

It's your business, you make the rules - Communication, expectations and boundaries

We need to be transparent and open from the start. This is to not only set expectations, but also to be clear on our boundaries. Educating your client right from the word GO!



Feel free to brag, but you are still in the driving seat!

Make your business all about the long-term support. But keep in mind that the structure of your business, and the timings, must work for you! It is about educating your client on how long-term support works, and the fallout of so-call 'quick fixes'. And remember to champion your services as you go above and beyond, stand out without giving the world away for free.

You are not just a one-stop cat feeding service, but truly go that step further to help their feline friends. Just like how you don't JUST walk the dogs. You offer more, but that is why you charge what you do.

Where your message begins...

This starts from the very moment the client reaches your Facebook page and/or the homepage of your website. I like to share my success stories, but I always emphasise that this was due to ongoing support. I explain the structure of our walks to ensure the safety and welfare of the dog is the main priority. This should, of course, apply to all services and all pets. And whilst the client needs to be satisfied, doing things that make you feel uncomfortable is simply not fair.

It is essential that the first time your client finds you, or gets in touch, they understand that you provide ongoing support; in fact, you only take on clients who will want longer term support as well as regular services. They should completely understand how you work and why. Your message needs to be clear as possible on every platform and in your initial discovery call.

YOUR MESSAGE/SETTING EXPECTATIONS

1. Dog training/pet behaviour

- On the discovery call

Ask them what they want and be clear about what exactly it is that they want. Remember: you need to be tactful; what they want may not always be the best outcome for the pet or for their own needs. You may need to help steer them in the right direction.

- On the forms

Fact finding as above, what have they tried already? What has worked and what has not? You can save time by not covering the same ground again, but always ask WHY things did not work the first time.

- Pre-plan/pre-session

Go through their expectations of the first session; they may be worried... make them feel at ease. Prepare them and give them something to look forward to.

- On your website and services page

"Through my unique, ongoing support programmes, I'm there to coach, mentor and advise you every step of the way. I only aim to take on 1-2 new clients each month, to ensure optimised learning, proven results and individual support."

(Notice how I have not only made them aware that it is long term support, but it is very bespoke, and I will be able to give them my full attention by not spreading myself too thin).

My services page clearly states 'Ongoing Support'. Reminder that I only take on clients who require long term support.

- On your Facebook

I share case studies and blogs and tell the audience how long they have been on my programme and how long term gives better results.

"I've been working with Freddie for 6 months and, in this time, the owners have seen phenomenal results!"

2. Pet visits/dog walks

- On the discovery call

Be upfront about payments, cancellations and briefly go through how it works and why. Find out about the temperament of the pet, what are they like?

- On the forms

As above, be clear about timings. Reminder that if you are a group dog walker – it is much more than an hour! As a pet sitter – you do more than feed their pet!

- On your website and services page

Talk about potential outcomes without focusing too much on the time. Whilst the length of the walk matters, the experience, safety, and overall satisfaction matter more.

- On your Facebook

Educational posts: you do more than walk dogs or simply feed cats. These posts are so important - be visual, show what you do. People will start to follow you, so give them something worth following.

- Pre plan/pre visit or meet

What do they need to know before the first session. Is there a trial period? Do they need to meet other staff members? Have they told you exactly what they need? Do you have everything you need ready to go?

3. Other pet services/online support

As above, you can use this template for all pet services. The main thing is that you need to be upfront and honest, stick to your timings (with a little wiggle room) and have firm boundaries. Effective communication is the key to explaining exactly why you do what you do. If you answer that email at 10pm you may encourage them to email you again at 10pm!

Your task:

I want you to go over to your website and read it thoroughly. Consider the following points and how you could add some of these details now, to save going over the same points in every discovery call. It doesn't need to be a wall of text, but try to cover the main points somewhere: -

- Do you mention offering long term support?***

- Are you upfront about how you work?***

- Do you focus on the entire experience?***

- Do you clarify your timings?***

- Have you introduced your staff members?***

- Is it clear how clients can pay?***

- Do you have a cancellation policy?***

- What happens if it doesn't work out?***