to reason that a happier team, a team that understands each other better, a team that works better in sync, and as you say, isn't just a group of people, but is a team that is more like gears helping each other out and pushing each other forward and lifting each other up, how can that not be more successful?

I love that answer so much. Start with yourself and see if you can get it to catch on just a little bit, but in order to get anything to catch on, including a business, a brand, you have to understand the why of the people you're talking to, so that's super powerful.

0:57:28.1 Senani Ratnayake: So you can find your carrot.

0:57:30.9 Katie Berlin: Really, I think this is something that can catch on in any practice, and I've seen it catch on in practices I've been in, where we've had really skeptical people, and start just starting the conversation, even just nudge with a nudge towards, maybe this is something we could do one day, can make a really big difference. No matter what your role is, you just have to believe that your voice is important and can start that. Senani, thank you.

0:57:55.1 Senani Ratnayake: Oh my gosh, this has been so much fun.

0:57:56.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I mean, you're amazing and you have such a wonderful way of turning everything into a story, which I just love, but you get exposed to a lot of different stories. And I think that's something that I think I alluded to in the trailer for this podcast, that one of the

things that will move this profession forward is remembering that we each have a story and trying to use that to work together instead of to separate us. I really, truly believe that, which is why I wanted to talk to you so badly. I understand this is your first podcast!

0:58:28.2 Senani Ratnayake: This is my first podcast.

0:58:30.2 Katie Berlin: So this is the first time that you all - or anybody! - is getting to hear or see Senani on a podcast, and I'm very honored that we get to be your number one.

0:58:39.1 Senani Ratnayake: Oh, I was very excited. Very excited to be asked here, thank you.

0:58:42.0 Katie Berlin: Thank you so much. And one last thing.

0:58:45.2 Senani Ratnayake: Okay.

0:58:45.4 Katie Berlin: Before we go, where can people find you if they want your help, or if they want to learn more about what you're doing?

0:58:49.7 Senani Ratnayake: Okay, so great question. Like I said before, Motivatum Consulting is my consulting company, that's where I do all of my speaking engagements and things like that. I don't privately consult for hospitals anymore, because I have this cool job with Vet Alliance Global Vet. So if you're in Canada and you would like to work with me and my awesome, shout out to all of them, team, then become a Vet Alliance member, and absolutely reach out to me and we can talk about it. I'm definitely not here to sell that, I would like to have that conversation for sure. But yes, then you would have access to all of us, and the support that we can provide, which is super cool.

Otherwise, definitely, if you want to follow and see where I'm speaking, and what I'm doing and things like that, then you can follow my Facebook page for Motivatum Consulting. It's not super active, because I still try to figure out the social media thing. I won't lie, I am a little bit old school I guess, but...

0:59:44.2 Katie Berlin: It is what it is. You can use it in different ways.

0:59:45.4 Senani Ratnayake: It is what it is, yeah, but at least I'll always post where I'm going to be and stuff like that. It is really cool for me to know that there are some people that have been inspired by me, and it's still quite humbling. Even when you reached out about this, it's really humbling. Please, please don't hesitate to reach out.

1:00:15.6 Katie Berlin: So that would be wonderful. We'll put all that in the show notes for this episode.

1:00:18.5 Senani Ratnayake: 100%.

1:00:21.4 Katie Berlin: And of course, you can always reach us too, if you want us to connect you to one of our guests, our email address is always in the show notes.

1:00:30.2 Senani Ratnayake: I don't do the consulting anymore, but doing the private consulting for hospitals, but doing the workshops, running workshops, doing the speaking stuff, I'm here for it,

like I love it.

1:00:46.1 Katie Berlin: Awesome, Senani, thank you.

1:00:49.8 Senani Ratnayake: Thank you. I'm so glad we got to do this.

1:00:51.4 Katie Berlin: Me too. And hopefully this live recording works out and you're all seeing us in the same room.

1:00:56.3 Senani Ratnayake: Literally in the same room.

1:00:57.7 Katie Berlin: Yup. This has been super fun. And everybody go check out what Senani is doing, because... you're making waves.

1:01:06.4 Senani Ratnayake: Oh, thank you. Verklempt.

1:01:10.8 Katie Berlin: Alright, thank you so much for joining us on central line, and we'll catch you next time.

1:01:15.5 Senani Ratnayake: Bye guys.