



Better than a Mission Statement

Our Strategic Vision

Almost every business has a mission statement. Unfortunately, once those mission statements are created and shared, they are almost always forgotten, and have little if anything to do with everyone's day-to-day work.

Thankfully, this isn't a "mission statement." It's a strategic vision – meaning it can actually be followed into the future. The main difference is that we can all relate to it and act on it with our daily work. It's designed to let us all know how we fit into the Inn The Doghouse story in meaningful ways. It will be used on a regular basis – by everyone – as a guide for who we serve best, how we serve them best, and why it is truly worthwhile to work here.

Probably the most important part of this is the fact that all of us must clearly understand not just our work, but exactly how that impacts our customer's lives. We have to know how our actions will improve the happiness and quality of life of our customers and their pets. Not only do we need to know it, we need to communicate it with our actions.

We're excited about this vision and we hope you will be too. Thanks for taking the time to read it, and we hope you find your place in it.

Who We Should Serve Best

The type of customer that we should serve best is just like Lauren. She lives about 5 miles from our facility and dearly loves her dogs Betty and Baxter. In fact, she loves them so much that she considers them part of her family! And because Lauren is a conscientious owner, she is willing to be picky regarding who helps her take care of them.

Our best customers, like Lauren, are willing to be educated, and really want two main things from us: 1) Peace of Mind and 2) Outstanding Service.

Peace of Mind

When we say "peace of mind" that means something very specific. Peace of mind means the ability to relax - to really relax. Our customers want to know that their dog is in the best hands, getting the best treatment, and having a blast. They want to know that as a dog owner they are doing the best they can for their dog and it matters. It means knowing they can trust us.

In building that trust, we really get to know our customers and their pets. We know what they do and what they like. We congratulate them on personal and professional victories, and we care about their setbacks.

In getting to know customers like Lauren on this level, we can better anticipate their needs and be ready to serve those needs...even before they ask. We can also recommend care and services for Betty and Baxter that Lauren might not be aware of. This keeps her pets in peak health and happiness.

The other aspect of peace of mind is that we listen - carefully. And we answer questions with professionalism and courtesy. We take our customers concerns to heart, and want to let them know that we are interested in understanding and solving those concerns more than looking good. If something can be made better, we're on it!

Outstanding service can sound like a marketing term but at Inn The Doghouse we really mean it. The Laurens of the world have a certain expectation - thoughts about how things should go, and the results they really want to see. And it's our job to deliver consistently and professionally.

How We Serve Them Best

Now let's talk service. This means that our customer's dog is happy. They think to themselves, "My dog is having as good a time or better than I am" while they are here. Our goal is to have everything our customers need. But it doesn't end there. Having options available is good, but it only becomes excellent when the way those services are provided and priced, exceeds expectations.

In doing that, we have to have excellent service, products, and professionals. But we also have to have a culture that inspires everyone to think ahead, and to consider what might be important to any particular client. Perhaps it's just a reassuring phone call or an unexpected gift at checkout...whatever it is, it's found by paying attention to our customers' needs and acting in meaningful ways.

Lauren's European Vacation

It wasn't too long ago that Lauren and her husband, Nick, decided to go on a vacation to Italy. Lauren had been there as a college student but always wanted to go back. But the busyness of life had always gotten in the way. Now, she decided it was finally time. Ciao!

As she was happily planning her dream vacation, 3 weeks in Europe, choosing the right hotels, organizing the activities, deciding which restaurants, she was suddenly struck with an overwhelming feeling of guilt.

Why? She was supposed to be excited and happy - but suddenly that all seemed to disappear. It was the thought of her dogs. Would they have as good a time as Lauren

and Nick? Would they be happy and well cared for? What kind of owner would she be if she left this to chance?

At this point Lauren and Nick had not yet come to be customers at Inn The Doghouse and just tried to make do with what she could find in the way of dog care. She was not very happy. And with this trip in the planning stages, she promised herself that this time would be different - very different.

How She Found Us

Lauren found us through our state of the art customer care system. We pride ourselves with being in communication with our customers. And it turns out that a twice per month communication is just what our customers want. Our automated system helps keep them up on events and specials, in addition to the facts of their dog's most recent visits and other account information they want to know.

In our system, we will occasionally send out a request for referrals where we offer a great discount on the services our customers most use and value. In fact, we send them an email perfectly designed so that they can just forward it to a few friends while they are thinking about it. We found that if a referral system is not easy and convenient, it will likely not work. And since referrals are the #1 way we grow, we had to get this right.

Our customers' friends get a great looking email, and if the friend uses the offer, then the referring customer gets a discount as well. Customers with the most referrals get special end of year rewards and accolades. We call it the "Top Dog Contest" where our top 10 referring clients of the year get priority booking and discounts off services. Yes, they love it!

That's how we first met Lauren and Nick. Their neighbor had been a long time customer of ours and upon getting the email, she forwarded it to Lauren.

That email took Lauren to a special, private web page that told the story, our story, a short version of this strategic vision, of how we do what we do. As Lauren read the page and saw the heartwarming images, she thought to herself, "This is exactly what I need for Betty and Baxter...now how do I get started?"

The page, anticipating her desire, ended with a specific call to action and a complimentary article of interest to Lauren regarding safe dog play.

She was so excited about the expertise and professionalism that she called Inn the Doghouse to schedule a free tour. She was pleasantly surprised by our open door policy regarding tours and visits to our facility. Our Receptionist was informative about Inn The Doghouse's services and eased her fears by explaining our dog to person ratio and ongoing education of our staff. Our Receptionist also clearly stated our vaccination and spay/neuter policies and our next steps regarding a Trial Day for all new dogs. It was explained that our Trial Day assures that we have the opportunity to vet our clients

to ensure we have friendly and healthy dogs at our facility. Our Receptionist also made sure that Lauren and Nick had directions to our facility and when to expect their visit.

Lifelong Relationships

As you can see, we want to start the relationship on the right footing, so that long term trust can be established. Our best customers become a part of our family, and we become a part of theirs. We're not just another stop on the to-do list. We care and we know them and their dogs, and they value us for that. We want them to continue being customers through generations of family dogs – customers for life (their life) is our goal.

Because Lauren and Nick's travel plans were coming up soon, she needed to take the tour soon. On the day of her appointment, she pulled up in the parking lot, and we were ready.

The Tour

Lauren and Nick arrived anxiously, but soon were put at ease by the calm atmosphere and the sounds of happy dogs playing in daycare. As she arrived at the office, an ITD staff member opened the door for her. Lauren and Nick were greeted like family by a staff member in the lobby. She was welcomed with a smile and a gentle touch, and offered a refreshing beverage while she waited for the tour to begin. She even thought to herself about how great the place smelled. In fact she said, "Oh wow! It doesn't smell like animals are here!"

Our Canine Concierge introduced herself and spent a few minutes getting to know Lauren and Nick and hearing about their dogs. Lauren and Nick were also introduced to a few other prospective clients, and they were off. They began with a quick stop by our Public Square suites, so Lauren and Nick could hear the history of Inn The Doghouse and why we do what we do. Each area of Inn The Doghouse is named after areas of Cleveland and Lauren noticed our hometown pride. Clevelanders are friendly and hardworking and our staff reflects the city we live in. Our boarding kennels look and smell clean, and our building is in excellent shape. Lauren and Nick can tell by the condition of the buildings and play areas, the happy barking of the dogs playing and the obedience skills our staff is using with the dogs that her dogs will be safe and secure.

After visiting each area of the facility, Lauren and Nick were very impressed with the cleanliness and professionalism we showed. And Lauren was thinking in the back of her mind, "This is THE place!" Before she left Inn The Doghouse, the Receptionist provided Lauren and her husband with our brochure and Client forms and asked when she would like to schedule a Trial Day. Lauren set the date to bring in her dogs and left happy and excited.

The day before Betty and Baxter's Trial Day visit, Lauren automatically received an email that gave her a breakdown of what to expect on that first day, service explanations, costs, and policies. These are written in plain language so that everyone

can easily understand them. Lauren and Nick really liked this upfront, clear information about costs and services. And the bond of trust took another step forward.

Their First Day Stay

An Inn The Doghouse associate graciously walked outside to meet Lauren and her fur children. Since Betty and Baxter had been cooped up for some time, they were a real handful getting out of the SUV. Much to Lauren's relief, we helped guide both dogs inside where they were greeted by our staff. Lauren got to walk in peacefully and felt a weight lift off her shoulders. "Wow" she thought, "this is great!"

She and the staff member went over again what the day would entail and confirmed any meals or special requests Lauren had. She left for work excited about what the day would bring. Back at the office, she was so curious, and called to check in just to make sure they were okay. Our Canine Concierge checked on the pups and came back to the phone with a quick report that all was well and that we looked forward to seeing her this afternoon. Lauren was also encouraged to watch her dogs play on the webcams and walked through the process on how to download the app to her phone. In fact, just about 3hrs later, she got an email with a photo of her dogs happily playing! "Unbelievable!" she thought to herself.

When Lauren came back to pick up the dogs that afternoon, she was greeted by our Canine Concierge, and asked about her day. She already felt like she was getting to know Inn The Doghouse, and so far, she really liked everyone she had come into contact with.

At this point our Canine Concierge presented Lauren with her personalized welcome binder (which includes the pricing, policies, services, and other useful information). These binders look great with our logo and colors and have easy to use tabs so that the customer can easily find what they need. This binder also has a list of questions that get Lauren thinking about diet and behavior the Inn The Doghouse "way".

Our staff gave her a warm greeting and a total rundown of Betty & Baxter's day. Lauren and the Canine Concierge opened to the first page of the welcome binder where a list of recommendations were provided based on the information gathered from Lauren's online responses, as well as a report card for Lauren to take home. We noticed during the day that Betty was jumping on the staff quite a bit, and suggested that if Lauren would like, we could work on that while she was in the Italy. "Wow," thought Lauren. "I wish I could come back to a Betty who doesn't jump on strangers!" Of course that would be okay with her!

She was asked if a particular package or service worked best for her. She enthusiastically said, "Yes" and the arrangements were made for Betty and Baxter to spend their vacation with us!

Two days later, Lauren & Nick received a thank you note in the mail, thanking them for being a new client of Inn The Doghouse and for the opportunity to get to know Betty & Baxter. They even mentioned how sweet both dogs were, and noticed how Baxter likes his belly rubs. Lauren and Nick couldn't believe how thoughtful we were, and how genuinely we seemed to care for their pups.

Lauren & Nick's Time to Travel

Well, the big day finally came and Lauren and Nick dropped off her dogs, said a heartfelt goodbye and was reassured by our staff that the dogs would be fine, happy, and well taken care of. With a few tears and some smiles, Lauren and Nick drove off towards the airport.

On her way, Lauren got really excited about her adventure ahead. She was also thinking how amazing Betty & Baxter's vacation was going to be too! She took a deep breath and let out a sigh of relief. Now to Italy in peace! When she arrived, she had already received an email from us with happy pictures of her pups!

Our Services

Much like Lauren and Nick's experience on vacation, our regular customers get the same quality care and services too!

All owners can log on to our website to check on their pups. A simple phone call gives them a quick but thorough report as well. Depending on if it's winter or summer we have special seasonal treats, Spa treatments, and services that make it a wonderful experience for everyone.

One of our services that many don't expect but truly value is the great education we give our customers. We help them understand the healthy food choices which we can offer, good nutrition, the best toys, and treats. We help them become better owners and feel great about how well they can take care of their dogs.

In fact after Lauren returned from Europe to pick up her happy, healthy, tired dogs, she was hooked. The dogs looked and smelled great after their departure grooms and Betty even sat for her to put her leash on! Baxter couldn't stop wagging his tail, and was insistent on saying goodbye to every staffer on his way out. Lauren and Nick are now part of the Inn The Doghouse family, and we are part of hers. As a regular, she now takes advantage of many of our services each week.

The Benefits Just Keep On Coming

In line with our desire to provide the "above and beyond" experience for Lauren, a few days after her first Pet Spa appointment, we followed up with a call. In this call, we want to hear first-hand how her experience is going and if there's anything we can do better.

This call data is recorded in our customer system so that we can follow up as needed. We also let her know to look for our member's email and what it will contain (offers, discounts, and education). And she gladly posts a glowing review of our services online.

A few months into this new relationship, she is informed about our other services and incentivized to try it out. With our combination discount (a discount for multiple services) she decides to try it out. Of course, she loves it!

We want to make sure every need is handled and anticipated with excellence and professionalism in a systematic way that builds a long term relationship.

Our Team

To serve our best customers in this way, our team has to be the best. Our staff is upbeat and happy, professionally dressed, and knows what's expected of them. We are all doing continuing education to keep our skill set fresh and up to date.

We all use the proper terminology for our services and are well versed in communicating them with prospects and customers alike. In fact every job function is documented and fully systemized. There's a special "way" we do everything. And we reward our employees for the great work they do. We all take ownership of our responsibilities and feel great about knowing that our efforts are rewarded.

Why We Do It

When Whitney was 9 years old and her brother was 2 years old, her father died. As a distraction to their grief, she and her mother started breeding and showing Champion Chocolate Labrador Retrievers. As Whitney participated in Dog Shows, Agility Training and whelping litters of puppies, her love of animals and the knowledge of how to best care for them consumed her young life. Once, when a puppy was born not breathing, Whitney cleared its airway and breathed into its little muzzle until it breathed on its own. She always slept next to the whelping pen for the first three days of the puppy's lives to make sure that Mom and pups were doing well during those first fragile days. When a runt didn't make it, she cried for days.

As a way to supplement a teacher's salary with two young children, her mother started boarding pets in their home. Even back in the 80's, people appreciated how we welcomed their dogs and cats as members of our family no matter how long or short their stay was with us.

As an adult, Whitney still wanted to contribute to the enrichment of our pets' lives and Co-chaired the building of the Lakewood Dog Park. She had a 6 month old Bullmastiff named Dublin and wanted him to have a place to play with other dogs. She spent two years working with other progressive, dog lovers to create an amenity for pet owners. Still, there was no place in Cleveland where Dublin would not have to stay in a 5 X 10 kennel for week if she and her husband went out of town, and she found it very difficult to convince her friends to take her well-mannered 130lb dog into their homes.

In July 2003, Whitney was laid off of her corporate job working for a consulting firm. Instead of getting depressed, with the encouragement of her husband she wrote a business plan and set to create the first dog daycare in Cleveland with on-site boarding, grooming and cat rooms. She was going to create a **better** boarding and daycare facility with trained staff, outdoor runs and more options. She wanted to give other pet owners like herself the comfort that their dogs were not bored and frustrated in a cage, but the peace of mind that they were loved, cared for and played with just like their owners' would be doing with them if they could.

We enjoy seeing pet owners feel good about taking care of their 4 legged family members. The services we provide for them goes far beyond just taking care of their animals. It involves developing a meaningful purpose filled relationship with each and every one of them, a relationship that will grow and prosper through many generations of pet ownership. It's so great to be able to educate pet owners and share the knowledge we have, in order for them to make better decisions for their pet(s) on a daily basis. We truly want their pet(s) to be healthier and live longer happier lives.

Nothing makes us happier than to hear a pet owner say; "When my dog knows he's going to Inn The Doghouse he/she gets so excited!!" That to us is true success!!

We Are Their Companions

We believe our customers' dogs are family members. No, not in a ridiculous way, but in a humane way - we should view them as deserving of respect and loving care.

At Inn The Doghouse our goal is to improve the lives of dogs and their owners in all situations. Dogs are full of unconditional love. And it's our duty to give some of that back.

When you see in a customer's eyes the look they get when they really understand that we care about their dogs just the way they do - when they really know that it's true - well that's a feeling that's hard to describe. It's overwhelming, it's heartwarming. It's the combination of immense trust and honorable service that makes us so proud of what we do. And it drives us to constantly be looking for ways to improve.

And that's why we do it. This is our story and this is Inn The Doghouse!