

ONE TO ONE TRAINING WALKS

Let's dive a little deeper...

My aim and the benefits:

- To provide a better-quality service, to bring something unique to the industry, to help more pet guardians.
- To help enable me to have a consistent income, which I see results and provide a service that caters to dogs that need more bespoke/individual needs.



My journey:

Like many of you I started as a dog walker but didn't particularly enjoy group walks. So, I decided to offer one to one walks. I quickly learnt that this attracted a specific type of dog - one which was reactive/anxious or one who due to health issues could not be walked in a group situation. I soon became the go to person for anxious dog walks. So, I invested my spare time learning about these dogs and how I could create a walking experience to help enable them to be more confident.

I quickly went from doing what would consider an everyday walking service to a lot more. I offered an experience; piece of mind and guardians were seeing a major improvement in their dog's behaviour! I had many people tell me I would never earn enough, and group dog walking was the way forward. In fact, I was the first person to provide 'training walks' so as there was little known about it, I was doubted by a few professionals. But for dog guardians this service sparked a real interest!

My struggles:

I quickly became tired - trying to do sometimes 9 plus walks a day. I felt I could not continue to provide each dog with my full attention - after all I was becoming mentally and physically exhausted. I did not want to compromise the quality of my services so started to reduce the type of walks and cut back. I had 4 types of walks with varying prices! It was time to focus on the dogs who needed me most and start looking at extras and ways to help the dog owner not just the dog.

How I changed things for the better:

I went from 9 walks to 3 to 4 a day but had to increase prices to reflect this bespoke service and the limited number of walks. I re-branded.

Additional opportunities:

With the training/rehabilitation walks came an added need - guardians in turn wanted to be coached. But I struggled to get the right set ups. So, I started to incorporate stooge support and sought more controlled spaces to train in. I really had to think outside the box!

You do more than dog walking:

So, whilst you may not be a dog trainer, I do feel you ALL do more than walk dogs.

You give peace of mind, an experience, you enrich dogs daily, you help socialise them, prevent future problems. You are a dog walker with a difference! So even if you don't see it as a 'training walk' it could be an enrichment walk or socialisation walk. But try to focus more on the outcome or the experience than just the words.

People pay for value and if you only walk one dog at a time that is a bespoke one to one service. You can make a career as a one-to-one dog walker combined with training - however you may need to consider the type of walks and add additional relevant services (that sync well) to the mix OR considerably raise your prices.

Marketing ideas

- Video case studies.
- Upsell from your programmes.
- Guardians who are looking for a little more than just dog walking, can you get your message out there.
- Educational posts on your page/community groups
- Branded wear/flyers/getting out at local events
- Free taster to build portfolio (ask current clients?)

FINAL THOUGHTS...

» If you are a dog walker and don't want to be a trainer that's ok, but I feel if you work with any animal, it's important to have a foundational understanding of behaviour.

» Prices - consider how much how many and how you can integrate it into a programme i.e. one owner assisted walk/transfer walk a week and one walk just you? Also, I really think time is time - if it's just you and the dog or guardian to, it's still value and your time.

» Remember if you focus solely on training walks you may be reducing your opportunities with coaching; I now only do rehab walks once a week.

» Consider a minimum number of walks, keeping to the same times or offering as a programme.

» Consider the amount of time they will stay with you; you may want to put a minimum time. I found owners at work wanted to carry on with this service long term.

» Don't forget to factor in time and travel. Plus, text updates!

Finally, believe in yourself! It's all about believing in yourself and understanding you bring something unique to this industry.