

0:00:00.1 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line. For this week's episode, we have a special treat. We've joined forces with My Veterinary Life, the AVMA's wonderful podcast, hosted by Dr. Marci Kirk and Annie Chavent. And we thought it would be fun to get together virtually and just have a chat about some of the things that we get questions about all the time. Like how we got to be sitting in front of these microphones talking to you, what the heck we do all day at our jobs besides podcasting and what it's like to the event working, not in a vet hospital every day. I get that question a lot. How do I get a job like that? So we thought we dive into that a little bit, and we hope you enjoyed this one, I would love to hear your feedback. Please send me an email at podcast@aaha.org and let me know if you'd like to hear more like this or if there's something else you'd like to hear more of, I'm always open to your feedback, and I really appreciate it when people reach out, so please do send me a message and let me know what you think.

0:00:57.4 Katie Berlin: And if you're not a listener of My Veterinary Life already, please head over there, you can find them on all major podcast platforms too, and give their show a listen.

0:01:06.1 Marci Kirk: Alright, welcome to this exciting episode. We are doing a podcasters unite sort of crossover episode with My Veterinary Life Podcasts and Central Line. We'll do the proper introductions, but I'll start. I'm Dr. Marci Kirk, I'm one of the co-hosts of My Veterinary Life podcast, and we're joined by our other co-host, Dr. Annie Chavent.

0:01:25.7 Annie Chavent: Hello, everybody. My pronouns are she/her/hers. And I am super excited to be here with you all today.

0:01:30.2 Marci Kirk: Joining us also Dr. Katie Berlin.

0:01:33.9 Katie Berlin: Hi, I'm Katie Berlin, I'm the host of AAHA Central Line Podcast, and my pronouns are she/her/hers. And I'm super excited to do this collaborative episode. Very excited.

0:01:45.0 Marci Kirk: Yeah. We had a whole brain storming session, and there are so many ways that we could collaborate, and I think we'll probably get to many of them, but we thought... And Katie this was your suggestion. There's always a lot of questions about non-clinical careers and how we... What it's like, what the day-to-day is like, how we got there and everyone... What we're finding when we talk to people, everyone's stories different. Katie's been a guest on the show before, and I know we've talked about this, but we thought it might be just a good idea to just kind of re-surface this conversation in this discussion. We're just gonna talk about that. We're just gonna talk about what options are available, how we got to where we are, how we're navigating all of this. Katie, do you wanna start. But maybe first start with what you did in clinical medicine and how the first bits of transition looked like.

0:02:36.3 Katie Berlin: Sure. I was a general practitioner, I have an acupuncture certification as well that I got later in my practice career, and I am an '09 Cornell grad, and actually it was my second career. I worked for a couple of years in the art museum world before going to that school, so I was one of those kids that wanted to be a vet and then certain things happened that got me kind of disillusioned with the idea so I went to get my liberal arts degree and really fell in love with art, but the museum world was not for me. I'm definitely a person who likes to use both sides of my brain, that med was definitely something I could see not getting bored with. And feeling challenged forever, which I wasn't seeing in my art museum job. I worked for 12 years in general practice. I worked in both corporate and privately owned practices, had a variety of work experiences. There

were times that I loved it, I loved parts of it all the time, but I'm a person who likes a little bit of routine. And I like to know what's coming.

0:03:41.8 Katie Berlin: I'm not definitely an adrenaline junkie who lives for the next emergency to walk in, and I just didn't feel like it was ever something I got up in the morning, was super jazz to go do. I wasn't one of those people who's working extra shifts just because. I burned out quickly. And then, discovered a whole community of people who also felt stressed out sometimes by practice and talked about it, and also maybe you had other things in their lives that they liked just as much as being of vet or more so. And so, I really connected with them on social media. I joined the Uncharted Veterinary Community, which is Andy Roark community and conference, and I met some amazing people that way. But the real thing that opened the door for me for other stuff was I wrote this blog post. One day I just sat down and wrote it. I had gotten hurt and I had to take a little bit of time off and then go back part-time and I realized how much I loved other things, and that it was actually okay. It's like work to live and not live to work as a vet, even though people were always calling it your calling and all this stuff.

0:04:53.3 Katie Berlin: And so, I wrote this blog post about that and I send it to drandyroark.com, this is before I ever met any of them. And they published it, and so it came on social media and I was excited, and that introduced me to Andy and to a whole bunch of other writers that write in the vet space. And the editor at that time was Jessica Vogelsang, who she was working for Andy Roark as his editor and picking what went up on his sight, and she is now my boss at AAHA, and we just stayed in touch that whole time. So that's the intro version of how I ended up working at AAHA and not in a Vet Hospital. [laughter]

0:05:31.6 Marci Kirk: I think that's awesome. Just trying something new and putting it out there and seeing if it fits you too. I mean, that's also important, 'cause sometimes... I know how you guys feel. Sometimes the grass always seem greener on the other side, and that might not always be the case, so I appreciate you sharing that.

0:05:51.4 Katie Berlin: For sure. And there are certain things that I miss a lot about practice. Right now, I could pick up a relief shift and I probably will start to do that now that I'm settled, but I miss the schedule, the regular schedule. Even though I like routine, it doesn't necessarily have to be like a 8:00-5:00 routine. [chuckle] And I miss having my week day off and being able to go to the gym at 10 o'clock on a Monday morning, because I don't start until noon, I miss stuff like that. Now I work in the same office schedule as a lot of other people in an office, but I work more hours now than I ever did as of that, except for maybe my first couple of years out, and I'm so much happier.

0:06:34.0 Marci Kirk: I missed the patients in the client interactions, and maybe we'll go around and talk about how we found our jobs and what that transition looks like and then we'll talk about what our days look like. That's the most... I don't know about you guys. The most common question, what do you do? What do you do all day?

[laughter]

0:06:49.2 Marci Kirk: I don't know. Explain that. Annie, how did you find your job? And what did the transition to AVMA look like for you?

0:07:01.5 Annie Chavent: Yeah, yeah. So prior to AVMA, I have mentioned on the podcast

before, so I was an equine private practice. I did an equine sports medicine focus internship in Virginia for a year, and then came up to Maryland and joined a single doctor practice, so first associate in a single doctor practice for three years. And I'm with you, Katie, there are parts that I loved. I loved practicing medicine, I love the clients, I loved the patients. Don't even get me started about horses, I'll just take up the entire podcast. Also, and I liked the flow and dynamic of practice too, like getting in your truck and being out in the elements and the physical nature of equine practice. But there were a couple of things that made me start looking for other opportunities. Not necessarily the one that I'm in, that one... We'll get to that part of the story, but there were things...

0:07:58.0 Annie Chavent: So one of the things that I was having a hard time with was I was missing the people of veterinary medicine, I would say, and I couldn't put my finger on it for a while, but being in the truck all day with just my tech or a tech and maybe one student. I missed collaborating with other veterinarians and I missed vet students and that mentoring relationship and just like the energy that you get when you meet somebody else who's really excited about something else in Vet Med. And so I knew I had that from my internship where there were multiple doctors in the practice and we were... We had a clinic and we were collaborating all the time. And so there was that. And then, to be perfectly transparent the on-call in a small ambulatory practice was difficult for me long-term. I would say it was amazing short-term in terms of being a new doctor and getting that experience and getting out there and proving yourself, proving yourself to yourself that you can handle these emergencies and that kind of thing.

0:08:55.5 Annie Chavent: But then when I look down the road of 20 or 25 years from now, is that gonna be sustainable for me at this current rate? And so, when I had some hesitations about that and then plus missing the people, I had some ideas about what I wanted to do. I looked into doing the AVP certification, so taking a deep dive into practice because I love school, I really do. One of those people that like, "Would you go back to that school?" "Absolutely. I totally would."

0:09:26.1 Marci Kirk: Same. Same.

[laughter]

0:09:27.2 Annie Chavent: Excellent. Yeah. So, I get some of additional training, potentially go back into academia, maybe do an equine primary care rotation or something like that, or go take a look at a position at a bigger practice. One that has an internship program where I could be a mentor vet there and then get that collaboration with other vets, other specialists. I called up a mentor who had some experience in both of those worlds, and she listened to me, tease it all out and was very kind and offered that year, but then at the end of the conversation, she also throughout that this AVMA student initiative job happens to be open and also that she thought that it would be a really good fit for me. And I do really like demise, both parts of that because one, it was the awareness of the position, but then also it was the fact that she could put her opinion out there too, and said that she thought that I would be a good fit. It wasn't just slide the paper across the desk, here's this option, it was, "Here's this option, and a vote of confidence for you being good at it."

0:10:33.4 Annie Chavent: And so, I took a look at that, sat on it for a little while, talk to my friends and support network and family about the decision, because I honestly, I'd never imagined myself not in practice, and so that... It was hard to wrap my head around. You can't see is on the podcast, but both Marci and Katie are nodding.

[laughter]

0:10:52.0 Marci Kirk: Yeah.

0:10:53.5 Annie Chavent: I feel that moment.

0:10:55.7 Katie Berlin: It's an identity crisis, really.

0:11:00.0 Marci Kirk: It totally, totally is. Yeah.

0:11:00.0 Annie Chavent: For sure. For sure.

0:11:01.3 Marci Kirk: And not just for you. For your friends and family too.

0:11:02.7 Katie Berlin: Oh yeah. Yeah.

0:11:05.5 Annie Chavent: This is also a great point. Also a great point. But I decided why close yourself off to any of these opportunities? So I put my application in. Still wasn't 100% sure about it, but fortunately, the AVMA has a very long interview process.

[laughter]

0:11:20.6 Annie Chavent: We joke about it often among colleagues, but...

0:11:24.0 Katie Berlin: No one's taking those jobs out to win.

0:11:26.5 Annie Chavent: Exactly.

0:11:27.3 Katie Berlin: No, that's true.

0:11:29.0 Annie Chavent: Yeah. Through those multiple interviews and multiple months of getting to know different people on the team and learning more about the position, that started getting me more and more excited about what I would be doing on the student initiatives team, and I'm sure we'll talk about the day-to-day later, but it really was a mentoring and networking opportunity that you just through those connections, learned about the position. And I know when I was a student, at least, or probably even before this happened to me, people would always say in conferences and talks of like, "Your network is so important and you just never know what will come down the pipe," and it's like, "No, that doesn't really... "

0:12:04.5 Katie Berlin: And also, every introverted vet on the planet is like, "Networking, that's a dirty word. I don't wanna talk about that. That means standing around at one of those high top tables and talking to people don't know. It's very uncomfortable." That's really not the case though. Networking is more about relationships than smoothing, at least in this industry.

0:12:25.1 Annie Chavent: Yeah, yeah.

0:12:25.7 Marci Kirk: 100%.

0:12:26.8 Katie Berlin: How long were you in practice before you joined AVMA?

0:12:30.5 Annie Chavent: For three years. Four plus the internship. I started AVMA mid-pandemic in June of 2020.

[laughter]

0:12:39.0 Katie Berlin: A good time. It's a good time to go remote.

[laughter]

0:12:42.6 Annie Chavent: Yeah.

0:12:44.6 Katie Berlin: That's funny, and that's actually when I started going to remote too, is in March of 2020, I on-boarded at Clinicians Brief, which was the part-time job I had before AAHA, like the week that everybody went into Lockdown, it was pretty nuts, but I was still going to clinic then so that was pretty crazy, but...

0:13:00.4 Annie Chavent: Wow.

0:13:01.5 Katie Berlin: That's a cool story. And a little bit less common, I feel like to see... To talk to horse, equine and mixed animal, that's... Just because, first of all, there aren't as many of you. And second of all, I feel like all of the materials, the content, the stuff that comes across my feet anyway is aimed at small animal people because that's what I know, because it's a dramatic majority and so people just... Their mind goes there, but it's really cool to hear about somebody who came from the equine world and is working and now we're all here together.

0:13:32.6 Annie Chavent: Absolutely. What about you, Marci? Round out our introductions. Yes. How did you [0:13:39.2] _____?

0:13:39.3 Marci Kirk: Yeah, you guys hit so many points, like the identity crisis and all of it, and I've said this on multiple podcasts and when I talk to people, I wanted to be a vet from the time I was a little, but then I failed to really set goals or plan past graduation, the goal was always just graduation, and I had no idea what I wanted after that. And I do think that impacted me because I am very much a goal-oriented person, and so... But you think like, "Oh, you're busy learning to be a vet in real life," and things like that. I was in a small animal private practice for five years. And my first job, I was really lucky, there were three other veterinarians. I did have to do surgery and I did have to do on call, which are things that I didn't love. But if you think about it, it was only on call a quarter of the time. But at the time, it felt like a time. Looking back on it, I'm like, "Oh, that really wasn't that much." But the surgeries are what got me really down because I love talking and collaborating, and in surgery, I felt totally isolated even though there's someone monitoring the patient and things like that.

0:14:47.9 Marci Kirk: I just didn't feel like I had the time to think things through as much as I would have liked, so surgery was never... And I knew that in vet school. So then I took... Trying to navigate all of this, I took another job, they had no on call and no surgery, and so I was like, "This will fix it. This will be the thing." And in between there, I had actually applied to the first AVMA student initiatives role, and did not even get a phone interview, which was the right call. It's really

funny to look back on that now though. I was maybe two and a half, or... I think at that point, you needed two or three years of experience, I can't remember. And so I met the minimum. And so, then move on to this new clinic, in a new location, it was like a fresh start and it was really nice. It was in Champaign-Urbana, which was where my husband and I went to school and we loved it, and that was really fun, so all that was good, but still wasn't hitting at work as much as I wanted to.

0:15:46.3 Marci Kirk: I was still feeling stressed, but for different reasons. And so actually my network of friends, we were always just always looking, just always having a pulse on things, and one of my friends sent me an industry position that she had seen. She's like, "This sounds like something you'd be interested in." So I went through the entire interview process for this industry position, it was gonna require a relocation. And I did get offered the position, but it was like right when we were settling into this new clinic, to this new house, and it would have required my husband, to get a new job, and just the offer wasn't quite what we would have needed for all of that, and what it really appealed to me about that position is their goal was to get someone early in their career so they could move them up through the and I'm like, "Oh, goals. Checklist, this sounds amazing." It was an organization that I have a lot of respect and love for.

0:16:40.3 Marci Kirk: Actually, after I told them no, I hung up the phone, I started crying so much because I was so stressful, and I had this vision that once you say no to something like you get blacklisted and nobody wants to talk to you, you have red mark... This is Mark against you. And that's it. Now, I'm in clinical medicine the rest of my life. But then a year later or so, one of my friends sent me the position for recent graduate initiatives at the AVMA and I was like, "Oh, I'll give it a try, seeing a call back last time." [chuckle] But then, it just kinda kept... You know how, I don't know about you guys, but things just feel like they start to fall into place. So I kept getting further and further in the interview process and it was gonna require a relocation. But at this time, we had a lot of friends in the area, and one of them happened to have an opening and had already asked before I even started this interview process, if my husband wanted to come work as part of his team in this financial division, and he's like, "No, Marci doesn't have a job at the... No."

0:17:42.3 Marci Kirk: So then as I'm getting further along in this process, he called our friend up, and I was like, "Is that position still open?" And it was. Things are just starting to fall into place, and so I was offered the position and able to accept it at the AVMA and give it a try. It was really exciting, it was stressful and exciting, an identity crisis and relocating and all of that.

0:18:06.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah. I love that you, A, had the guts to go for a job at the place that hadn't even given you a call when you applied the first time, because a lot of us are so goal-oriented. Like you said, we like to check things off on a list and move up and do the things, and we don't handle rejection well, and so it's like if somebody rejects this one time or like what they're dead to me, but I love that you gave it another chance and said, "I'm a different person now, but a different place now, and maybe it'll work out," and then things started to line up, and I love that too. That is such a great fee.

0:18:42.8 Marci Kirk: Yeah. And I will say, actually, the episode that's coming out... Well, we're recording this a little early, but it's coming out in February. It's with Dr. Kim Farina. And she makes such a good point. She says it very bluntly, but she said like, "People don't care about you." And she's like, "I don't mean that in a bad way, but that job application was the center of my world for a very long time, but not a blip." Like people probably do not remember that I applied for that first job, right? So like, it probably didn't even occur to them that I applied for a second job. And if it

did, I mean, it could show... Again, different person, different skillset, different role. So that's... I talk to people all the time that are interested in coming to work for the AVMA and they're like, "I've applied before," and I'm like, "I would just apply again."

[chuckle]

0:19:24.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:19:24.5 Marci Kirk: You've learned more. They've learned more. It just... You never know what's gonna happen.

0:19:30.4 Katie Berlin: And so much of it depends too on who's out there looking at that time like... We talk a lot about how there are so many other things you can do besides clinical practice, and that is true. And I wanna say this before I forget it, which is that the knowledge and experience and just general awareness of issues in the veterinary space that you have, anybody listening, that you have from being just in a vet clinic, in a truck driving to a farm, these things, from being in vet school and talking to your vet friends and your technician friends, these are things that you cannot buy. So you... This experience is something that you should never undervalue. And so if you want to go and do something besides clinical practice or dabble and see if there's something out there for you and you're like, "But I'm not qualified."

0:20:23.2 Katie Berlin: If you've been working in veterinary medicine, you have a qualification that people will pay money to have on their team, part-time, full-time, it depends on the job, but people who can write or speak or be on a call and talk to sponsors or teammates or marketing people who don't have a clue how to market to veterinary teams will absolutely value your input and want you there. So I just wanted to say that because I know I didn't feel qualified for any of this [laughter] when I started to think about leaving practice. I was like, "What qualitfi... " I can write. I, I'm a liberal arts major. That has to count for something. But a lot of people can write. And you cannot undervalue the fact that you understand a language that most people do not understand, but that you must speak in order to market effectively or provide initiatives that really serve that industry, the veterinary industry.

0:21:19.2 Marci Kirk: Katie, I'm glad you brought that up because we become an echo chamber because we hang out with a lot of veterinary people and they're all very smart, speak the same language that we do as far as medical terms and things and we forget that there is a subset of the population outside of this that does not have the knowledge of these inner workings of the veterinary field and medical field. I was watching a show on Netflix, I think it was called From Scratch, and there was a medical issue going on, and like watching them navigate that, I was thinking to myself, "If I was in that situation, I would know what questions to ask. I would know what was going on." So already it's 10 times less scary than... And it just made me realize, "Wow, we do have these skills."

0:22:05.6 Marci Kirk: And that's one thing that I love. The Veterinary Career Center that AVMA has talks about how you can look at some of the skills you have as a veterinarian and how you can translate that on a resume. And what I like about it is I think it gives you ideas of things you could explore that maybe you hadn't thought about, like writing or working with other organizations and things.

0:22:27.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah, totally. And marketing is a big one. I don't know how much contact you have with AVMA's marketing of any kind of initiatives. I'm sure AVMA is much bigger than AAHA. So I'm sure that there's different aspects of marketing for different aspects of the organization. But our marketing department, they're a great group of people and they don't have... With some minor exceptions, they don't have veterinary experience. And so my job as content strategist is pretty much to bridge that gap between our marketing team and the content that our content team who's really talented and creative is putting out, because that content is not useful unless it's dressed in a way that veterinary teams will relate to and understand and feel like AAHA understands, if it comes out and it's marketed more towards pet owners or towards a level that doesn't suit the needs of the audience it's aimed for. It's not gonna get... It's not gonna resonate.

0:23:31.4 Katie Berlin: And that is a really, really important aspect of a lot of the jobs of veterinarians that I know, veterinarians and technicians that I know who aren't in practice is to be a subject matter expert. And we do not think of ourselves as subject matter experts, but we are. We know that subject matter better than anybody outside the industry could possibly know it. So yeah, it matters so much. But I feel like the two of you, you found this job sort of accidentally, just like showed up at the right time. Did you have time where you were like perusing the internet for non-clinical jobs? Like every day you looked in your browser and had little tabs open and you were like, "Do they have a job open? Do they have a job open?"

0:24:17.3 Marci Kirk: For sure.

0:24:17.6 Annie Chavent: Yeah.

[laughter]

0:24:18.0 Marci Kirk: Yeah. Like that was... One of my, I would say ineffective mechanisms I tried to use for coping with stress was I would just search the job boards and say like, "Well, what is out there?" and then if nothing's appealing, I'm like, "Well, this is..." [laughter] So you stay. And jokingly, I would go to lunch with one of my colleagues and if it was a really stressful day, we would say like, "What could we do outside of the profession that we could do effectively? And this is..." I don't want this to sound like I'm minimizing anything, but I was like, man, I could go like stock some shelves. I would love to organize some shelves and just see something that's all messy...

0:25:01.3 Katie Berlin: You could work at the container store.

0:25:02.4 Marci Kirk: Right? Like, see something that's messy and fix it. Because I think that's what I was struggling with too, is how many cases do we actually get to fix? And the answer is a lot more than I actually think, but it's... You don't get to see it right? They don't usually call back if it's fixed. So you see a lot of re-checks. I felt like the... So there was just times where I was thinking like, "I'm not fixing the things." And of course there's conditions that aren't going to be fixed, that are gonna be managed instead. So just a mind shift. But there were times where I... That was something I would do regularly was check the Veterinary Career Center and put on... I liked the filters. That was nice. But some of the bigger companies that have parent companies, so I think of like... If like Colgate, there's a subsidiary of that, or Mars, there's a subsi... They have their own job boards and they're... I'm gonna be honest with you, I think they're challenging to navigate. And maybe it's because I'm so familiar with the AVMA ones than I was before I started working here. But it was always challenging. One of my friends just had a knack for it and that's how I got

connected with that industry opening. But that's where your network comes in. So if you start to know people that work at those places, they can help kind of ping you when those things come up.

0:26:22.2 Katie Berlin: For sure. Yeah. So Annie, since you kind of stumbled upon this job, I'm assuming you didn't go through the phase where you had like a bunch of tabs open and you were checking for industry jobs all the time, just hoping that you'll find something.

0:26:34.5 Annie Chavent: [laughter] That would be a correct assumption. Yeah. So I did not peruse the job search boards. I'd say I was still looking, but I would say it was more like conversationally. So I was talking to people who I knew in the different areas that I thought that I might want to be in, so in academia, in these larger private practices, even in industry too, just trying to keep my options open, but I never quite got to the job board section. So there's lots of ways to pursue your career search if you kinda identify those sort of... If you identify the things that you're looking for and the things that you may be trying to minimize, I think there's... Once you've got that, there's lots of ways to find what you're looking for.

0:27:23.4 Katie Berlin: And I also wanna stress too that if you hadn't gotten the AVMA job, somebody gave it to you and said, "Hey, I think you would be right for this. I think it would be a good fit," that's not a guarantee that you're gonna get the job. But as you progress through the interview process, you kind of got attached to the idea, right? And so if you had not gotten it in the end, that probably would've started a process for you. Would that be correct of saying, "Okay, well, if that's not the job, then what would be right for me?"

0:27:51.7 Annie Chavent: Yeah, absolutely. You very accurately kind of pinpointed that experience. It was at first just kind of like, "Let's put something out there and see how it goes." The more that I knew about it, I realized that that... There definitely came a very specific point where I was like, "Man, if I don't get this, I think I'm gonna be pretty sad."

0:28:10.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:28:11.6 Annie Chavent: 'Cause I'd feel like then I had already gotten to kind of meet some of these people on the interview and got really excited about certain things that I knew I would be doing as part of the description. And so... And I think also kind of more through that process, solidifying the things like I just said, the things that I liked and the things that I might wanna minimize in private practice, it gave me a clearer picture of what I'd be looking for either with or without this AVMA job. But of course, I was very excited to receive the call and say that I got the offer. But I think that would've sparked a peruse on the job search boards for sure with a clearer purpose than...

0:28:51.1 Katie Berlin: Right.

0:28:51.3 Annie Chavent: I think if I started there, and Marci's saying like the filters were really helpful, I wouldn't even have known where to start, where I was like in my phase of exploration, but kind of after going through the AVMA process, I would've had a clearer picture.

0:29:04.4 Marci Kirk: I think what you did was so smart too, Annie. I just wanna point out, like talking to the people for jobs you might be interested in is key. Like here... I'm not trying... I'm not saying like, "Oh, so you can dig up dirt on the organization." No. It's like, what is it like? What are

the... What strengths do you bring to this? What do you enjoy about it? Like understanding that so you can start thinking about, "You know what, actually that's... " Like I found... You know why the student initiatives job would not be great for me? I get really stressed out about parking and figuring out where to park at vet schools would stress me out. I went all four years of veterinary school, actually, and four years of undergrad without getting a parking ticket and I want my record clean. And so that stresses me out. And that is a weird stress point, I know, but I know that about myself. And like, you're relying on the students to get you the information and stuff and you don't always know. And I'm sure once you visit them, you kind of get a feel for it, but that is stressful to me, [laughter] so...

0:30:03.3 Katie Berlin: I never even thought about that. But that would be stressful. It was stressful knowing where you could park as a student. I can't imagine just driving onto a campus being like, "This looks good."

0:30:13.2 Marci Kirk: Yeah.

0:30:14.6 Katie Berlin: You're definitely gonna get a ticket.

0:30:15.3 Annie Chavent: Let me count the ways that you can park on vet school campuses. There are passes, there are meters, some only take coins, some use apps, and then some don't do anything at all. But I guess my... Talking about transferable skills, so my time in equine private practice where it's like, "Are you gonna park on the gravel road next to the barn or in this field?" really I think help decrease things.

[laughter]

0:30:37.7 Katie Berlin: That's true. You went to unfamiliar places like every day for your job. That is a skill. You know what else is a skill that I find very useful in this world of Zoom meetings, is brainstorming. This is an actual skill. People don't realize that being able to sit in a virtual room or a real room and like throw ideas around and not be afraid to say things, I mean, it's a skill you can nurture and build. And part of the way you build it is by doing it because you realize... Like one of the biggest things I learned at my part-time job at Clinician's Brief, because... Okay, so I have to set the stage a little bit here because I joined as a contractor, but then moved on to part-time as an employee. But my job was to work in the sponsored content department. And so we call it custom content. So we would be working a lot with industry partners, like drug companies and food companies and they would've paid for us to create some content, basically like advertorial content. But Clinicians Brief has very high standards and that advertorial content has to be just as relevant and accurate and important as the editorial content.

0:31:47.8 Katie Berlin: And so I loved that because it's like a puzzle. But you also had to get on the phone with people from very major companies and say things like, "I know we could do a quiz," and then talk about like what that quiz would look like and how it would incorporate the material that they wanna talk about. And it was so scary at first. Those calls were so scary for me because I'm like, "What do I know? I don't know anything." But they didn't know that I felt that way. [laughter] And that's the key, it's like any of these jobs, you're gonna feel like a fish out of water at first because it's not a vet clinic, but you felt that way in a vet clinic at the beginning too.

0:32:24.6 Marci Kirk: That's right. Yes. Yeah.

0:32:26.4 Katie Berlin: It gets better. It really does get better.

0:32:29.7 Marci Kirk: Yeah. So I wanna make sure we hit on this 'cause I love that. So thank you for sharing that. And it kind of segues into, what do we do? Right? Because I remember my first day, I sat in front of my computer, I wasn't as busy like people... It was my first day. I didn't know what was going on. People didn't know I was there.

0:32:52.1 Katie Berlin: You have like one email.

0:32:53.4 Marci Kirk: Right. And so I'm like, "What do I... What do I..." And so then I'm thinking to myself, "I've made the biggest mistake ever just sitting here." And so for me, my day... It's like, it's computer time, right? It's project work, it's emails, it's, conversations where we're brainstorming and things like that. And I love all of it. If you would've told me that I was like sitting in front of a computer doing these things or interacting with people like this, I would've been really surprised. But there were many times, especially at the beginning where I'd sit in a room and look around and be like, "I'm not sure I'm supposed to be in this room," and the very wise Dr. Kristin Wuellner, once said, she shared that similar feeling, but she said, "Then I follow up with, what can I do to make sure I feel like I belong and like the steps you can take to prepare for those meetings and everything?"

0:33:42.9 Marci Kirk: So I don't... I think for me, my day-to-day a lot is computer time, email time, project work. And I will just add, I didn't know if I would ever go back to clinical practice. And I started dabbling in some Saturdays here and there, and then in the pandemic when I really felt like there were pets that needed to be seen, I'm trying to be more regular, like I work at least if I can swing it with a schedule, one to two Saturdays a week. And so I do wanna also hit that, that you can blend your passions and you can figure out, like... It was really nice for me to have some distance and to be like, "Yes, I actually love medicine. I actually missed this." And so for me, there's no surgery, so that's great. So you can make it work for you. So I just wanted to throw that tidbit in there. But I wanna make sure we talk about, what are... And no day is the same, right? Like today, I have tons of meetings. So there's not gonna be a lot of project work. But that's kind of those are the big buckets for me. So, Katie, I imagine yours is fairly similar.

0:34:48.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, it's pretty similar. There isn't a lot of travel with my job. In fact, there'd be almost no travel. But I like to go to conferences. I get a lot out of being there. And I do find that connections that I make and maintain with people in the industry are really, really valuable for my job. So I do love to go to conferences and I'm gonna try to get to as many as I can. And AVMA is in Denver this year, so...

0:35:08.1 Marci Kirk: Yeah. [laughter]

0:35:10.0 Katie Berlin: I'm very excited about that because that's where I live. So I will definitely, hopefully see both of you there. But...

0:35:16.3 Marci Kirk: Yes, for sure.

0:35:17.9 Katie Berlin: So my day is... I guess the only difference would be every day is a lot of meetings. [chuckle] I have a lot of meetings and I don't mind that. I actually really like that a lot of

days because meetings give me structure. If I have to sit in front of a computer with like eight hours of "free time" to work on projects or write, I have a really hard time focusing for that long. And I don't... Probably get as much done as I would get in a four-hour block if I had to fit it in around other things.

0:35:48.0 Marci Kirk: I that's well-said. I need that pressure of the meetings to make sure I'm getting... And being productive in that time. Yeah.

0:36:00.5 Katie Berlin: Yes. Yeah. But it is a ton of being in front of the computer. And the hardest thing for me is turning it off at the end of the night because I do end up with... If I have like six or eight meetings in a day, and then all of a sudden it's 6 o'clock at night and I'm like, "Oh, but I wanted to get that thing done," and then suddenly it's 7:00 and I end up just pushing that boundary later and later. And it's interesting because I used to get so annoyed at the clinic because I would never get out on time because, clinic, and I would get so resentful about it. And I don't get resentful here because it's stuff that I'm doing because I want to and have a hard time stopping working. And I think that doesn't necessarily mean it's healthy all the time, but I also am just really, really grateful to be in a position where I have to make myself stop working because I know it's good for me to stop, not because I just can't wait to be done at the end of the day. I'm excited to go to work every day.

0:36:54.0 Katie Berlin: I'm a manager of a small team now. So I oversee our publications. So if you read like Trends, or NEWStat or JAAHA, the people that make those things happen are on my team and all the graphic design that we see on the content team. And I love being a manager. I love helping people to solve problems. Our AAHA store, we're going through some changes there and thinking about how to offer good things in the store. And that's part of my team as well. And I love that because it's problem-solving in a different way and it's this one-on-one communication versus sort of like big picture thinking. And I think I need both of those in order to be happy. And what happened in practice was it was very much that it's you and this patient and this client, it's you and this patient and this client, it's you and this patient and this client. And I didn't have the big picture thing to balance that out. So I really like the balance of my job now and getting to have conversations with people that I wouldn't otherwise get to, like you guys.

0:38:01.0 Marci Kirk: I really wanna hit on something you said though, 'cause I think it's very important. There is a definite truth to that 4:50 appointment coming in that you... That's sick. It's one thing whenever you feel forced to do it. We all wanna help the pets. I don't want this to sound like we're ungrateful for that appointment, but there's a difference between if someone asked you if they can put that on your schedule and you say, "Yes," or it being on there... And maybe that's the only time a person can come. I'm not trying to... Again, don't wanna make this a bad connotation, but there are some nights where you need to get off on time. And so I think there's a big difference between forcing it and choosing it for yourself. That's what I have found the difference between. I'm choosing to go back into the clinic, this is where I want to be on those Saturdays, and that means I'm working six days that week usually. So it is extra work. Or choosing to do that extra hour because I just enjoy it, and I wanted to get this done today. And again, it's not always the healthiest choice. Sometimes you really do have to just close [chuckle] the computer and be done.

0:39:06.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes you're like, "Wait, when did I pee last?"

0:39:08.5 Marci Kirk: Yes.

0:39:09.3 Katie Berlin: That's not good. [laughter]

0:39:10.4 Marci Kirk: Yeah, right? But just that mindset. Jen says it very eloquently in one of her presentations about well-being of something like, if you have to choose between a lot of emotions, always choose the one that's not resentment. Because even if you'll be angry or sad or something, but choose the one that's not resentment 'cause resentment tends to fester. And I'll have to try to figure out what... I'm not getting it right off the top of my head, but Annie, your day today is much different. So do you wanna walk us through [chuckle] what your life is like sometimes?

0:39:48.8 Annie Chavent: So yeah, so I do have the elements... To tie some similarity. So I have the elements of needing time and project work with the extra spice of traveling to campuses both here in the US and internationally as well. So I guess I maybe should describe a little bit of the content of the student initiatives role too, because I do get some questions on that. So I would say primarily, I am an advisor to our student AVMA, or SAVMA chapters. So there are four of us total on the student initiatives team. We've got our associate director, our program manager, and then there's two of me, my lovely colleague, Dr. Lauren Rowe covers the other part of the assistant director role. And so I'm visiting about 20 campuses each year that are in my region to meet the leaders of the SAVMA chapters, to speak to the students on topics of their choosing that kind of supplement the curriculum. And that in terms of travel time in my day-to-day, I would say I'm going to a campus once a week, most weeks during the fall and spring semesters. It's lighter travel during the summer and the winter.

0:41:02.3 Annie Chavent: There are some conferences sprinkled in as well, so like Katie said, so AVMA convention in the summer, too, but my heavy travel seasons are gonna be fall and spring that coordinate with the student schedules as well. I guess, again, I think that equine practice probably helped me prepare for that because it doesn't bother me. I will be taking calls from the airport or from the hotel room, or trying to kind of fit things in transit, which is not a novel concept to me. And I think it's kind of a fun challenge most of the time too to see, "Oh well, what coffee shop can I stop at this place to try to get these emails off?" Or something like that. So in addition to being a SAVMA advisor for the students, then I also work very closely with the chapter presidents, which I love. I think that kind of scratches that mentorship itch, and then that one-to-one interaction too. The chapter presidents of SAVMA meet twice a year, and they're student-run meetings, and I provide the administrative support there, so it's a fun coaching role.

0:42:08.6 Annie Chavent: Katie, this just reminds me of when you talked about thinking about different... Using your brain in different ways. The school visits are very different than the planning of the meetings, and then also in content creation, I think you get to do some of that as well. And the opportunity to exercise the creative part of my brain is something that I'm very, very grateful for. I just love making PowerPoints. I'm gonna put it out there for the world. I just do.

[laughter]

0:42:38.4 Annie Chavent: I think...

0:42:38.5 Marci Kirk: And she's very good at it. She's very good.

0:42:42.3 Katie Berlin: Well, yeah, I don't. That's not something I love, [chuckle] but...

0:42:46.0 Annie Chavent: I recognize that majorly, but I feel like it's kind of like that translation thing, it's like a communication challenge for me of like, "How can I get this content in the way that's most well received by the audience and maybe put some nice colors and pictures in there too?" So being able to exercise all those different parts of my brain keeps me energized and keeps me on my toes, and so I really do like that variety in my schedule as well.

0:43:11.7 Marci Kirk: I love that you just sort of made this as similar to like, we are in private practice, and you're in ambulatory practice.

[laughter]

0:43:21.6 Marci Kirk: I never made that association, so I love that.

0:43:26.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah, 'cause a lot of the jobs that are outside a clinic are still very trouble-heavy, like professional services, veterinarians and industry and field specialists and stuff like that. They're traveling all the time. And that's cool too. Some people really love that, and I don't think that I would do well with that because like I said, I like routine. Every day is different, but I'm pretty sure I know where I'm gonna be on a given day, and then travel is like this fun little spice to sprinkle on it a few times a year versus a lot. I like that balance myself, but it sounds like it is a really good fit for you, and somehow your mentor knew that when [chuckle] that piece of paper slid across the table to you with the endorsement that it would be potentially a really good fit, and you're right. That confidence that somebody you respect has that you would be able to do this job and would like it and be good at it goes a long, long way, and I can say, having a mentor say, "I have heard about this job that's available, do you want me to put you in touch?"

0:44:36.5 Katie Berlin: And think to ask me, think to say, I think Katie might like that. And then call me up and say, "I feel like this might be a good fit for you," that means so much to me, and I hope that I can pay that forward now because that was life-changing twice, I guess. It was life-changing for me, and I also wanna clear some... Two things that I would like to clear up, because I get these questions a lot, or I should say, I hear the questions implied a fair bit. One is, it's just about who you know. And I do feel like, like we talked about, networking is very important in this industry, and that these jobs are not... It's not that you see the jobs posted that commonly, because people are happy in them, it's not like these jobs are gonna be open every two years because people really like them, and also because they get filled by people who are sort of moving up through that chain in the network, when they are available.

0:45:44.9 Katie Berlin: And so you have to put your name in the hat, your name has to be somewhere near the hat for you to be able to be available at the right time and know when the jobs are available, and that doesn't mean that you don't deserve them if somebody calls you and says, "Hey, that job is open again, do you want to apply? Or do you want me to put a good word in for you?" That's not saying you're not qualified, that's saying that you've done the work to let people know that this is what you're looking for, and you're out there and you've come to terms in your mind with potentially not working full-time in practice and you might actually want to apply for these jobs. So putting yourself out there is not asking for something that you don't deserve, and a lot of us don't think we deserve things that we do. [laughter]

0:46:32.6 Katie Berlin: It's like a common thing I feel like, we just think we have to go in and do

the work in the clinic and then leave at the end of the day, and that's it. And you deserve other things, if other things will make you happier. And then the second thing is that people who are in industry or organizations or organize that med left because they couldn't hack it in the clinic. And no one's ever said this to my face, but I do think that there is a possibility that somebody might be saying, "Well, one of the themes that I hear is that a lot of the people who are working in these positions didn't love practice or didn't love it enough to stay." I think that sometimes that's true, but not loving life in practice does not correlate with how much you love the veterinary profession, and I think that's something that I only realized after I started to work outside the clinic was that you can love this profession as much or even more in a different position because we all have something to give, and sometimes you can give more of yourself and in a more appropriate way, if you're not seeing patients every day, that just might not be the way that you're meant to give back to the profession.

0:47:41.0 Katie Berlin: And I think that's really just an important thing to clear up because those are conceptions that I had, I think, for a while, is it's all about who you know, and if you left clinical practice, you couldn't hack it. And it's just not the case.

0:47:57.5 Marci Kirk: Yeah, I think those are great points that as we sort of wrap up here to kind of... Hopefully, it's been helpful to people to understand that, it is, I think we get those same themes too, that you have to know the right people, and you don't have to, but certainly the more you know, the more you just have insights into what is gonna be open, and again, so you can throw your name in there. And if you don't find the right fit the first time, just keep trying and... 'Cause you'll learn more about yourself each time too.

0:48:29.8 Katie Berlin: Exactly.

0:48:32.0 Marci Kirk: And you don't know, you may find your way back to clinical medicine, and if you don't, that's okay too. This profession needs all of us, and needs us all in different ways, it needs our knowledge, it needs our passion, it needs our kindness and our care. So this has been really fun for me. I really enjoyed chatting with all of you, so thank you both so much for being so open with your stories and time.

0:48:56.2 Katie Berlin: Thank you, this has been super fun. And I love hearing about how other people got to be behind the Zoom screen where I'm looking at them, because we all have such variable stories, and I just love that. It brings a whole new dimension to vet med for me.

0:49:11.0 Marci Kirk: For sure.