

IACP

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANINE PROFESSIONALS

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International Association of Canine Professionals

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The International Association of Canine Professionals is dedicated to the education, development, and support of dog training professionals world-wide. The IACP provides a community where experienced dog trainers mentor, guide and cultivate members to their full potential. Our commitment to the highest quality training increases our members' skills and abilities, develops professional recognition, and improves communication on training best practices. We support our members' rights to properly use and promote effective, humane training tools and methods to create success for each dog and owner, while expanding the understanding and cooperation among canine professionals and dog owners across the full spectrum of the canine industry.

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AFFILIATE MEMBER — An active interest in a career as a canine professional but lacking the experience to be an Associate or Professional member, i.e., apprentices, students of canine professions, trainees, volunteers, part-time, and devotees of canine related occupations. Cannot use the IACP name or logo for business purposes and may not vote.

Annual Fees:

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The IACP is proud to announce that IACP Members Peggy Vitolo and Julie Anderson

have successfully completed their Certified Dog Trainer examination and are now able to add the designation IACP-CDT to their names.

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The Board of the IACP



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President's Letter

by Karen Laws

This will be my final report as your President. I am very grateful and humbled by the many words of encouragement and support that I have received from many of you during the past two years. Thank you for your faith and support. You truly are what make the IACP the best professional canine organization available. Your passion for the IACP holds the Board of Directors accountable and instills a drive for continual improvement.

I am proud of our accomplishments both as an organization and as a Board. We reached a crossroads only a few short years ago ... we chose the road less travelled ... and will continue to move forward ... full steam ahead. These past two years have seen an unprecedented period of change and growth for many areas of the IACP that had remained static since inception – from relocation of the home office to development of a new website. Your support for these changes is reflected in significant increases in membership and unprecedented conference attendance. Although many changes are not as evident as a new website, we have momentum and much remains to be done.

I would like to thank departing and long serving Directors Chad Mackin, Tawni McBee and Brad Strickland for their years of service to the membership and to the IACP Board and for embracing the change that has become the 'mode of operation' for the Board of Directors. On behalf of the Board, thank you for your valuable service, wisdom and friendship. While their term as Directors is complete at the end of December, each has agreed to continue to serve the IACP in various volunteer capacities.

Refreshing the leadership of a young organization like the IACP is one of many critical elements for successful growth. Fresh ideas, new energy and growing networks are just a few of the many requirements for continual, progressive change. Your Board of Directors for 2015 will continue to move forward with the vision and fire that was fueled in 2014. In keeping with the new focus-forward culture, I would like to congratulate newly elected Directors Nelson Hodges and Melanie Benware. Also returning to the Director table is Martin Deeley. Under the capable lead-

ership of new President James Hamm and an ambitious Board of Directors comprised of fresh minds, and new energy working alongside seasoned veterans, we will continue to stretch the comfort zone of this organization to achieve audacious goals that will position the IACP at the forefront of Professional canine organizations all over the world!

While 'new blood' is important to success, the wisdom of seasoned veterans is critical for a strong foundation. Martin Deeley is and always will be the rock of this organization. His history as founder of the IACP makes his sage advice essential to our success. Thank you, Martin and Pat, for all that you do for the IACP. I would like to thank the Directors who will continue with their terms through 2015 - Tyler Muto, Cyndi Graham, Jeff Gellman, Jack Clark, and Mailey McLaughlin.

The most significant change during the past two years for the Board of Directors and executive has been the change in mindset. The journey to re-engineer thinking of a diverse Board has been arduous, and will no doubt continue to be so, with many challenges ahead.

Our drivers for change include a need to increase revenue and to become relevant in the burgeoning social media world. During the past two years we have seized the opportunity to clearly articulate the mission of our organization and who we serve, enhance our image as a modern, progressive organization and re-align our core business to reflect the demographics of the booming professional canine trainer industry.

During this time your Board has maintained a laser focus towards becoming the biggest and best professional organization in the canine world. We are continuously looking for efficiencies and taking action to reach this seemingly audacious goal. We refined the IACP mission statement to state, in plain language, what we are about (check it out at the beginning of every SHJ). We established three strategic goals and move towards achievement of those goals with every action. We continuously work towards enhancing our relevance to the professional canine community and to provide a crystal message of whom we serve. Above all, your Board of Directors will continue to 'Put members FIRST.'



The three strategic goals and associated targets, approved last February, have shaped our organizational foundation:

GOAL 1: Increase Membership. Less than half way through the year we exceeded our modest target of 10% net membership increase. Similarly, a target of 75 non-members attending conference with 25 of those converting to new members was also exceeded.

GOAL 2: Increase Public Awareness. One approach to increase our profile in the public is through key sponsors. The goal of \$10,000 in NEW Sponsorship on or before Conference 2014 was exceeded and work continues to seek new sponsors and help them to see the value of aligning their business with the IACP.

GOAL 3: Add/provide value to IACP members. A trial publication of a monthly e-Newsletter created member engagement with opportunities for members to showcase their talents through submission of videos and success stories. A new award was established to recognize the year's best video submission. Congratulations to **Brian Bergford** as winner of this year's video of the year for his incredible story of the rehabilitation of Lazarus - check it out - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0baOHT3H5-U!>

Profiling the outstanding contribution that members provide to the IACP and to their professions, communities and people and dogs in need is recognized through the Member of the Year award. Congratulations to this year's member of the year, **Leslie Horton**, for her outstanding work with the IACP Service Dog Committee and to the Service Dog community.

The catalyst for our ongoing commitment to change was relocation of the Home office from the home of Martin Deeley and Pat Trichter to a business office in Lampasas Texas overseen by Director and Treasurer Jack Clark. In addition, a brand new interactive website was launched – on time and under budget. Members have been asking for a new website for years. Both of these projects were long overdue and I am extremely proud to be part of this success. You can speak to Dana Burns directly at the new office as well as go online at www.canineprofessionals.com to join and renew your membership; register for conference and much more – and we have only just begun!

This year's conference in Alexandria, Virginia was a resounding success to say the least!

Congratulations and a special thank you to this year's hard working conference committee. Cyndi Graham and her committee knocked it out of the park ... superb venue, so many great speakers and presenters, so many memories, connecting with old friends and making new ones. The conference atmosphere is the heart of the IACP culture! This conference will be remembered well into next year leading up to the 2015 event – plans are already underway. 2014's event has raised the bar for what is to come with future conferences.

The success of any organization is built on embracing change and trusting its leaders to do what they do well. In his book *The Four Hour Work Week*, Timothy Ferris states that any organization that requires multiple layers of approval to get things done is doomed to fail. To that end, your Board has fully embraced the Carver model of governance, which can be summed up as "letting people do what they do best" with benchmark reporting, rather than micro-managing. For some, this change has been extremely challenging. However, by remaining focused on our goals, the Carver model prevailed and as a result, we have a new home office, a brand new website and just pulled off the best conference ever! The train is out of the station and there is no turning back – we are reaching for the next summit.

I am extremely proud of the extent to which the comfort zone of this organization has grown - well beyond any limits that it has ever known. Change can be difficult for some, and YOUR support for our commitment to change and forging new pathways inspires even more change and growth.

I encourage you to get involved in making this vision a reality. Contact any one of the Directors ask to get involved, or pitch your idea to move the IACP closer to goal achievement. Ask questions, make suggestions – this is YOUR IACP and your Board of Directors is here to serve YOU!

It has truly been my honour to serve you. I will continue to serve as Director and Past President for the balance of my term. I am pleased to pass the Presidential baton to James Hamm to lead your IACP. Please give him and the Board of Directors your continued, enthusiastic support as we move forward into 2015.

Thank you,

Karen Laws,
President, IACP

e-mail: Karen@canineprofessionals.com



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Educational Conference 2014

by Mailey McLaughlin

What's that saying? "The only thing that two dog trainers can agree on is what the third is doing wrong"?

What if you put 300 dog professionals in a hotel for 4 days? You'd get lots of opinions...and friendships, new understanding, learning. You'd get old school wisdom and fresh perspectives. You'd get surprises, too. You might stay up most of the night talking about dogs with people you'd known a long time and people you'd just met. You might wake up with a hangover or two. You might be part of a podcast. You would probably get to meet some of the presenters up close and personal, and even share a meal with them. You might enjoy an early morning pack walk with a man of the cloth who also knows a lot about dogs and training. You would get to see some of the greats in the industry.

If you were at the Holiday Inn in downtown Alexandria, VA last month, you would have seen Gary Wilkes demonstrate the "bonk," Monica Davis demonstrate a near-foolproof method for clipping nails and stripping coats, Cyndy Douan inspire us to dance with our dogs, Babette Haggerty demonstrate martial arts katas to help our students with their training skills, and Kristin Morrison open our eyes to streamlining our businesses. You'd have heard IACP founder Martin Deeley talk about how it all began, cried at Heather Beck's struggles with rehabbing dogs, marveled at the deftness with which Michael Ellis uses food to motivate, had several "a-ha" moments as you listened

to Wendy Volhard and Dr. Allison Faber, and laughed at Janine Driver calling Brother Christopher a "tool" during a pretend game of "The Weakest Link."

And you definitely wouldn't have come away the same as you went in, and you'd have home with a renewed sense of purpose for this profession we love.

The 2014 IACP Conference is in the history books, and if you missed it, you missed what attendees have been calling the best conference ever.

"What a wonderful conference, great location, splendid people, just a wonderful time."

"I really loved seeing old friends and meeting some of you for the first time. What a really AWESOME conference this year! Can't wait to see you all again next year!"

"This weekend was my first IACP conference, but I have been to several Clicker Expos and APDT conferences. I am a new IACP member and wasn't sure what to expect but the weekend exceeded any expectations I did have. The speakers were top-notch and I felt like I came home to a huge family; everything was very well organized, which I know is no easy feat. Thank you all and I look forward to next year!"

"Still soaking up the great memories of the best IACP conference ever... perfect venue, fabulous speakers, ... something for everyone. . . and best of all ... new friendships that will last a lifetime. I am already looking forward to seeing everyone next year!"





"Awesome time at the IACP Conference. Best part: putting names and faces together and meeting new people. Getting to actually shake hands/hug people I've 'known' via Facebook for many months. AND the organizers did a Fabulous job!"

"Wow! What a fabulous time with AWESOME people and AMAZING dog trainers! I can't even remember the last time I had this much fun! I'm not only a better dog trainer because of the IACP Conference, but a better person. Thank you to the IACP board members for all your hard work for making this happen! Can't wait for next year!"



"This was my first time to come to the conference. I came with my ears and my eyes opened to observe and learn. And that I did! Thanks to the BOD and Conference staff for all your hard work. Thank you to all the other attendees for your warm welcomes and great participation. It was truly an amazing event and I am ready to get to work today!"

"Sitting here reflecting on all the ideas from conference I want to put into action when I get home. The real value of IACP membership comes from attending conference, seeing the great workshops and talking with other great dog people."

"As a novice trainer and first time conference attendee, I had no idea what to expect. What I do know is this experience totally blew me away. There is nothing I didn't like about this conference. The speakers were great, the people were friendly and even the food was good. It amazed me that I could walk up to most any of the speakers and introduce myself and they would actually take the time to talk to me. Another thing that was pretty cool was that you could go into a seminar and see the presenter of the previous seminar sitting in the audience with you. The camaraderie was amazing! I felt like I was reliving the 60's, it was all peace and love. But seriously IACP, thank you so very much for making this happen. I hope I can continue to attend these conferences for a long, long time to come."





This year's conference shattered attendance records for human and dog attendees, and appears to have exceeded expectations and inspired many. The Board and the Conference Committee are thrilled at the feedback we've been getting. We are already planning next year's event. We hope to see you all there!

See YOU next year!



Dealing with The Other Half – Owners

By Guy Kantak

In a previous article I shared my belief that a dog's owner is the most important environmental factor in its life. As Canine Professionals, we all need to interact and work with owners. After all, they're the ones that pay our fees. While strong skill sets when dealing with dogs are important, I would offer that strong communication and interpersonal skills when dealing with humans are an equally important factor in the overall success for a dog, and the owner's customer satisfaction with your service.

As an example of the importance of good interpersonal skills in business, my wife manages an office for a General Surgeon. They pay more each year for liability insurance than I make working 2 jobs – and I'm paid well. Every year, their insurance provider offers them a very sizable discount if they attend a 3 day seminar. What's the focus of the seminar? Being nice to people! I attended a Tyler Muto seminar last year and he said something very concisely that explains why; good doctors get sued, bad doctors get sued, and nice doctors don't.

Good interpersonal skills aren't just helpful for avoiding legal issues. No matter how good your business, good interpersonal skills can bring more customers to your door and make your interactions with them flow much more easily. In my experience, interacting well with your fellow humans builds a lot of good karma that can make many aspects of life go much easier. While I'm generally a somewhat quiet and observant person, I also know there are times I need to step outside that comfort zone to do my job well – to talk and interact with my fellow humans. While some may have a strong aptitude at being "good with people," I don't consider myself particularly blessed in that regard. I do believe, however, there's a reason they call these "skills". They can be developed, practiced, and improved.

Strengthening Interpersonal Skills

To begin, consider that the colorful characters we enjoy in movies and on TV have propagated the belief (by many) that you can be horrible with people if you are greatly skilled at your job. Frankly, as a supervisor for 20+ years (in a different profession), I'll tell you those beliefs are nothing but fantasy. Co-workers, and people who are paying you for a service, are not really looking for someone who is socially challenged. In short, you may be great with dogs, but if you are curt, inconsiderate, unprofessional, or otherwise difficult with fellow humans, you'll never thrive in a service-centered profession. My brother, who has been in business for decades, believes that customer satisfaction is more closely related to good interpersonal skills and professionalism.

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than actual service-related skills. I believe he is absolutely correct.

I'm not trying to date myself here, but some of the statistics I see of how much time people are spending online, texting, and otherwise interacting with a virtual reality are staggering. You won't develop great people skills solely through a computer or email. While technology can certainly make life easier, avoiding human interaction will be to your own detriment. I much prefer to call a client with a question. Having a two-sided, live discussion (vs sending 5 emails back and forth) prevents a lot of details getting lost in the mix.

Polite and Cordial to Peers

Interacting with peers is a great way to develop people skills. Whether exchanging ideas online, over the phone, or in person, why not take those opportunities to build better people skills?

Being polite and courteous goes a long way toward helping people you may have something worthwhile to share. Being argumentative, curt, or rude may make you feel better sometimes, but those behaviors have no place in a professional discussion. If people are making excuses for you "that's just how she/he is", "don't take it personally", etc. - you probably need to take a closer look at yourself.

Focus on Others

People with good interpersonal skills can always find ways to engage others in discussion. One of the best ways to do this is to focus on the other person, not yourself. Making a client the focus of your attentions goes a long way toward making them like you. If you are busy talking about yourself or trying to up-sell more services, don't be surprised when a client goes somewhere else.

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Read People and the Situation

I strongly believe most communication is non-verbal. Those who understand this are continually reading others. How the person you are speaking with carries themselves, their eye contact, even their vocal inflections can offer great information. Stiff body posturing may indicate a person is not really at ease with you. Faltering eye contact may mean you're losing their focus or trust. These clues should also be considered in the context of various situations – sometimes non-verbals are not about you but someone else or something else. Reading others is an art unto itself. But getting good at it means you develop “reading” how people are responding to you and your message. Once you get better at this, you can start adjusting delivery on the fly, and maximize your communication effectiveness. Masters at this art understand that how you say something is often more important than what you actually say. As a service provider, you should be seeking

effective communication – reading the “receiver” can improve your deliveries.

Body Language and Eye Contact

Not only is reading other people important, but so is your own body language. This non-verbal information speaks volumes. Dog trainers generally understand this important point with dogs, but some fail to recognize it's just as important with the dogs' owner(s). Good posture, avoiding distracting hand movement, and respecting the personal space of others can help them feel comfortable around you. Appropriate eye contact inspires confidence and trust – too little or too much degrades these things.

Talking not Lecturing

Speaking calmly, clearly, and with good grammar earns points. So too does including your clients in conversations. There's a huge difference in talking “with someone” vs “talking at them” or lecturing. Too much of the latter makes many defensive,

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and when people get in that state of mind they're not terribly open to listening. If your goal is to help, being judgmental or critical rarely moves the ball forward. People will always listen better to those they like than those they don't. Your attitude in how you speak to others is key here – be caring, not confrontational.

Calm and in Control

Your demeanor says a lot about you. If you walk into a room when you're having a bad day, does everyone know it? Being a professional means you shouldn't let them know it. It means getting to work and doing everything we've been speaking of whether you're having a good day or bad day. It means whether you just got bitten or a client is having a meltdown, you need to have the presence of mind to stay in control. It's easy to be calm when things are going great. But real professionals can stay calm in chaotic situations. I list this as an interpersonal skill because it is! And people paying for professional services expect this.

Listen

The old adage that "God gave you 2 ears and 1 mouth for a reason" deserves some thoughtful consideration. Nobody is learning when they are speaking; they learn when they are listening and observing. As a service professional you will need to speak, but listening first (and listening well) can make your words much more pertinent. Every dog and every client is unique. If you don't believe that, then you're sailing the waters of splendid isolation. Knowing what makes each client unique comes (mostly) from listening carefully to what things they tell you AND how they tell you those things. Identifying their unique qualities, needs, and concerns will help you better serve them.

Be Nice

Being nice isn't always easy, but simple things can make a big impression. Bringing in the newspaper on a home visit, waiting while an owner speaks to a spouse or child, or loaning a client a piece of equipment if needed are all clearly outside

your job description. But they are all also part of being nice and can earn a lot of good karma. If you can do something for a client, especially if it's inconsequential to you, why not do it? You have no idea how well remembered a simple act of kindness can be.

Summary

As service providers, we all spend time thinking about developing our skills when working with dogs. I hope you will consider developing your "people" skills that can make you more effective with the dog's owners. Not only will your business benefit, so will your clients' dogs.

Guy Kantak is a Certified Professional Trainer and owner-operator of "The K9 Guy", providing training and behavioral services throughout Central Ohio. Guy Kantak, CPT, IACP Professional Member #K2989, Worthington, OH, www.theK9guy.com

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Anthropomorphism: Is It Really So Terrible?

By Chad Mackin

Poll average dog owners and ask if their dog is capable of emotions like love and jealousy, and the consensus will be a resounding “yes.” It is likely that they will attribute much of their dogs behavior to these emotions. But despite this, for as long as I can remember, the scientific consensus has been that this is nothing more than the dogs’ owners projecting their own feelings onto the dogs. Professionals argued that only humans have advanced enough emotionally to feel such emotions, and that while dogs behaved in a manner that looked like love and jealousy, they were really much more simple survival mechanisms that appeared similar to our emotions on the surface.

This practice of projecting human emotions into dogs was termed “anthropomorphism,” and it has been a standard term in the dog industry for as long as I can remember (probably longer). I can remember trainers referencing their clients’ need to attribute such emotions to dogs with absolute disdain. A few years ago, MRI experiments indicated that dogs actually do feel love. This was not met with the fanfare in the dog community one might expect. A few short articles were passed around describing the experiment, and then everyone sort of went on as they had been doing. No one changed their training approach. Few questioned what other assumptions about the emotional capabilities of dogs were in error.

Well, another study has been done that seems to indicate that dogs are hard-wired for jealousy. Once more, the response from the dog community is

underwhelming. Beliefs change slowly, and methodology even more slowly. There is a real fear that if we attribute human-like emotions to dog, people will treat them unfairly. “My dog ate my shoes because he was mad at me for leaving, so I spanked him when I came home. He knew what he was doing.” The idea that dogs have human-like emotions might be interpreted to mean that they have human-like motivations, which can suggest they are more culpable for their choices. So what do we do with the increasing body of information suggesting that dogs do indeed experience human-like emotions? As trainers, rescuers and plain old dog lovers we cannot ignore the information because it might lead to unpleasant conclusions. That would lack integrity. We have to acknowledge that while dogs aren’t humans, they have more in common with us than we previously expected. We should take a more open look at our own assumptions without going overboard.

We already know that dogs are masters at reading humans, more so than any other species

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we've encountered. Humans and dogs both share a phenomenon known as "left gaze bias." When looking at a human face, we tend to read the left (our left) side of the face first. Both dogs and humans do this. But dogs don't do it when looking at other dogs or other animals, they only do it with humans. Dogs are also one of the few species that will respond to human gestures without lots of training. All of this suggests that the process of co-evolution has created many similarities between our species. Let's face it, one of the reasons we like dogs is that they seem human in so many ways. They usually react in ways that are predictable to most humans and can be related to human experiences. If it looks like human behavior, and it acts like human behavior, maybe it's closely related. Why dismiss it as something more primitive?

In the end, the best we can be is a human trying to look through a dog's perspective. But that's really not much clearer. Essentially, the exercise is "If *I* saw things the way the dog does, how would I behave?" But the dog isn't a human and

he doesn't behave as a human with a dog's view of things. He behaves like a dog. So is it any more clear? I don't think so. In fact, I think it muddies the water more than it clears it up. It reduces dogs to very simplistic beings with virtually no inner life. They become something "less than" rather than "other than." Science is catching up to dog lovers, and it's validating that their dogs do have an emotional depth that is at the very least similar to ours. They are not simple input/output machines. They are not merely the products of their conditioning, nor are they hive-like pack drones. Like us, they are individuals with their own interior lives. We should respect that. We should honor that. But we should never fear it.

Chad Mackin is a trainer, teacher, seminar presenter, podcaster, mentor, and muse to many. Founder of Pack to Basics, he is always seeking ways to provide clarity to dogs and people. He is also past President of IACP and knows a choke hold. It is possible that he is 7 feet tall, though no one has ever asked. Look for him on FB, or annoy him by emailing packtobasics@gmail.com.

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Exercising Self Control –It's More Than a Metaphor

by Janeen McMurtrie

Ed. Note: the first edition of this article ran in SHJ in 2010. The author has made some revisions. References can be found on the author's "Smartdogs" blog.

Self control is the measure of an animal's ability to control its own emotions and desires. It is the ability to override impulse to obtain a delayed reward. Self control is important in social interaction because it allows animals to alter their behavior to follow to rules and plans, to maintain social bonds, to reduce aggressive behavior and to cooperate with others.

The strength model of self control presented by Baumeister et al., illustrates some fascinating and important parallels between self control and muscle strength. It is based on the following ideas:

- Self control is a limited resource. When an animal uses some of it, the animal temporarily depletes his stockpile of self control.
- When the animal's stockpile of self control is depleted, its ability to use it effectively decreases.
- An animal's stockpile of self control can be restored by rest, good nutrition, and positive emotions.
- Like muscle strength, if the animal uses it regularly and well, its self control gets stronger over time.
- Other high level mental functions appear to draw on the same set of resources that self control relies on.

This is relevant to dog training because exercising self control is the basis of good social behavior, and most problem dog behavior is rooted in a lack of it.

Like Muscle Strength, Resources are Limited

How can you help a dog learn to exercise self control? First, remember that it is a limited resource. If it's late in the day and the dog is tired, stressed, and / or has already expended significant mental effort; give him a break. He's operating on a short fuse. Don't tempt fate by lighting it.

Self control resources are limited, but like muscles, we can build them up. To increase mental strength the dog needs appropriate self control exercise, which consists of proper exposure to stress. A general rule of thumb is that if the level of stress / excitement / distraction in a situation is so great that the dog loses, or nearly loses, control -- that is not an appropriate context to do

meaningful mental exercise. Help the dog by finding a less distracting situation and doing some repetitive drills.

Repetition can be helpful because an exercise or action adds a layer of predictability to the context. Predictability is reassuring and requires less mental effort for the dog to process.

Setting fair, easily recognizable goals for the dog to achieve in these kinds of exercises also encourages a sense of confidence and success. Clickers and verbal markers can be good ways to communicate to the dog that he has achieved the goal of the exercise. I use positive and negative markers extensively in this kind of work.

A Self Control Savings Account

Because self control and related mental resources are limited, we need to make sure that the dog maintains enough to use when he needs it. Baumeister et al. point out that:

"Not only self-regulation, but also acts of effortful choice and volition use the same resource."

This points to one of the great, and I think largely unrecognized, strengths of the Nothing in Life is Free (or NILIF) program - because when we implement it properly, we take away many of the dog's opportunities to make choices, leaving more mental resources available for executing self control. Think of NILIF as a kind of self control savings account.

Mind and Body Work Together

A number of studies and books have presented the correlation between physical fitness and good mental health. Give the dog plenty of rest and good nutrition. A weak, tired, thirsty, or hungry dog is a stressed dog, and stress depletes vital self control resources. If the dog's home is loud and chaotic, give him a quiet place to rest and recuperate. Feed him good quality food. If he's working hard or under a lot of stress, give him extra food and rest. Make sure he has plenty of clean, fresh water.

Intrinsic Motivation vs Drive

The dog's state of mind is important. Biological drives like hunger, thirst, and lust along with external forces like punishments and rewards have long been viewed

as the motivation for all noninstinctual behavior but a puzzle solving study on rhesus monkeys conducted by Henry Harlow showed strong evidence of a drive toward the internal or intrinsic rewards of acquiring knowledge and the feeling of success. Harlow called this “intrinsic motivation.”

Edward Deci conducted a study that found that while rewards typically deliver measurable short term gains in producing desired behaviors, not only does their effect wear off, rewards can also decrease long term motivation and compliance.

External rewards like food tend to narrow the mind's focus. External punishments can function this way as well. So in situations where you want a dog to open its mind, take in the broad context of a situation and work to use self control, intrinsic feedback can be a better choice.

Mental Cross-Training

Make sure the dog gets regular mental exercise. Much like what sitting on the couch all day does to your muscles, letting a dog do whatever he wants whenever he wants allows his self control to atrophy. To keep his self control strong, you need to do some training work with him every day. It's also important to maintain a consistent set of rules and boundaries because once these behaviors become habits, they no longer require conscious effort from the dog and therefore draw far less on his reserves.

Other high level, or “executive” mental functions also factor into the equation. Baumeister et al make an important observation about how mental cross-training can increase our human powers of self control:

“Targeted efforts to control behavior in one area, such as spending money or exercise, lead to improvements in unrelated areas, such as studying or household chores. And daily exercises in self-control, such as improving posture, altering verbal behavior, and using one's nondominant hand for simple tasks, gradually produce improvements in self-control as measured by laboratory tasks.”

A lot of my clients tell me that they don't see the importance in taking the time to teach their dog formal obedience exercises; they just want Cujo to stop attacking the mailman. But the link between mental (executive function) training and self control points out the importance of encouraging a dog to do hard mental work on a regular basis.

Training your dog to sit and heel accurately, hold a long stay, navigate obstacles, and do other seemingly unrelated mental tasks can help him build up the self control resources he needs to resist the temptation of the mailman's oh-so-tempting ankles.

The Importance of Focus Over Fun

The way you work on obedience exercises also has a bearing on how they affect the dog's self control. As pointed out in popular books by Alfie Kohn and Edward Deci, meaningful input is more intrinsically / internally motivating than praise or external rewards. If you are working with a dog that needs a boost in self control, your focus should be on meaningful input rather than fun. You want to work the dog in a focused mindful state, not in “drive.” Markers, body language cues, training aids, and the use of contrast can all be useful to achieve this.

It is also important not to make the work too easy. The right level of challenge helps keep the dog's mind focused and calm, and as I pointed out earlier, too much challenge makes the work unproductive. I typically aim for a success rate of about 80% in this kind of work, meaning that 80% of the time the dog gets the exercise right without any external help at all.

Conclusion

Self control is a vital, and all too often lacking, part of healthy canine behavior. A combination of regular physical and mental exercise and self-discipline combined with rest and good nutrition helps make people and their dogs more cooperative, less reactive and better able to resist temptation. Based on my experience it works.

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A red rectangular graphic with white text. At the top, the word "EZYDOG" is written in a stylized, bold, italicized font. Below it, the phrase "NOW GO AND PLAY!" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath that, a list of products "LEASHES - COLLARS - HARNESSSES - PACKS - FLOAT - TOYS - SAFETY" is written in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font. Below the list, the text "PROUD TO BE AFFILIATED WITH THE IACP" and "CONTACT US FOR MEMBER SPECIALS" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the website "WWW.EZYDOG.COM" and email "INFO@EZYDOG.COM" along with the phone number "877-339-9364" are written in a bold, sans-serif font.

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It's Not Always The Human

by Sean O'Shea

Your dog is a mirror.

When you change, your dog will change.

Your dog is just responding to your energy.

It's always the human.

We've all heard this message, or some variation on it, for quite a while now. The highly successful TV show *The Dog Whisperer* espoused this concept weekly - and the message behind it, while a valuable one at its core, has morphed into an all-encompassing dog training and dog owning mantra.

And to be honest, I think we needed to hear it. I think we needed to switch out of the mindset that the dog was the problem, and that his or her issues were created in a vacuum. We needed to hear that the human influence and the environment that was shared with the dog was indeed a very powerful factor in the dog's behavior, either good or bad. For a long time it seems the dog took the fall for any issues all on his own, so we needed this kick in the butt, this reality check that our dogs don't live in a vacuum, and that who we are and what we share with our dogs is a major factor in how they feel and how they behave.

But here's the thing: Like many of our reactions to a previously-accepted belief or practice that we no longer subscribe to, our tendency is to go too far the other direction. The development of the positive-only movement as a response to the more heavy-handed training styles of the past is a great example of this.

Why do us humans tend to follow these cycles of polarization? There are lots of reasons, but here are a few of the big ones:

First, there's an emotional comfort in going all-in on something. The less grey area and the less questioning/uncertainty, the easier and more comfy things are. Next, there's the belonging component - people have a deep-seated need to belong to

groups or tribes. This is often where we develop our identities and gain social security. I think guilt is the next big factor. With hindsight, we realize we may have been engaging in a choice or path that we are embarrassed or upset by, and the farther we remove ourselves from the previous choice or path, the more we assuage the guilt. So to feel comfortable emotionally, and socially, we cut out the grey, or middle, ground. We grab onto the latest belief that has some resonant value and we dive in all the way. We want to divorce ourselves completely from the previous belief that now feels outdated, uncool, and unsophisticated (and possibly painful), and we get uber-passionate about the new, cool, smart, cutting-edge thing. I get it; we all do it to some extent.

But where has this latest polarized idea taken us? It's taken us to some good places, and some not-so-good places.

We've smartly gotten away from simply blaming the dog - which is an awesome development - but the trade-off has come in the form of a complete slide in the opposite direction: simply blaming the human, neatly and completely. This has created plenty of misdiagnosed/un-helped dogs, and tons of guilt-ridden owners (with legitimately troubled dogs) who believe that who they are as humans is the sole cause for their dog's issues.

Here's the message:

If a dog is nervous, it's because the human is nervous. If a dog is aggressive, it's because the negative energy from the human created it. If a dog is anxious, it's because the human is anxious. If a dog is obsessive, it's because the human is obsessive. If a dog is fearful, it's because the human is fearful. If a dog is reactive, it's because the human is anticipating the worst, and telegraphing it to the dog. And here's the tough part:

It's often true.

Oftentimes, the human IS responsible for creating or exacerbating behavior issues, absolutely. But here's the other part of it - sometimes it's not true at all.

As someone who works with primarily heavy behavior modification cases, I see lots of troubled dogs, and plenty of them have correspondingly troubled owners. BUT, I also see plenty of troubled dogs with awesomely balanced owners, owners who are calm, owners who have a fulfilling life outside of their dogs, owners who are emotionally balanced (perhaps even more so than their trainer, but more on that later). I see owners who are knowledgeable about their dogs and training, and owners who are downright sane, smart, and normal, but who are wrestling with major dog issues--dog issues that they often didn't create.

In my earlier training days this would always perplex me, because I had bought into the popular belief, too. I'd see these normal folks and these

messed up dogs, and I'd ask myself: How can this be if it's always the human? I figured they were just hiding their dysfunction really well.

But, through experience, and an open, curious mind, I discovered that while "It's always the human" sounded great--it had a really nice poetic/personal development sway to it, which made it sound really deep--it was a super convenient concept for trainers to throw around, creating a clear and easy diagnosis/focal point, and it shifted responsibility away from the trainer and onto the owner--but it just wasn't always true or fair.

Here's the thing--once we're able to get some distance from the popular message and programming, it's pretty easy to see the situation with a bit more clarity and bit more realism. Asserting that the human component is the only determining factor in a dog's behavior is tantamount to saying that a dog is simply a blank canvas - a personality, breed, and genetic-free zone, a unique

A black and white advertisement for KONG Wobblers. The top left features the 'KONG WOBBLER' logo in a bold, stylized font. The main image shows a black and white dog interacting with a KONG Wobblers toy, which is a dark, rounded object with a hole. Several small, dark, bone-shaped treats are scattered on the floor near the dog's head. At the bottom, the text 'Feed a meal or just some treats.™' is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font.

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creature that brings nothing to the table but what it gets from us. And while this would be awesome if it was true--because that would mean every dog could be a perfect dog with a stable human, regardless of how severe their issues--anyone who's worked with enough troubled dogs will tell you that's simply not the case.

I've seen lots of troubled dogs removed from their owners, living with amazing trainers, with great energy, who don't become untroubled.

The truth is there are numerous factors that determine how a dog behaves. Genetics play a big role, breed characteristics/tendencies play a big role, early environment (and, of course, current environment), experiences, and even personality tendencies play a role. I've seen dogs come in with obvious cognitive/genetic issues, with behavior running parallel to autistic humans or the mentally disabled, that all the awesome energy, training, and correct lifestyle won't change. I've also seen dogs whose early experiences were highly traumatic (trauma from actual experiences or lack of experiences), and, although the best energy, training, and lifestyle will help, it will likely never erase or remove that trauma completely. There are the millions of variations on these (and other) factors, with varying degrees of prominence.

When we objectively look at all the possible factors contributing to a dog's behavior, it becomes pretty clear that the human they live with is just one piece of the puzzle--a big one--but still just one piece.

The astute trainer knows that successful training and problem solving is a lot like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. In order to have the best chance at success, you need to make sure you've got all the pieces on the table to work with.

If we truly want our clients to succeed--both human and canine--it's imperative that we examine all the possible puzzle pieces that are in play. If we automatically remove any of these pieces from our list of possible contributing factors simply because they don't involve the human's energy/behavior/state of mind, we're doing both parties a disservice, and they, and you, will likely struggle.

Here's a great check-in regarding the whole "It's always the human" and "In order for the dog to be balanced, you must first be balanced" message: There are lots of great trainers doing consistently awesome work with troubled dogs...who aren't exactly perfectly balanced folks. Trust me, I'm one of them! So how is that we not-perfectly-balanced folk are able to help these unstable dogs make huge strides and progress even though we're not perfectly balanced ourselves?

I think it's a good question to ask, and in many ways it underscores the value of what you do being possibly more important than who you are - within reason. If you understand a dog's needs, and if you share the necessary structure, rules, guidance, discipline, even if you're not perfectly emotionally stable (and who is!?), you can usually have a great dog and relationship. Of course, if who you are emotionally prevents you from seeing accurately what your dog's needs are, or worse, knowing what the needs are, but still not providing them, that's a different story. And I think we

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all understand that if you're a serious emotional wreck, your dog's behavior is definitely going to be negatively affected by you.

Let me clarify what I'm saying: It is possible for someone who is stressed or anxious or worried or not 100% confident (or perhaps a bit of all of them!), to develop good handling skills, great timing, great dog reading skills, an awesome training approach, and effect great change in a dog. Conversely, it's also possible for someone to be calm, relaxed, confident, centered, have great handling skills, great timing, great dog reading skills, and an awesome training approach, and still struggle with certain dogs. You don't need to be perfectly balanced to successfully train dogs, and that, sometimes, with certain dogs that come with serious baggage, even if you are pretty darn balanced and have great skills, it won't matter a whole lot.

I know this concept of unbalanced folks often being able to create balanced dogs and balanced folks sometimes not being able to create balanced dogs will likely stick in a lot people's craws. I get it. It's not the pretty, poetic, neat and tidy, super-cool belief club to belong to, but it's often true. And, in all it's messy realism, it offers the greatest opportunity for the most authentic diagnosis and truth-based solutions.

Yes, many, if not most of the times, the human will have a large part to play in what issues are occurring with the dog you're working with - we're all influenced by our surroundings, especially those that we live with daily - but we also have to acknowledge that dogs are complex creatures, who come to the table with genetic, breed, personality, and experiential variables. Some of these variables can be highly influenced and trained, and some not so much.

I think it's a great time for us to take a deeper look at this latest version of convenient, safe, path-of-least-mental-resistance polarization, and add some critical thinking, empathy, and self-responsibility to the party. We're too smart and too tuned-in to the dogs we work with to truly buy (or sell) the notion that it's always the human. I know somewhere deep down, we've all always known

that it was just a little too simple, a little too one-dimensional, and a little too tidy to be true.

So in an effort to serve our clients, their dogs, and ourselves at the highest, most authentic, and fair level, don't just look at the human, look everywhere. Keep all your puzzle pieces on the table so the dog, the owner, and you, the trainer, have the best chance at success. To do our best work, and to honor both species, we have to eschew the tidy for the messy, the simple for the complex. We need to embrace all the mess that comes with being a complex being on this planet--whether human or dog.

The good news is that even if you're a bit eccentric, a bit anxious, a bit needy, a bit insecure (aka human), but you've cultivated the necessary knowledge and skill, you can do amazing work and create amazing transformations with dogs. The bad news is that sometimes, with some dogs, all the skills and knowledge in the world will still leave a gap that won't be filled.

This messy message is a good one to remember, for yourself, and for your clients.

Sean O'Shea is the owner and head trainer for The Good Dog Training And Rehabilitation in Los Angeles and New Orleans, he co-founded and co-leads the highly successful Train the Trainers seminar series for dog trainers, he writes the popular Good Dog Life Blog, and he recently released Learn To Train The Good Dog Way: The Foundation DVD.

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Critical Thinking

by Mailey McLaughlin, M.Ed., CDT, Editor

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.” ~Max Planck

When was the last time you said “thank you”?

Was it today, when your spouse handed you a bagel as you ran out the door? Was it said to your child because she got dressed on time, or picked up a toy? Did you say it to the barista at your favorite coffee shop, to a customer who dropped a dog off for training or grooming; or within the confines of your car, sarcastically, of course, when another driver finally hit the gas?

If you had any interaction with other human beings today, you probably said “thank you” at least once.

But I’ll bet you didn’t really mean it.

Okay, I take that back. Maybe you weren’t making small talk. Maybe you really were thankful for your customer, your spouse, your coffee. If so, you are probably a happier person than most. If you actually wrote down these incidences where you felt grateful, you’d be even happier.

In one study on gratitude (Emmons and McCullough), participants kept weekly journals, and wrote down five things that made them grateful the previous week. Others wrote five things they considered hassles, and the last group wrote about things that had affected them, but were not told to focus on the positive or the negative.

After 10 weeks, the first group reported significantly more happiness than the other two (25%), fewer health complaints, and more desire to exercise.

That’s a positive finding, but a later study by Emmons revealed something even better: different participants wrote daily (instead of weekly) what they were grateful for. This led to greater increases in gratitude than the weekly journals had, but it got better. These participants also reported offering others more assistance with a personal problem, or emotional support, indicating that the gratitude exercise increased their goodwill towards others. A third study, conducted on patients with physical disabilities, revealed the same conclusion, and its participants also reported that they slept better, had more optimism in general, more life satisfaction, and more connectivity to people in their lives.

“If you’ve forgotten the language of gratitude, you’ll never be on speaking terms with happiness.” ~Anonymous

Gratitude helps lower depression, and keeps marriages from crumbling, too. Those who practice it consistently and truthfully report higher levels of life satisfaction. And why not? To be grateful means to acknowledge that you are rich—if not in monetary wealth, in personal happiness wealth. The idea

that we are the product of our thoughts and feelings, and that we can steer our own outcomes with those thoughts, is no longer considered “New Age.” If you have been fortunate in any way, you increase your wealth by being grateful for what you have.

Expressing real gratitude doesn’t just make your life better. It enriches those around you. You know how it feels to be warmly thanked, right? Spread that feeling around. Don’t be stingy with it. It costs you virtually nothing in time or energy, but it gives back multi-fold.

When I began working at a large humane society, I just knew that the work there would make me angry at people. I waited for the anger to come, to make me wary, even bitter (the shelter/rescue field is one of the “top” fields for compassion fatigue). But it didn’t happen as I expected.

Sure, people made me angry, but instead of holding on to that, I tried to see things from their point of view. Much as I do when working with dogs, I decided to assume that resistance and poor behavior were due to a lack of clarity, not a personality flaw. A lack of clarity is a problem that can be rectified! And once I embraced that idea, my anger dissipated. I actually gained an empathy for people that I had never had before. Most were not bad people at all. They were just struggling, trying to cope with limited information, and unable to distance themselves emotionally from their pets.

Not only did I not hate them, I began to thank them for giving me the opportunity to serve them. I started to see what they were presenting as a gift, and when I expressed true gratitude for it, everyone changed for the better.

Do people still do dumb things when it comes to pets? You bet. Can I reach all of them? No. Do I thank the ones I cannot reach? Not to their faces. But I do thank them. I would not be who I am *right this minute* if it weren’t for them, and everyone in my life who has helped me in some way.

Gratitude is like a muscle: if you don’t use it, it atrophies. I’ll bet you can think of no fewer than 5 people right now who have helped you, molded you, made you better, or improved your life—just today, or for a while now. Why not reach out and thank them? Write them. Call them. Text them, or thank them on Facebook if you must (the best way to express gratitude is through the means with which your recipient, not you, is most comfortable), but do it sincerely, and with feeling. Don’t allow them to brush it off; push on with it until they’ve truly heard you, and they believe you.

Lather, rinse, repeat—daily, weekly, or monthly, make it a habit to express gratitude.

It just may change your life.

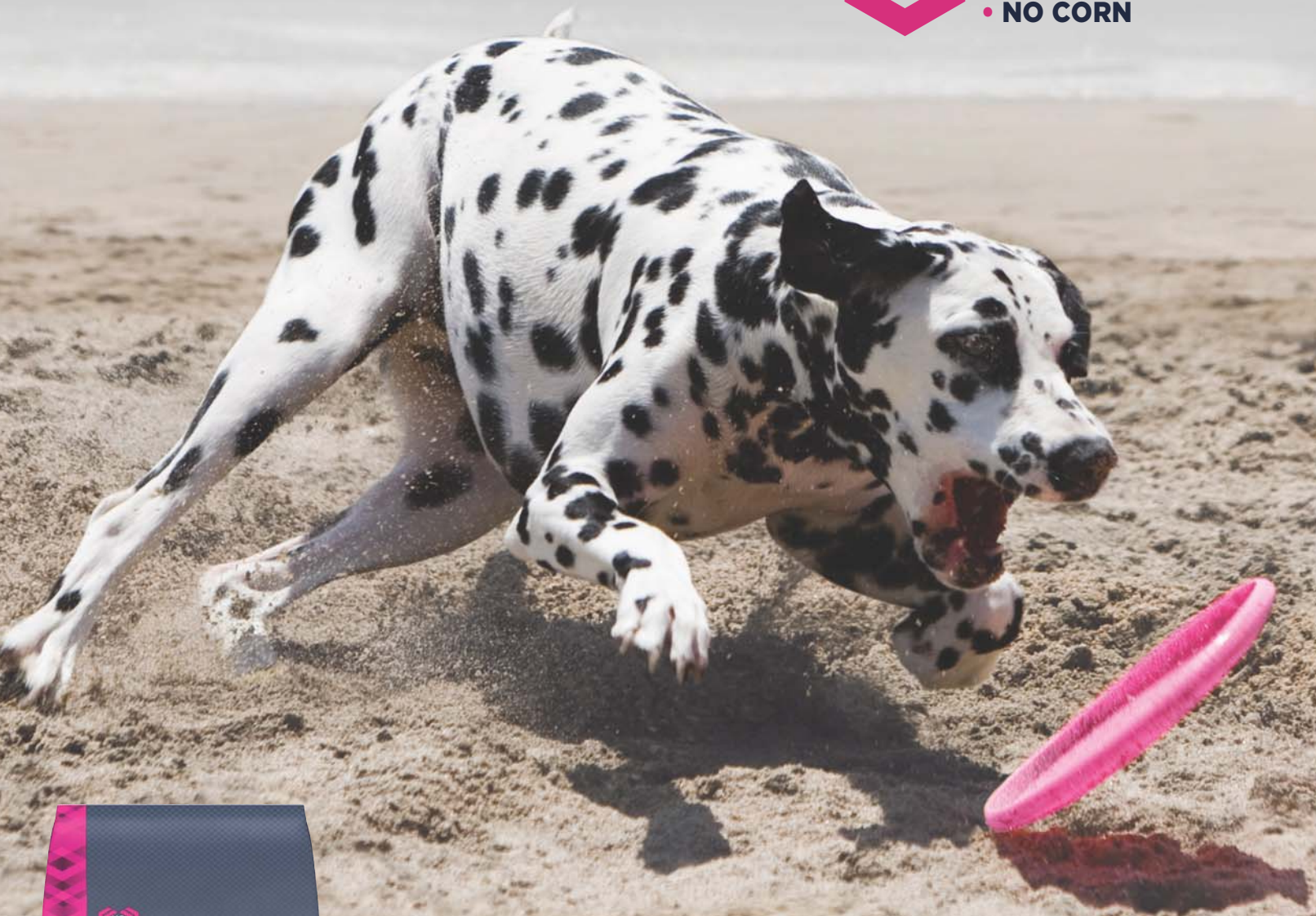
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