

Your BVA, Your Say— 2012 member research project

Following a tendering process we commissioned Research by Design to conduct a member research project to measure and evaluate the levels of satisfaction BVA members have with the Association and examine their perceived value of BVA's representative role and benefits package.

Research objectives

The objectives of the research were:

- To measure and evaluate the levels of satisfaction BVA members have with the Association;
- To ascertain why members join, what keeps them as members and how long they are likely to stay, in order for BVA to develop meaningful recruitment and retention strategies;

- To gain an understanding of whether members feel they are adequately represented as a profession by the policy and lobbying activities BVA undertakes;
- To examine members' perceptions of the journals, services and benefits BVA offers as part of its membership package;
- To allow BVA to develop its member communication, in terms of what is currently done and any future direction;
- To ensure members are listened to and able to input into the membership package;
- To give an understanding of how members position BVA in terms of competitors—where it is succeeding and where it is falling short; and
- To enable BVA to improve member experience and customer service.

Research structure and methodology



Quantitative research

- 7,917 UK-based graduates and final-year student members of BVA were sent an email inviting them to complete the online survey.
- Two reminder emails followed for those who had not completed the survey.
- 27% of those who received the email invitation completed the survey. The excellent response rate provided a robust dataset from which to carry out analyses of the findings.

From the 2,110 respondents:

- 650 were practice owners/partners/directors
- 443 were YVN members
- 118 were final-year students

Main findings

Membership engagement and perceptions

- The majority of members joined BVA as a student or graduate.
- BVA journals, *In Practice* and *Veterinary Record*, are the primary reason for members joining BVA, followed by supporting the national body and accessing professional support and advice.
- Overall, BVA scores well on membership key performance indicators (KPIs), compared to both Research by Design's normative data and previous BVA member research.

- Members rate BVA generally positively; particularly younger members.
- BVA is rated very highly on 'rational' measures of renewal intent and value for money.
- The key words used by members to describe BVA are positive: informative; helpful; relevant and member-focussed featured most often. However, practice owner/managers were more likely to describe BVA as traditional; safe; distant; and old-fashioned.

Benefits of membership

- BVA journals are the most widely recognised and used benefit across all member grades.
- A number of benefits are highly rated but used less commonly (such as legal representation and employment mediation) as they are only necessary if there is a specific point of need.
- Final-year students and YVN members place great importance on careers guidance and job hunting via www.vetrecordjobs.com, while the older, more senior, professionals place high importance on policy/lobbying by the BVA.
- Encouragingly for BVA, the most important benefits to members are predominantly the most highly rated.
- Students, YVN members and those not currently working are most interested in the potential new benefits tested in the research.

Representation and positioning of BVA

- The majority agree that BVA is the 'voice of the UK veterinary profession'.

- Members are clear that the most important area that BVA should focus its energies in the future is 'representing the views of UK veterinary professionals'. Specifically BVA should be proactive and do more to educate and raise awareness amongst the general public.
- The majority of members believe BVA is fulfilling its mission.
- Vets are aware of the different roles of BVA and RCVS.

Professional challenges and BVA's policy/lobbying role

- The key challenge for members is educating the general public and addressing negative perceptions about the profession. Members believe that the public are unaware of the hours they work, think they are too expensive, that dealing with the public is becoming increasingly difficult. Members believe that BVA should do more to represent vets to the public.
- Away from their individual challenges and moving towards wider policy/lobbying issues, members are aware of ways they can engage with BVA and provide their views. However, many do not get involved due to reasons such as lack of time.
- The key topics members would like BVA to focus on in regards to lobbying are general animal welfare issues.

Marketing and communications

- BVA's communications are rated fairly highly, in particular *BVA News*, BVA website and the enews.
- The publications and resources area of BVA website (which contains member guides) is the most visited section of the site.

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- The BVA Twitter account and online community are not currently being fully utilised by members.

BVA's CPD offering

- The majority of members have not yet attended a BVA CPD event or course, the main reason for this being the location (of London during the two-year pilot CPD phase). As BVA expands its CPD offering outside of London, more members will be encouraged to attend.
- Small animal clinical CPD from BVA is sought by 66% of members; medicines and farm clinical are also areas of specific interest.
- Around a quarter of members mention non-clinical courses such as business support and personal development courses as future subject areas for BVA CPD. Those on a career break or out of work require support on returning to the profession.

Conclusions and next steps

Member engagement and benefits

- Negative public perceptions of the profession are mentioned across all member grades.
 - Challenging, educating and raising public awareness is an area that we will focus on.
 - Above all, members require us to support them when dealing with the public and this will be kept in mind as further marketing/communication is developed.

- In terms of overall membership benefits, members display general satisfaction with the current package, and struggle to think of many other areas where benefits could be developed. However, when shown some potential new benefits, it is final-year students, YVN members and those not currently working that showed the greatest interest.

- We will focus our energy on the 'intangible' benefits of membership; ensuring members feel engaged by and supported by us and are represented both at a profession and at an individual level.

- The new benefits that tested positively will be reviewed with the Members' Services Group in early 2013.

- Although there is wide recognition of the Young Vet Network scheme and acknowledgement that work is being done in this area; there is still a feeling from some members at this career stage that BVA could do more to support them.

- We will look to expand YVN support meetings into areas where they are not currently taking place and do more to promote the scheme to our members.

- We will extend our recent graduate clinical CPD around the country.

- The BVA needs to do more to engage senior members (those over eight years' graduated, practice owner/managers).

- Policy and lobbying are key areas where this audience would like BVA to be more visible.

- With commercial pressures increasing for this group, we will invest further in CPD, concentrating on management and business issues and for the whole practice team.

Representation of the profession

- BVA must ensure it encapsulates the views of members and work with those who feel under-represented.
 - We will ensure members feel their views are being heard, whilst acknowledging that members are time-poor.
 - We will further promote our network of regional representatives and territorial divisions to help engage members in their local areas.

Communication and positioning

- On the whole, rating of BVA communications is good, although it is clear that some channels are not being utilised by members.
 - We will look at how we can use channels such as social media to further engage with members and create an online voice to the general public.
 - We will develop our database and web capabilities to better meet members' needs.
- When probed, members in general are positive about BVA's positioning and strapline, although there is not complete agreement.
 - We will re-examine our messaging and communication in light of the research.

CPD

- Members would like to see a wider range of BVA CPD provision in both area and subject.
 - We will extend our CPD provision from 2013 and build on it year on year, including the formation of a CPD Group of members to help us develop its CPD going forward.