

# 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 our facility's 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. Be creative in envisioning how you'll be a key player in manifesting our shared Strategic Vision.

## Who We Should Serve Best

The type of customer that we should serve best is just like Anna Anderson and her husband, Ed. They live about 10 minutes from our facility and dearly love their dogs, Max and Aspen. In fact, they love them so much that they consider them part of their family! Because the Andersons are conscientious owners, they are quite selective in their choice of care provider for their dogs.

Our best customers, like the Andersons, really want two main things from us:

1. Peace of Mind
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. We also rise to the challenge when going above and beyond is not necessary, but appreciated, to ensure the wellbeing of their pets – and this over time shows the Andersons we are to be counted on. It shows what our own standards are and what is acceptable to us.

In getting to know customers like Anna and Ed on this level, we can better anticipate their needs and be ready to serve those needs...even before they ask.

We can hopefully help them have a more carefree life with their dog without worrying about secondary care. We can also recommend care and services for Max and Aspen that Anna and Ed might not be aware of. This keeps their pets in peak health and happiness.

The other aspect of peace of mind is that we listen - carefully. We also answer questions with professionalism and courtesy, respecting perspectives, values, and needs different from our own. We take our customers' concerns to heart, and want to let them know that our primary focus is understanding and solving those concerns. This is secondary to making ourselves look good. Improvement is always the goal and if something can be made better, we're on it!

Outstanding service can sound like a marketing term but at our facility we really mean it. The Andersons of the world have a certain expectation - thoughts about how things should go, and the results they really want to see. It's our job to deliver those results 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 truly appreciated by the client when those services are provided in a way that exceeds their expectations.

In doing that, we have to have excellent service, products, and professionals. We also have to have a culture that inspires our staff to think ahead, be empathic, creative problem solvers, work together as a strong team, and handle situations with grace and professionalism. We have to consider what might be important to any particular client.

Perhaps it's just a reassuring comment or an unexpected report card describing their dog's enrichment activity...whatever it is, developing and delivering a perfectly tailored service component can only happen when we pay attention to our customers' needs and act in meaningful ways.



## Anna and Ed's European Vacation

It wasn't too long ago that Anna and Ed decided to go on a vacation to Europe. Anna had been there as a college student but always wanted to go back, but the busyness of life had always gotten in the way. Finally, she decided it was time. Ciao!

As they were happily planning their three-week dream vacation to Europe, choosing the right hotels, organizing the activities, deciding which restaurants to visit, Anna 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 their dogs. Would they have as good a time as Anna and Ed? Would they be happy and well cared for? What kind of owner would she be if she left this to chance? The vacation wouldn't even be worth taking and wouldn't be enjoyed if she couldn't find someone they could completely trust. At this point the Andersons had not yet come to be a customer at our facility and just tried to make do with what they could find in the way of dog care, which they were not very happy with.

As a matter of fact, they used to take their dogs to another facility but every time they pulled into the parking lot their dogs started shaking and didn't want to get out of the car. The facility was very loud with barking dogs and smelled a bit of urine. The staff wore grungy clothes and the lobby was cold and smelled doggy. The staff reassured the Andersons the dogs did "fine" while they were boarding, but their dogs' behavior was saying something different. The last time she picked her dogs up from a two-day overnight stay their dogs bedding was soaked through with urine and Anna felt horrible knowing her dogs didn't receive proper care. She swore she would never board her dogs again.

## How She Found Us

Anna and Ed had close friends who also had dogs. They watched as their friends took trip after trip and their pets always came back happy and healthy! Anna approached her friend with her dilemma. She asked her good friend whom they had found to take care of their dogs while they were away.

Her friend sat her down at the family dinner table over a cup of coffee. She explained that she had been using our facility since we opened. Anna again shared her experiences with kennels and was very concerned about trying to kennel her dogs again.

With Anna in tow, her friend went to the computer and pulled up our website. She went into detail about what our facility has to offer, a bustling dog gym and pool, an enrichment daycare program, unique and fun training classes, and top of the line overnight care. Together they looked at beautiful, professional pictures of the dogs enjoying the services offered and Anna felt excited. Anna was thrilled to see dogs in playgroups outdoors in large yards, having a swim in the indoor heated pool, exercising on a treadmill and engaged in training classes.

She explained that she knew the staff and owners personally and trusted our facility with her family members.

Together they read the Yelp reviews of happy clients who raved about how clean the facility looked and smelled, how friendly and professional all of the staff are, how happy their dogs are to get out of the car when they pull in the driveway, and how happy and tired their dogs are after playing for the day or extended lodging visit! She told Anna to call us but she had better hurry as our kennel books up quickly!

That's how we first met Anna and Ed Anderson. Anna called us that day and asked us a ton of questions. We invited her to come out to take a tour any day of the week between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. She didn't need an appointment nor did she have to call ahead of time. She was so relieved to hear that because other places required appointments and which she said made her concerned that they were "staging" their tours.

She was so excited about the expertise and professionalism that she shared her experience with Ed. They talked and decided when they would come for their "unannounced tour".

## 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. Often customers will be dropping off their dog but wind up in several conversations on the way out with employees, because they also think of us as friends – they enjoy sharing important life news with us. We want them to continue being customers through generations of family dogs – customers for life is our goal.

Because Anna and Ed's travel plans were coming up quickly, they needed to take the tour soon. On the day they decided to tour (which was the very next day), they pulled up in the parking lot, and we were ready.

## The Tour

Anna and Ed arrived anxiously, but were soon put at ease by the view of dogs playing all around. Anna and Ed were greeted like they were family by a staff member in the lobby. They were welcomed with a smile by a professional looking staff member. They even commented to us about how great the place smelled, that it doesn't smell like animals. In fact, Anna said, "Oh wow! It smells like a spa in here!"



Our receptionist spent a few minutes getting to know Anna and Ed and hearing about their dogs. It wasn't long before Natalie arrived up front to take them on their tour. They began with hearing the history of our facility and why we do what we do. They heard about how Natalie and Alicia came to be the owners of our facility, their experience, and family upbringing of high standards for dog welfare and training. You see, the two sisters are from a family that cherished canines and earned reputations for being "dogcentric". They could see how, with that unique, specialized family history and dedication to dogs they brought a new level of care and enrichment to the local dogs and their families.

Our lodging areas look and smell clean, and our buildings are in excellent shape. Our dens have beautiful glass doors, radiant heated floors, and their own exclusive outside area attached to their inside resting area. Not your typical kennel!

Anna and Ed could tell by the condition of the buildings, the fencing, the play areas, and all the enrichment activities that their dogs ~~will~~ would be safe, secure, and have a great time.

After visiting each area of the facility, Anna and Ed were very impressed with the cleanliness and professionalism we showed. They couldn't believe their eyes when they walked through the gym and saw staff exercising dogs on treadmills, our awesome indoor one-on-one fetch room and a wall of training classes no different than the gym they have a membership with. The pool was sparkling clean and contained a pair of happy labs were enjoying a private swim. Every staff member they came in contact with smiled genuinely and said "hello" - and even held doors open for them - and they could tell it wasn't an act. These employees really loved being at work! They saw daycare supervisors doing engagement activities with their groups and that really impressed them. They were thinking in the back of their minds, "This is THE place!"

We answered all of their questions and gave them a brochure of fees along with all of our requirements. They were really happy that a pet sitter was onsite all night long. That made them feel very secure and that their dogs would be safe. They were given a free daycare pass to give their dogs an opportunity to see how THEY would like the facility.

## Their First Day

Our facility associate graciously opened the door to meet Anna and Ed and the boys. Well, since Max and Aspen had been cooped up for some time, they were a real handful. Much to Anna and Ed's relief, the staff offered to take the dogs to a potty yard and then out to daycare. Anna got to peacefully connect with the receptionist about a few last questions. "Wow" she thought, "this is great!"

Anna, Ed and the receptionist went over again what the day would entail and confirmed any grooming wishes or special requests they had.

They left for their day trip looking very happy and content. Anna was so curious that she called to check in just to make sure they were okay. Our staff member gave a quick report that all was well with her boys and they had integrated into their appropriate play groups. In fact, just about three hours later, she got an email with a photo of her dogs happily playing! "Unbelievable!" she thought to herself.

When Anna and Ed came back to pick up the dogs that afternoon, they were greeted by another professional who knew that it was their dogs first day and how much they were loving their respected daycare groups. They already felt like they were getting to know our facility, and so far, they really liked everyone.

Anna and Ed were told that for their upcoming trip, their kids might really enjoy daycare daily because of their energy level, and maybe a swim in the pool for Max who loved the splash pools in daycare. Anna enthusiastically said, "Yes" and the arrangements were made for Max and Aspen to spend their vacation with us!

## **Anna and Ed's Time to Travel**

Well, the big day finally came and Anna and Ed dropped off their dogs, said a heartfelt goodbye, and were reassured by our staff that the dogs would have fun and be well taken care of. With a few tears and some smiles, Anna and Ed drove off towards the airport.

On their way, Anna and Ed got really excited about their adventure ahead. They were also thinking how amazing Max and Aspen's vacation was going to be too! Anna took a deep breath and let out a sigh of relief. Now off to Europe in peace! When they arrived, they had already received an email from us with happy pictures of their pups!

Even though they took the vacation to rest from normal communications, they were delighted that even from the little cafes in France they could check Facebook...

They could see videos of their dogs making new friends, playing, and even acting goofy and silly, which warmed their hearts. Everyone misses their dear dogs when they have to leave them, but seeing them have their own doggy vacation helped them not miss them so much.

## **Our Services**

Much like the Anderson's experience on vacation, our daily customers get the same quality care and services too!

All owners get an email from us on their first day of daycare, if they add an enrichment activity, and if they are lodging with us. They can log onto Facebook to catch a beautiful photo or video their pup in a playgroup. They can call us anytime to check in and get honest and professional info on how their dog is doing. Regardless if it's winter or summer, we have special 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 educate our clients about what to look for in evaluating a pet care facility. We show them how we meet those things here at K9 Activity Club. Our lodge staff pays very close attention to our guests, they closely observe and analyze every dog's health and potential issues, such as new lumps formed since their previous stay, and provide that feedback to their parents. We help them feel great about how well their dogs will be taken care of, paid attention to and loved!

In fact, after the Andersons returned from Europe to pick up their happy, healthy, tired dogs, they were hooked. Their dogs' belongings were all returned to them in a new K9 Activity Club bag (including a clean folded blanket that they brought for Aspen). Max even sat for her to put his leash on! Aspen couldn't stop wagging his tail, and was insistent on saying goodbye to every staffer on his way out.

When they got in the car Aspen climbed onto Anna's lap and she hugged her little guy who smelled like lavender from this departure bath. Anna and Ed are now part of our facility family, and we are part of theirs.

## **The Benefits Just Keep On Coming**

Anna and Ed have become one of our biggest fans! They have recommended us to countless friends and neighbors. And with each new client they refer, they get a free day of Daycare. They really like that. They now bring the boys for daycare with enrichment activities regularly and often have them bathed while they are here. They have taken the boys to many of our different training classes, for fun and manners. With regular training and daycare their obedience and overall wellbeing has greatly improved. They even decided to add a third dog to their family and adopted a foster dog from our facility because they know they have the resources to provide for another dog with the help of K9 Activity Club and Staff. They feel supported as "dog people" and were able to grow their dog family because of that support.

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. They are motivated to make a difference and be a part of an incredible team. They treat each other like friends and family. They communicate with respect, compassion and kindness. They recognize one another's unique attributes and learn from those differences. They deal with challenges in a mature, professional way. They take ownership as part of strong team and help build systems when change is needed.

We are all doing continuing training and education to keep our skill sets 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**

Its what were passionate about. As children we practically grew up in a whelping box. Our household was filled with animals of all kinds. Our mom raised and showed dogs, she worked at a vet hospital and was a dog trainer.

My sister and I have both explored many different training styles and classes for our personal enjoyment since childhood. We love learning new dog-related information and skills. We are dogcentric people. Since owning K9ACL we are so fulfilled by providing a great service to our community and helping people by helping their dogs. We enjoy seeing pet owners feel good about taking care of their 4-legged family members. We are very proud of our growing staff. Our employees receive service and care for their own dogs here at K9ACL so, in a sense, they are also clients and know how important seamless service is to the conscientious pet owner.



The services we provide for customers go 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 to help them make better decisions for their pets on a daily basis. We truly want their pets 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 coming to you guys, 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 view them as deserving of respect and loving care.

At our facility 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 pets 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. This level of care takes a village. Our team is our village!

**And that's why we do it.  
This is our story and this  
is our vision!**