



**BLUEPEARL CASE STUDY:**  
Putting Their  
Best Paw Forward



## A MULTI-CLINIC VET PRACTICE ADDRESSES RETENTION THROUGH CAREER LEVELLING

Veterinary technicians are an essential part of veterinary practice, often playing multiple roles—assisting with anesthesia, surgery, dentistry, and much more. Therefore, this demanding role requires a broad skill set. Although most vet techs have an associate’s degree (typically a two-year program) it often takes years to mature into a confident, multi-faceted vet tech. Unfortunately, the role typically has a huge turnover rate—on average, vet techs stay in the role for only six years before leaving the field.

For a company like BluePearl, one of the largest specialty and emergency veterinary practices in the U.S. today, retention remains a priority concern across its more than 100 hospitals in 29 states. In order to meet the demand of more than 1.1 million pets and their families who use their service each year, they need more than 1600 vet techs. And with 16 services offered—including surgery, critical care, cardiology, neurology, oncology, and more—the care provider has a huge need for highly specialized, experienced vet techs.



Faced with a shortage of qualified vet techs, the team dug into root causes of high turnover across the industry: low wages, high student debt, unclear career pathing, and burnout. In order to address the issues associated with this fast-paced, high-stress, and traditionally low-paying field, BluePearl knew they needed more than just budget—they needed a structured and scalable solution.

In response, Bluepearl launched CareerTrax in September 2021, a skill-based levelling program. The program prioritizes career transparency and trackability—key features BluePearl identified in their aim of training and retaining skilled employees. “CareerTrax is a complete game changer to how we approach on-the-job training and career pathing as an industry,” says Steve Baker, Director of Training and Nursing Care. Historically, veterinary medicine has relied on paper checklists, caseload exposure, and top-down initiatives to dictate and guide the training initiatives for their teams.

“We wanted to design a customized program to influence the culture of learning and training,” says Steve. “CareerTrax allowed us to flip that approach by providing our associates a transparent roadmap and set of expectations from a skills development and career pathing perspective.”

The CareerTrax program is built on the Xapify platform and is designed as an interactive, levelling system with each verified skill-building towards the next level (and corresponding pay increase). Of the 16 specialty services offered, each one has 8 different levels for vet techs to progress through.



## THE BENEFITS OF A SKILLS-BASED CAREER LEVELLING PROGRAM

**Creating structure.** In order to build enthusiasm and encourage employee participation, BluePearl opted for a biannual levelling-up process. Twice a year, employees can submit their checklist and sit for an exam if needed. From October 17-24, 2021, BluePearl is celebrating their second 'Next Level' event across the organization to recognize vet techs who are advancing within their career journey using the CareerTrax program. "Much of our job is messy, and this is one aspect of our roles that is no longer messy—it's precise," says Laura Champagne, a BluePearl Surgery and Anesthesia Veterinary Technician. "It's clear what needs to be done, and it gives us time back to focus on our skills and the patients."

**Streamlining the system.** In BluePearl's old paper-based system, checklists were everywhere—the bottom of lockers, on the floors of cars, on countertops around the hospital (covered in unknown fluids of every color). Compiling the information from these checklists was also no easy matter.

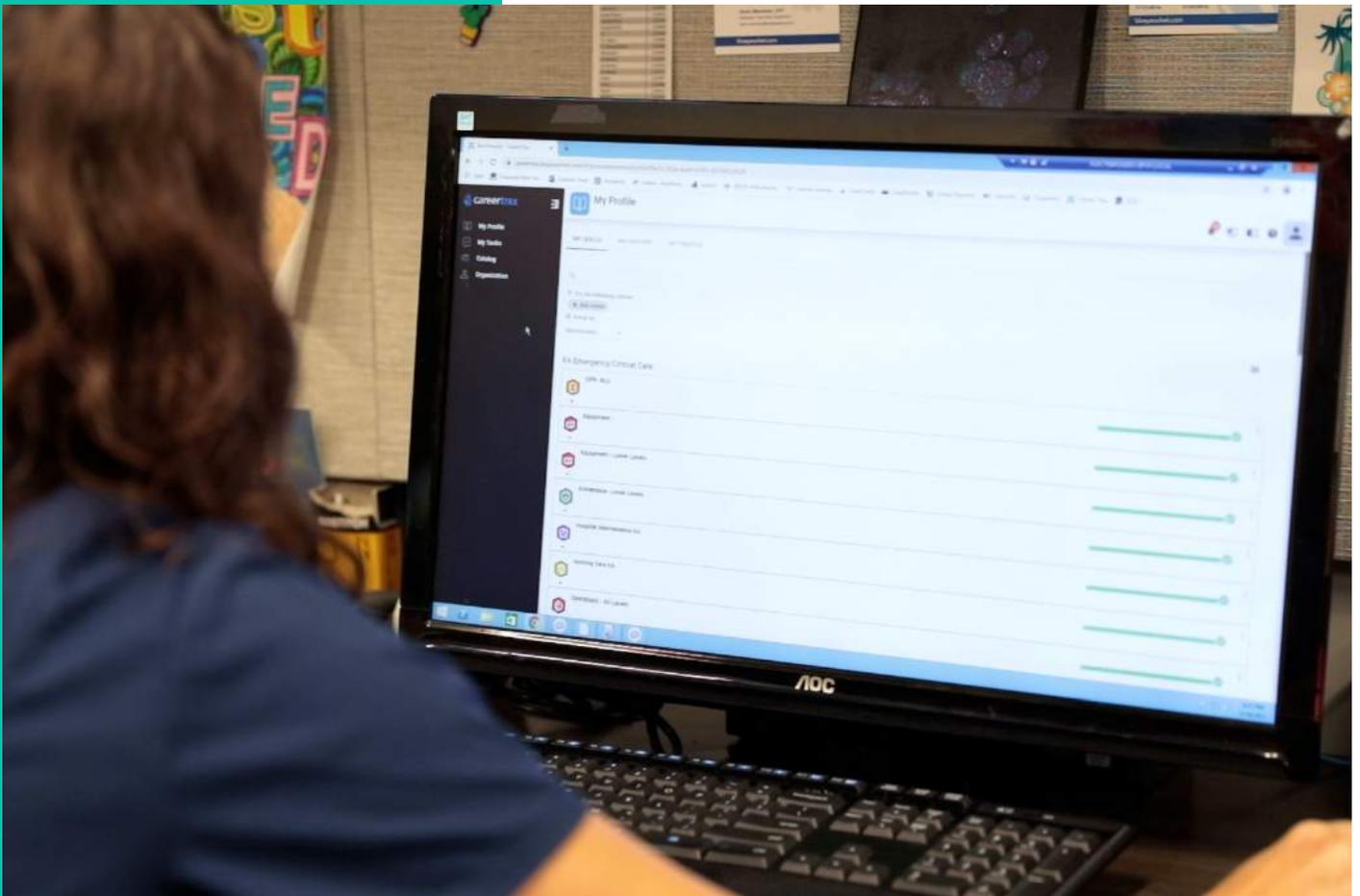
"I would have to collect checklists, transfer data to my own spreadsheet, then hope the checklists made it back to me somehow after the next skills were verified," reports Heather Riggs, BluePearl Regional Training Partner. "I also had no way to know exactly who had signed off on skills (unless I recognized scribbled initials), there was no feedback recorded, and many checklists were submitted with only a checkmark and no proof that anyone had actually verified the skill." The digital system solves all these problems in one solution.



**Onboarding new hires.** Since CareerTrax launched, each new associate is automatically enrolled into the Xapify system and assigned an appropriate level within their specialty. Depending on prior schooling and experience, some skills may be signed off immediately to give an accurate reflection of an individual's skills.

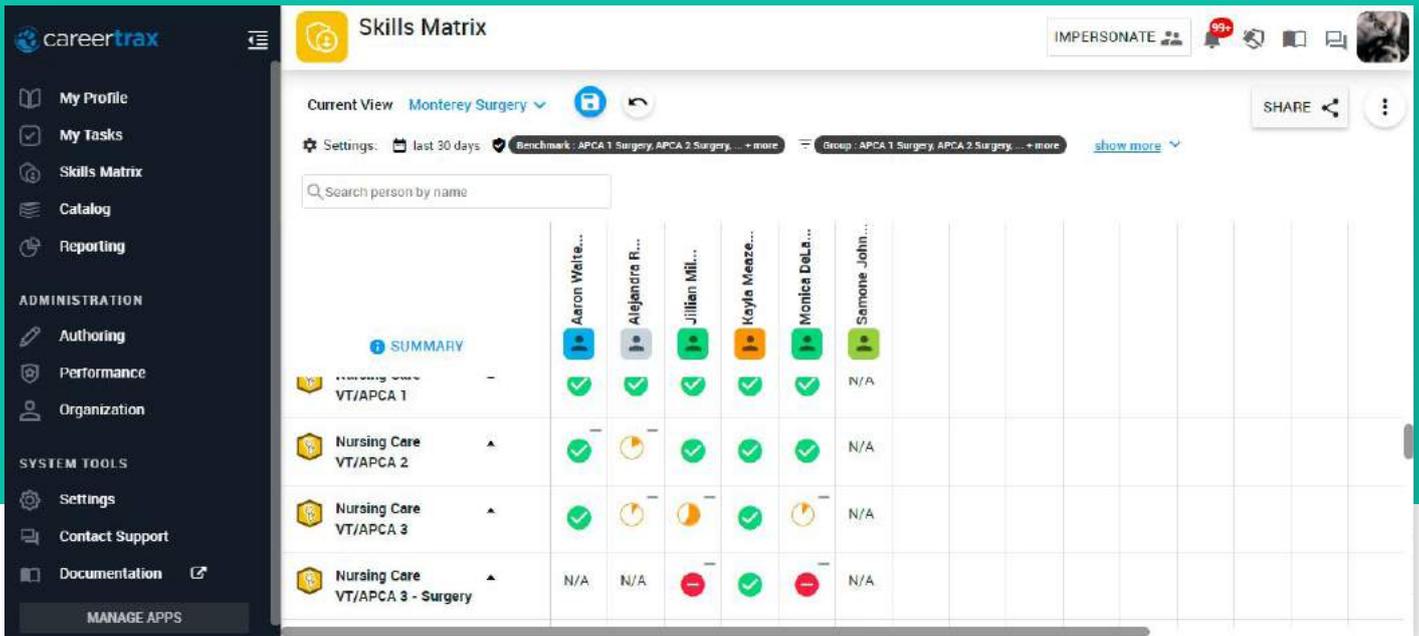
For both new hires and existing employees, supervisors can assign "buckets" of skills. Each list is tied to a vet tech's specialty and title, providing transparency about what is required to progress to the next level.

**Empowering employees.** To give vet techs power in their career progress, vet tech can request a skills verification from any computer or mobile device, thereby pushing ahead progress and getting closer to the next skill level (and corresponding pay upgrade). For example, they can prove their ability to place a peripheral catheter by selecting a skill and sending it to an MD or nurse working with them. The verifier then receives an email with a link to easily confirm the tech's mastery of the skill. As the skill gets checked off, the vet tech moves one step closer to the next level.



## WHY XAPIFY?

When considering software options to build their program on, BluePearl looked at several options. Ultimately, they choose Xapify because of their competitive pricing and their willingness to partner on a customized solution. With an existing solid base to build upon, the two companies collaborated closely to build a unique program to overhaul BluePearl's culture of learning and training. Behind the scenes, BluePearl's HRIS system talks to Xapify, which allows seamless integration.



**Getting actionable data.** Behind the scenes, CareerTrax allows Bluepearl managers to see a snapshot of each clinic’s success and opportunities. In the first month alone, managers saw associates sign off 7000 clinical skills per week.

Accurate, real-time data allows the BluePearl team to explore:

- What sets high-performing teams apart?
- Are they missing key experienced people to drive training?
- Which individuals or teams require more support?

The skills matrix portion of BluePearl’s solution creates an easy way to see any individual’s whole skillset at a glance. Setting various filters allows management to see how techs’ skills are evolving and growing over time. When comparing employee skills, for example, they are able to cross-reference skill levels with patient outcomes.

“If we’re about to place a central line or a urinary catheter in a patient, we can look at who is working that day and needs to be signed off on that skill,” reports Laura. “It’s a great push for people who want to train and level up.” It also allows visiting veterinarians to see who is on their team and identify any gaps.



**Transparency.** BluePearl wanted a program which was transparent on every level, from the learner all the way up to the CEO. “Having this level of transparency is relatively new to our industry,” says Steve, “but from a culture of learning and training perspective it is absolutely essential.” By using the data that CareerTrax provides, management can assess which hospitals are being successful at growing their associates and, most importantly, who is driving that culture and how. According to Steve, “The best practices and benchmarking capabilities that will come from this will be industry-changing.”



### **Building company culture.**

Change is hard. That's why BluePearl is putting the focus on nurturing employee pride in medical skills and patient safety. By shifting the focus from "Why do I have to go through additional exams?" to "I get to prove my skills and receive compensation accordingly!", BluePearl is encouraging professional growth across their many teams.

Through their industry-leading CareerTrax program, BluePearl created a direct and organized path to advance the education and careers of their vet techs. The key? Giving techs full transparency into requirements for each role, level, and specialty

and putting the power to advance within their own hands. "Many people in the veterinary medicine industry are feeling burnt out and some feel they are underpaid and undervalued by their management or administration," says Laura, the vet tech mentioned earlier. "By implementing CareerTrax we know that BluePearl management is taking it seriously. They want us to level up and advance in our careers and skillsets—and it's tied to a raise and a job title change which makes it particularly motivating."

BluePearl's partnership with Xapify gave them the structured, scalable solution required. By tracking skills development and offering career advancement, BluePearl hopes to recognize, reward, and retain talent within their organization—and maybe change the vet tech retention paradigm once and for all.

Our clients are tackling the skills shortage, improving job satisfaction, and reducing costs using Xapify. Our team are specialists in developing and verifying the skills and competencies of frontline workers, get in touch and we can customize a demo of our platform to show how;

- Digitizing your skills and competency framework will drive efficiency, cost savings and give time.
- Real-time reporting provides a comprehensive view of the skills and competencies of your frontline workforce 24/7.
- Xapimed can be customized to your requirements. It's a complete training, development, engagement, and retention tool built for frontline workers.

At the end of the demo, we will set you up with a free Xapify account for you to try with your team. <https://xapify.com/schedule-a-demo/>