

How the implementation of the leadership plan may affect obedience training

[Business](#), [Management](#)



By definition “ Leadership is the action of leading individuals to achieve goals”. Any group certainly needs a leader to maintain order and harmony. Linking this to our dogs, our goal is to coexist both species successfully; it is, by all means, to have a well-behaved dog that can follow directions. The way we achieve this is by providing structure and giving clear directions and guidance; as in the process of guiding them we influence their behaviour in different ways consequently, we do need to know and be able to communicate with them if we want to shape their behaviour and achieve obedience. How the implementation of the leadership plan may affect obedience training involves all these concepts, obedience is the foundation that will affect all the training to come, to impart that you need to be a good leader.

Because dogs are highly social animals with codes and a hierarchy system when living in packs – that allow them to coexist in harmony when the roles are correctly in place – they are happy taking follower positions when living in mixed packs with humans, conversely if they don’t see there is one qualified leader guiding the group, they will take the position in order to preserve theirs and the pack’s safety; if that is the case, it will leave us at the mercy of the dog’s instinct and as what he perceives as a treat or dangerous. It is clear that is the human who needs to be the leader, we better fit to the position because, amongst lots of reasons, we have a better understanding of the pictures – chocolate is harmful, the postman is harmless, cars are dangerous, the vet will help you heal, etc – but likewise all good leaders, we need to possess the skills to be qualified at the eyes of our dogs. “ Dogs use discipline to assert authority” to impart discipline, direction

and guidance we need to set up rules, stick to them at all times and being able to communicate them to our dogs not only for them to understand but also to be recognised as an authority. Here is where communication takes place.

When training we are decoding language – putting meaning to verbal cues or hands signals using rewards and motivators – whether using food, toys, praise, attention or anything that is rewarding for the dogs to have them engaged and displaying voluntarily the behaviours we want, at the same time we are setting up neural paths for desirable behaviours that eventually will be displayed automatically. So then, establishing the commands and sticking to them consistently is the key, working by repetition, progressively managing distance and duration, we are creating neural paths in our dogs through the way they learn first, while at the same time reinforcing the neural paths of attention and active listening, so then we get to have them waiting for us to provide directions later. But subsequently, and equally if not more important than the rewards system” If we want a dog to repeat an action we reward him. If we want a dog not to repeat an action we discipline him”. Discipline is the key to gain authority.

We build communication and develop the best relationship with our dog over time by practising and being consistent the whole way, just because the dogs know what we expect from them it doesn't mean they will do it. So then, it is crucial to work in the discipline by creating boundaries and to demonstrate the dog there are consequences – we start the exercise from zero till you get it right, a sort of “ Stubbornness Contest” – every time they

overstep. In being disciplined we are establishing this line of “ what I say, means what I say” in the coherent way dogs see life. In the same way, in the presence of other dogs, we are demonstrating social control “ there will be social responsibility for misbehaving” by applying “ Time out” for example. Finally, we are also showing them that they can rely on us to keep them safe and there is no need for them to take care on situations to establish lines of responsibilities by themselves. Coherence and fairness is the key to gain leadership.

The implementation of the leadership plan affects obedience training by introducing and working over maintaining boundaries and clear directions; obedience training is all about assigning consequences to behaviours and being persistent, consistent and insistent. To get there, we need to have their attention, have them listening, and have had gained their trust to do what we command at all times. All these concepts involve leadership, and being the leader of our dogs it is not a label, it is rank we gain over time while working together while building the relationships we want with our dog based on trust and respect, the key of good leaders.