

## Education is the key – Can we afford it?

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### Overview

This paper is in two parts. The first part looks at just what sort of education programme you may require, who you want to educate, how you want to educate, etc. You should by no means be confined by what I have suggested in structuring your programme as local rules and needs tend to differ somewhat. The elements that I have suggested are pretty generic and I have attempted to open them up for you to question, analyse and discuss so that you can develop an outcome that is well-researched and considered as the most suitable for your area.

The second part of this paper discusses and introduces ideas and strategies on how you may be able to fund the above initiative.

### Part one – The programme

#### *Why bother to educate?*

First off we need to fully understand the 'big picture'. It is hard when we are busy coping with the day to day stuff to retain an overall idea of what the big picture or 'grand strategy' should be, and even harder to make space in our diaries to free up time for some 'big picture' analysis.

In an enforcement and compliance activity like animal management our officers go about their daily tasks and after a while the work seems to fall into natural and logical patterns. There is a lot of repetition in the work. There are also patterns to most aspects of our animal management work; there is a pattern for impounding, like there is a pattern of human behaviour where people try to avoid paying their registration, a pattern to the escalation of aggressive dog behaviour, a pattern to irresponsible dog ownership, and so on.

Most of these behaviour patterns appear to stem from a simple word – 'habit'. If we don't do something tangible and meaningful about replacing negative behaviour habits with positive habits, then we are inevitably going to be faced with more of the 'same old' work patterns and an endless series of 'Band-Aid' type solutions to addressing the symptoms and outcomes of what really is a human behaviour rather than a dog problem.

Our 'big picture' should always be to change the negative behaviours or habits of our dog-owning community members. We bother to educate these owners because enforcement alone will never achieve this goal. Enforcement needs to be accompanied by a focused education programme to have any chance of a measurable and enduring habitual change. The other stakeholders in our communities would also benefit from some form of dog-related education.

#### *Who or what needs educating?*

Well the short answer to this question is – everyone (including the dogs).

I believe the outcome of what we are trying to achieve in our industry is to:

1. Define what the reasonable community expectations are when it comes to dog and owner behaviour.
2. Have in place clear, unambiguous and consistent rules that govern the expectations mentioned in 1.

3. Have a clearly defined and effective process to manage unreasonable dogs and owners when they stray outside the boundaries of 2.
4. Establish a comprehensive education programme so that ALL members of our communities fully understand 1, 2 and 3 and voluntarily remain within the above boundaries.

If we accept that the community expectations mentioned in 1 are already in place then we can tick these off and proceed to 2. (Bear in mind that it doesn't hurt to re-visit these expectations from time to time as communities have a habit of changing and you should never assume you know everything about your animal management customers just because you have been doing it for a long time and "you already know what they want").

The clear and consistent rules (2) should be well established and already written, with either national, state or local laws in abundance. Whether they really work or not and don't confuse people is maybe best left as a topic for another discussion paper, so for the moment lets assume that they deliver the 'goods'.

The processes mentioned in 3 should equally be established, and hopefully understood by everyone affected by them (especially the animal management professionals who are tasked with applying them).

This leaves us with point 4, and if you are found to be lacking in your education programmes there can be a lot of (avoidable) confusion and grief in dealing with the other 3 points. Without a thorough community understanding of this whole area the job just gets harder.

Just exactly 'Who' needs all this education? Well, let's start with:

- Children of all ages and sizes in how to act and react around dogs.
- Adults (of all ages and sizes in how to act and react around dogs).
- Owners of dogs on how to care for and responsibly own them.
- Owners of dogs on how to manage them so they don't upset their neighbours.
- The non-dog owning members of the community so they too can understand just what reasonable and responsible dog ownership actually looks like.
- Politicians and members of the media so that they understand enough to prevent or minimise sensationalising and knee-jerk reacting whenever dog events occur.
- Domestic dogs that really need thoroughly socialising and training throughout their natural life. (Ditto some of the owners).
- Anyone else who I have inadvertently missed out on so far.

I believe that there is no one single all-encompassing answer to successful urban animal management. We stand the best chance of achieving good results and outcomes if we are prepared to 'wage the battle' on all fronts. This means that we should respond to complaints, investigate, resolve, enforce, educate, impound, give out advice, prosecute, communicate; in fact we should include all of this and more in our box of tricks.

Doing all of the above, and doing it consistently keeps the pressure on to enable us any chance of achieving a successful habitual change for the people that need it. But a war on all fronts comes at a price – doesn't it?

### **Who should I include in my education programme?**

#### **School aged children**

If you believe that you should be doing some work educating school aged children in learning strategies on how to behave around dogs then first off look and see what other people are doing. Believe me it is a lot easier and cheaper to copy someone else or to buy an off the shelf programme than to try and 'reinvent the wheel'.

You will need to carefully consider whether it is appropriate to send your Animal Management Officers into the classroom environment, as teachers are 'proudly possessive' of their classroom standards and protocols so to present your programme it might be wiser to engage the services of an ex-teacher or somebody equally 'classroom-savvy' in order to gain the confidence and support from the teaching fraternity (or should that read 'sorority' nowadays?).

After all would you honestly ask a primary school teacher to go out and use a catch pole to apprehend an aggressive dog in their playground? So why send an AMO into a classroom under the protectively-interested gaze of a group of teachers? One wrong word or action, especially in handling inattentive or unruly children would likely mean that you don't get asked back again, which sort of kills off your school programme – doesn't it?

A much better option is to focus the whole thing around impressing the teachers. If you can sell it to them you get invited back every year, and your school 'dog education' programme gets to succeed.

#### **Pre-school children**

If you think that pre-school children need some dog-safe advice then forget about trying to teach the kids, you should aim any programme at their parents, as they are supposed to be supervising the little one's environment so it is they who should be learning the correct strategies and passing them on to their toddlers etc. Although the 'experts' might disagree with me I believe that this group of kids (under 5's) would have difficulty grasping the subtleties of reading 'dog language' through the signs of 'ears laid back', 'erect posture' (whatever that means), 'submissive tail position', etc. Far better to thoroughly teach their parents or caregivers the basic signs and then tell them it is their responsibility to create and manage a safe environment for their 'wee ones' on how to interact with dogs.

#### **Dog owners**

Now that's all of the kids sorted out you might turn your attention on the dog owners. These come in five basic categories:

**Really good dog owners** - who responsibly own their adequately socialised dogs.

Ignore this lot AT YOUR PERIL! Time and again animal management professionals are so focused on managing the Irresponsible and 'Rat-Bag' categories of owner that they lose sight of the responsible majority. These people register their dogs on time every year; keep them under control, care for their animals, and all of the other things that earns them the title 'GOOD CUSTOMER'. And how do we usually reward them? We normally increase their dog fees in order to fund the increasing level of service we need to sort out the Irresponsible and the Rat-Bag owners.

In terms of keeping your good customers happy this is not a very healthy strategy. You need to come up with ways of rewarding your good customers in a tangible manner.

This is called 'accentuating the positive' and it really works. The downside to ignoring this group and taking them for granted is potentially 'civil disobedience' and getting them to 'join the bad guys', which can make everyone's job more difficult to perform.

If, on the other hand, this is well managed you have just enlisted the support and help of the majority of your good owners in polarizing and managing the minority of owners who cause you grief.

**Reasonably good dog owners** - who have poorly socialised dogs with the odd case of bad manners (the dog). How many times have you visited a property where the owner allows his dog to greet you and then says (early in the conversation), "Yes he seems friendly but just watch out for him if I'm not here".

What this owner is really saying to you is, "I have only succeeded in socialising my dog with his immediate family members and I have failed miserably to properly socialise him with everyone else on Planet Earth".

If this wasn't true then why do we continue to have instances where a dog has attacked a person, or another animal and there has been no previous or obvious sign of the stereotyped 'Irresponsible Owner'? The dog has been registered every year, microchipped, de-sexed, kept in a well-managed and secure environment, given plenty of exercise, etc. So how come it bit someone?

Maybe these owners have to be educated that the initial puppy training and 'good manners' classes are not enough. Maybe the education and socialising process should continue throughout the dog's adult life and have regular reinforcement and contact with other people, dogs, animal species and situations so that the dog presents a much reduced risk of causing problems 'out of the blue'. Maybe this entire category of dog/owner behaviour is both predictable and preventable and we should include some form of dog/owner evaluation or training in our overall programme.

In many areas of modern society, where safety and health are at stake, it is true to say that it is better to "Build a fence at the top of the cliff – than park the ambulance at the bottom".

A comprehensive animal management education programme is the best fence you can buy – much cheaper than a fleet of ambulances too.

**Part-time dog owners** - who practice responsible dog management, but only in areas that suits them to. eg. the owner who religiously takes his/her dog for its daily walk on a lead, but never bothers to pick up any droppings left by the dog in a public place. This group of owners tends to comply with some of the rules all of the time, or all of the rules some of the time, or just the rules that suit them, or only the rules that they think they can get away with, or maybe all of the above. If you contemplate owning a dog, i.e. sharing your life with a dog, you need some honest commitment. Just like the commitment you should show when planning, and giving a life to, a human family. Dogs are not 'fashion accessories' or pieces of furniture that you can throw out when you are tired of having them around. Owners need to commit to the 'total package' – or not at all.

Raising dogs is similar to raising teenagers, I know - I have two of each. Both examples of these two species require knowing where the boundaries are. They also need some clear and consistent guidance and enforcement from their owners (or parents) when they cross these boundaries in order for them to learn how far to 'push it'. Believe it or not this disciplined approach gives them comfort.

If dogs are left to their own devices and are given the freedom to do whatsoever they wish, then the entire sum of all activities usually factors down to the common denominators of;

- Feeding whenever they want to, and eating as much as they want to (irrespective of whether they really feel hungry).
- Roaming where and whenever they please, with little regard for the niceties of society or time of day.
- Leaving untidiness, mess, disorder and 'little messages' in their wake.
- Being always on the alert for the 'sniff of hormones' in the air and striving to demonstrate their overt romantic tendencies whenever the opportunity presents itself (or should I say 'arises').

Come to think of there really are a lot of similarities between the species are there not?

The role of the good responsible dog owner is to manage the dog's environment in an effective 'best practice' way so that neither the dog nor the local community foregoes any 'quality of life'. The 'total package' of responsible dog ownership is to ensure that they comply with all of the rules – ALL of the time. The owner's main job is to curb the dog's natural tendencies so that they can fit into society. An untrained, poorly socialised or non-managed dog does nobody any favours, and is guaranteed to spread the negative aspects of its species far and wide, giving a bad name to all dogs and owners.

It is up to the animal management professionals to educate to ensure that every dog owner fully understands just what the 'best practices' really are, and that they adopt these practices into their every day routines. This can be restated as changing their 'old habits' for new ones, or simply put as 'raising their game'. If they continue to cling to their old habits then a dose of enforcement is required - just like teenagers!

**Irresponsible owners** - by virtue of the fact that they are partially or totally ignorant of any of the standards of dog behaviour, the rules or their responsibilities. This group is for want of a better name – ignorant (of the dog rules). Some of this ignorance can stem from simple factors such as being new immigrants and not speaking our language fluently. It can also stem from a cultural background where dogs are or were treated quite differently from what is currently expected in our communities.

Some dog owners may have recently come from parts of the Pacific and Asia where local dogs were always allowed to roam free to do what they wanted, non-owned or community-owned they scavenge and survive as best they can with no visible form of control.

This can be a significant challenge to our local animal control professionals in order to get the message across, and might involve enlisting the aid of translators and cultural advisors to assist in communicating just what standards of dog ownership and responsibility are expected.

In my experience if an immigrant is seriously embracing a new and beneficial life in our country then, once the issue has been fully explained and understood, the problem is speedily resolved and unlikely to be repeated. Either way the challenge for the education programme is to ensure that all of the relevant printed matter does the job of communicating in simple terms (non legal jargon) and probably in different languages.

There are also some people in society who have problems with literacy and do not easily read, or are in the habit of reading, all of the council dog notices in their local newspaper. These groups usually respond better to the spoken word, especially if the speaker is reinforced by a community leader with some local 'mana'. The inclusion of some community based talks about the local dog 'rules' would be of value to your education programme.

**'Rat-Bag' owners** - who know the rules and society's standards and who choose to flout or ignore them.

This group of people usually forms the local 'hard-core' of problem dog owners. It could be argued that education has already been tried and has failed. Dog related issues and complaints emanating from this sector inevitably end up with enforcement and a court appearance. Sometimes people finally get the message and nice surprises do occur. All we can do is to keep the pressure on them to change their habits.

#### **Educating the remainder – who else?**

Although we have covered the main stakeholders groups who would likely benefit from some relevant education the remainder of the community still needs to be kept informed when dog related issues or events occur. This form of education is best described as 'Proactive Communication' and is best achieved by having a regular 'dog' column in your local press, which will keep everyone 'in the loop' and advise them what is going on.

#### **What should my education programme look like?**

Now that we have identified the main target groups for our education programme we should put together all of the elements that are needed to do the job. The following are only a suggestion on my part, and the list will only be limited by your imagination, but to give you some idea of what your complete package should look like, here goes;

- A presentation that focuses on the 5 – 12 year olds, held in their classroom, with an audio-visual element, role-play, class discussion, and hand-outs for each child to take home for discussion with their parents. Obviously the learning content will need to be varied according to the age of the children being presented to. We have found that taking a live dog into the classroom is a negative as the distraction of the dog impedes the children's ability to retain the lesson, not to mention that even the most placid of dogs might not take too kindly to having lots of strange hands patting it and a warning 'nip' from an ill-at-ease dog might well torpedo your school education programme if it appeared as front page news.
- A training package specifically designed to teach commonsense strategies to the parents of pre-school children on how to avoid or minimise the risk of injury to the child. In our experience most dog-inflicted injuries on small children are avoidable by appropriate and enlightened parental supervision.
- A series of promotions throughout the year designed to reward the good dog owner for their efforts in keeping up the standards. This can be in the form of free handouts (dog products) from AMO's whenever they observe an owner 'doing the right thing' i.e. walking their dog on a lead by a busy road, carrying a plastic bag for droppings, etc.
- An annual (or 6-monthly) Free Community Dog Evaluation/ Training Course. This would mean engaging the services of a reputable dog trainer or bona-fide dog obedience club to take classes of owners (about 12 at a time), where for a 2-hour session the dogs are evaluated and scored on their good manners (or lack of), obedience, basic training, behaviour and degree of sociability with others. The owner would receive valuable feedback, handy hints, training and management strategies, and in extreme cases the name of professional dog behavioural support. This evaluation session would be at no charge to the owner, so there would be no reluctance to participate. We have been conducting these for a while now. They are fully subscribed and we get to meet a whole lot of dogs and owners who are then able to prevent undesirable behaviour from escalating into something worse (real 'fence at the top of the cliff' stuff).

We normally schedule 12 x 2-hour sessions over a couple of weekends, which means a total of 144 dogs and owners get to share the experience.

- Publish a small book, or similar of every one of your laws, rules and community expectations of what is expected of dogs and their owners. Break it down (simplify it) into common everyday, easy to understand language. Then, if necessary, translate it into the various languages that make up the ethnic mix of your communities. Foster a working relationship with local community leaders and then try for some buy-in from their communities on a starting basis that knowledge of the rules is the best form of prevention to avoid enforcement.
- Back up all of the above with a selection of printed pamphlets or brochures that reinforce and explain everything so that they are easily distributed at any appropriate opportunity to 'spread the word'.
- Promote and publicise all of the above with good coverage in your local news media. You may have to consider using 'Advertorials', which are basically paid adverts that read like local news stories. Most newspapers will give free editorial space to organisations that regularly advertise so there are opportunities for deals to be struck in this area. The main points to cover are that you will need to promote all the elements of your expanded education programme as well as 'being seen to promote' it. The latter is very important because it always pays to be seen as doing something proactive and positive. This is both good for the animal management department and your employing council.

#### ***How can I afford this Programme?***

The answer to this question is quite simple really – "Don't worry about it right now".

What you should be focusing upon at this stage is that your programme is capable of reaching out to all of the stakeholders that you have identified will benefit from it. When you think you have got everything in there that you need, you can proceed to work out how much it will cost. Remember to split the costs into the 'up front' or establishment cost and the ongoing or annual cost of delivering the programme.

Get quotes from various printers, graphic artists, etc and get more than one of each because costs and quotations can vary widely. Find out how much you would have to pay for labour content, i.e. what is the hourly rate that ex-teachers are prepared to work for? How many schools are there in your area? How many classes of 5 – 12 year olds?

Prepare a spreadsheet-based budget that has literally everything and every cost listed down to the nth degree. And don't forget the cost of advertising in your local media.

If you do your sums right you will end up with an amount which will in all likelihood be quite a lot more than your present annual education budget (if you have one). In fact if you haven't fainted at the shock of seeing so many zeros in the final total then you will probably be in good shape to tackle the next few stages.

You can now start contemplating how on Earth you are going to pay for such an ambitious programme when your employing Council has never previously funded this sort of thing, especially to this extent. Of course there is always the possibility that your council will listen to your plea (for that read 'business Plan') and will grant all of the extra funds at the first time of asking. If this happens then you don't need to read on any further as you have just won 'Lotto' and you have succeeded in funding your 'Big Picture Education Programme' at first try.

If you haven't won 'Lotto' at this stage – please continue reading.

## **Part Two – The Financial Challenge**

Most animal management activities that are carried out by local councils are funded by a mixture of income from the registration of dogs, maybe a top up from fines or infringements levied on errant dog owners, and more than likely the lion's share from local rates or taxes from the communities that are served.

There are usually (quite vocal) sectors of the community who openly monitor your council's spending practices and never hesitate to criticise expenditure initiatives in your local media. This can be quite a tough audience to get on-side and supportive of your brand new education programme, so you can expect it to attract very close scrutiny and healthy discussion if you attempt to fund it through traditional channels.

Strong community and political support will be required, especially if you intend to ask them to fund an initiative or two that they have never previously contemplated, or even fully understand. There is always the inevitable and contestable 'prioritising' argument where you will really have to compete with other council departments and other council initiatives for your share of the funds that are budgeted for the year.

The bottom line in all this is that the Animal Management Department is usually near the 'bottom of the food chain' when it comes to budget priorities within council and a few extra dollars to fund the right tools to 'wage war on all fronts' is not normally a reality. If we are going to go for a dramatically increased education 'spend' we therefore have to come up with a way (or ways) to short-circuit the traditional budget-cost-management mentality and get our hands on some real dollars to pay for what is needed.

We clearly have to think outside of the traditional council square.

#### ***Should we try to get some form of sponsorship?***

You might get lucky and enlist the support of a sponsor from the commercial sector who would fund your education programme. Most companies in the animal food or products industry typically would have budgets to spend on ways in which their company's products are portrayed or marketed to their target customers. You will need to fully research just what any prospective sponsor's views are on your animal management activities. Is your department known as the 'Dog Police' in your area? Are you going to attract these companies if they perceive that your 'operating style' would make them uncomfortable associating their product brand and logo with you? - Probably not.

You will also need to understand your own council's views on sponsorships as there may be some limitations or internal policy directives on these things, so you had better step carefully to avoid treading on anybody's toes.

Some of the larger city councils have corporate staff employed especially to manage these activities. If this is the case then proceed with caution as it is not unknown for these council 'promotions' departments to accept sponsorship funds and then decide what to spend the cash on, which means it might not necessarily be directed towards your new education programme and you can end up with your hard-negotiated cash being hijacked by another council department. At best there will likely be an element of 'control' exerted by these people and you will need to thrash out an agreement with them up front as to just what your operating guidelines and 'rules of engagement' are.

A sponsorship deal does not always guarantee that you will consistently receive an annual funding of cash, so you might find yourself having to negotiate with different companies every year. This should be avoided as it is a time consuming exercise and there is always the risk of not finding a new sponsor for the coming year, which would place your education programme firmly in jeopardy.

This would be crucial to achieving a successful outcome as many of the negative attitudinal changes you are striving for and the learning of new positive habits are fairly long term goals for your programme, which would be seriously undermined if the funding were to be withdrawn part of the way through.

I have known of animal organisations who tried every year to gain forms of sponsorship with every company in town, with every deal running concurrently. After a while they found it difficult to attract just one, until they 'wised up' and signed a long term agreement with only one company. Exclusive deals are harder to put together but they do attract worthwhile sponsors as this allows them to shut out their competitors.

Sponsorship comes in many forms and varieties, but in the end they all boil down to the same thing. That is you are asking a commercial enterprise to fund something you are doing, and you are giving little if anything in return. I'm not saying they don't work, but there is something else you might like to try first.

### ***The 'Strategic Alliance'***

The strategic alliance form of relationship contains the following elements;

- They are based on a 'Win-Win' philosophy where both partners contribute.
- They only work well when the parties have identified some strong common goals.
- They require proper planning and the honouring of promises and deliverables.
- They are long term.
- They must be exclusive, although it is possible to enter into strategic alliances with different companies at the same time as long as they are from non-competing sectors of the animal industry.

The basis to a strategic alliance is the old saying of "You scratch my back – and I'll scratch yours". Simply put, if you can identify some areas or activities that you can agree on swapping or 'trading', and these areas can assist both organisations in achieving some common goals, then you have the potential for an alliance to work.

### ***Establishing common goals***

Let's start by using the example of a fictitious dog food company throughout our discussion. The name of this fictitious organisation we'll call 'Best-Of-All-Dog-Foods' Limited, which we'll shorten to 'Best Offal' for brevity. Now 'Best Offal' Ltd makes a tinned dog food product called "Tasty Guts". This is a quality product and well established on the local dog food market.

*(If there is already a company and a dog food product by these names then I sincerely apologise for the portrayal as it is entirely coincidental).*

Set up a short meeting with the relevant employee of Best Offal (probably the 'Tasty Guts' Product Manager) and outline your proposal and business plan. The first thing you will need to do is to develop and agree on common goals for your alliance. A good one to start with is that both of your organisations firmly support 'Responsible Dog Ownership'. This might sound obvious to you but these things need to be spelt out up front and put to them for consideration. There probably aren't many companies in the world dog food market that would disagree with this goal, as part of being a good responsible owner has to be that they buy plenty of dog food each week as part of caring for their dog.

Think up a couple of other objectives to put on the table at this meeting and see what their reaction is. If they are attracted to and support these common goals then you can proceed to outline the alliance activities you have in mind.

If you cannot agree on any common objectives then your strategic alliance will not work with this potential partner and you need to move on to the next prospect.

A good idea will be to put these agreed objectives down in writing on a 'Charter' document and then invite all (both) parties to sign it as a visible form of commitment to the success of the future relationship.

### ***What do I have to trade?***

The first area you might look at is in 'profile'. Think of how you might be able to assist this potential strategic partner in the marketing and sale of their products. How can you use your current resources or activities to raise their profile so that they can sell more products?

You should be thinking up ways in which a 'joint approach' between your two organisations can assist Best Offal in growing their business, while they are funding your education initiatives.

'Branding' is a worthwhile avenue to explore. This is where your alliance partner's name and logo, and the names of their products gain exposure by being printed on your relevant educational literature. I say 'relevant' because there are a few of your forms and printed items that are used as part of your enforcement processes, many of them likely to be used in court as part of a prosecution process. These printed forms might prove a touch 'insensitive' to Best Offal if their top selling brand of Tasty Guts had its name plastered all over a court document that was likely to result in a dog owner being unhappy with the result.

Similarly most companies in the dog products industry have an aversion to their brands or logos appearing on the sides of your animal management vehicles, especially if the vehicle is involved with one of the messier aspects of controlling dogs, aggressive or otherwise.

Not a good look you might say (in either case).

Far better to limit the use of these brands and logos to the informative and proactive educational documents, brochures, leaflets, posters etc that you intend to use for encouraging responsible ownership. For this type of printed matter it is usually easier to negotiate with the alliance partner an agreement where they pick up the total cost of the educational printed items in return for good name and branding exposure.

In effect you will design and develop what you want said on these leaflets etc and meet with Best Offal to gain their input and 'sign-off'. Then place the order with your printer with the instruction to ship the printed items to you and forward the invoice to Best Offal for payment. This is very achievable and allows you to cover the cost of your printing every year (although don't get tempted to send Best Offal your non-educational printed matter invoices as this will likely see you without an alliance partner as soon as they find out). Stick to the 'script' and honour all of your promises and undertakings. In other words you have to act professionally.

Another big item you have control over, which is of value to Best Offal is your 'Dog Register' or local owner database. Managed correctly this can fund the balance of your programme. Mismanaged or poorly approached this can spoil your day (and every subsequent day) quite quickly.

### ***Sharing your Dog Database – Or not?***

Nowadays a lot of public organisations quote and use the Privacy Act or similar legislation as a reason to prevent commercial access to government databases. Most of the time this is quite a good thing as I for one do not take too kindly to receiving any unsolicited mail or sales advances from any company who is trying to sell me their products, especially when they have got my details from someone else's computer file.

The following is not intended to instruct the reader on how to circumvent these protections of privacy; rather it describes a process on how to achieve a 'Win-Win' for your department and your Strategic Alliance partner without bending any of the rules that govern databases of this nature.

Best Offal Ltd like any manufacturer or distributor of dog food products likes to know a bit about its customers. It builds 'profiles' on the dog owners (the people who are most likely to buy Tasty Guts in their supermarket). Worldwide the domestic pet food market is simply HUGE, and literally millions of dollars are spent annually by competing companies on ways that they might increase their sales, grow their market share, and beat their competitors.

A common method to promote their products is in the form of the unsolicited mail drop, or 'letter drop'. Thousands of cheap leaflets are put in every mailbox in the city, advertising a new product or promotion or 'special', and the leaflet may be designed as a voucher to redeem a sample of the product at a cheaper price when they go shopping.

This method is best-described as the 'shotgun' approach and is not without its down side. To start with there is no guarantee that each leaflet will arrive in the letter box of a dog owner. This means that if your dog ownership/population ratios in the city are eight to one (an average of one dog every nine houses in every street), you will be wasting eight leaflets for every one that gets to a house where a dog lives. When you realise that a lot of home owners tend to put all of this junk mail straight into the trash without really looking at what it is or says, then you realise that the 'letter drop' is not a wonderfully efficient way of getting new dog-owning customers to buy Tasty Guts.

It would be a lot cheaper if Best Offal could know exactly where the dogs live, and mail out only to them. This information is worth quite a lot to Best Offal and all of the other companies selling products in the dog industry, - but how can we get these addresses and owner details to our alliance partner?

Another way that Best Offal would use this information to advantage would be to ask these dog owners some questions relating to their buying habits, preferences, dog eating habits, and all of the other stuff that good marketing departments thrive on to increase sales of their products. Once again we are not allowed to pass on these details to the good people at Best Offal because of privacy considerations.

There is quite a significant cost to Best Offal's marketing department in getting all of their product and market questions responded to, and door to door 'question-askers' are not exactly cheap to employ. Once again we are in a position to assist our alliance partner.

One thing we are able to do is to send out leaflets, or educational material to the addresses of all the dog owners in our area. If we were to send out a newsletter or two each year to all of our dog owners we could structure a 'deal' something like this;

1. The animal management activity prints and sends out two newsletters each year directly to each dog owner. Best Offal Ltd pays for the printing and mail costs.
2. A part of the newsletter is written by your department and covers whatever aspect of your education programme that you wish to emphasise.
3. The remainder of the newsletter is written by Best Offal and contains a mixture of advertising, or discount vouchers for Tasty Guts, or better still, an invitation to the owner, that if they would like to fill out the short questionnaire on the back of the newsletter and send it to Best Offal, they will receive 'x' amount of free product by participating in their marketing survey.

4. If on the other hand the dog owner does not wish to participate, then they can just throw the newsletter in the trash and not bother. Either way the dog owner has freedom of choice whether they participate in the Tasty Guts promotion and they only need send the form in to Best Offal if they choose to do so.
5. The dog owner can cancel his/her participation with Best Offal at any time, while Best Offal's marketing department only get to survey or contact the dog owner with the owner's prior permission, and best of all - no privacy laws are broken by anybody.
6. This sort of deal is much more effective and significantly cheaper than Best Offal's traditional method of obtaining market information, so they are now in a position to forward some of those cost savings to you and underwrite your education programme.

#### *Who wins?*

Your strategic alliance partner is now marketing their products with a more effective method of targeting their end-user customers (the dog owners).

The dog owners get to participate in a simple survey if they choose to do so, and receive a reward for their efforts.

Your animal management department gets to fund its new educational programme.

The targeted sectors of the community benefit by the new programme.

The employing council gets to look good as it now has an effective education programme administered by a proactive animal management department.

Best of all the ratepaying community is not funding any of it at all, so they can have no objection to it, and the whole strategic alliance concept is politically neutral, which means no complaints to the local media about how their money is being spent (as none of the public fund is touched).

*Everybody wins.*

#### *Other areas of involvement for the Strategic Alliance Partner*

Earlier in Part One of this document I mentioned the offer of a Free Community Dog Training Programme. Your Strategic Alliance partner would more than likely be interested in paying the local dog obedience organisation for their services, putting together a pack of products and other goodies for each attendee, and all it needs is to organise the local media to run a positive news story at the training session and you have an instant Win-Win situation on your hands. We trialed this concept three years ago in Wellington City and it was very successful. These are now held annually in both Wellington and Manukau City (Auckland) and all have been fully subscribed by owners wishing to gain some feedback, handy training hints and an evaluation on the standard of good manners that their dog exhibits.

Free handouts in the form of dog products (Tasty Guts maybe) are always good to accentuate the positive with good dog owners. Once again your alliance partner Best Offal Ltd will gladly supply a few cases of product to give away during the promotional period. We call this promotion 'Free-Gift Fortnight' and have been running it successfully for nearly seven years.

The animal management vehicle is driving along, spies an owner walking his/her dog on a lead and pulls alongside for a chat. The owners normally go on the defensive when this happens, wondering what they have done wrong. Your officer then congratulates them on setting a good example, and thanks them for doing the right thing, i.e. walking the dog on a lead by a road.

A free can of Tasty Guts gets handed over (or a supermarket voucher which believe me is a lot easier), and everyone gets to share a positive experience. At the start of the promotional fortnight the media gets involved by running a 'good news' story on the promotion and once again – everyone wins.

You will probably think of more instances where you can use free product like this. Always bear in mind that your strategic alliance partner will find it easier to donate products than cash. Its just the way the system works.

Although be careful with giving things out during your school sessions for the 5 – 12 year olds. Schools have gone a bit 'PC' nowadays and it is sometimes frowned upon to hand out sweets and lollies as everyone is sensitive about the 'taking lollies from strangers' lessons they teach. In fact handing out cans of Tasty Guts would probably be frowned on too.

If you plan to buy a proper training programme for your child bite prevention education stuff, then consider negotiating with your alliance partner a deal where they buy the programmes for the schools and get a bit of branding and profile in the bargain (lots of kids have dogs at home, which would all potentially love to be fed Tasty Guts!)

## Conclusion

I have attempted to outline a simple strategy with this paper. The basics are all sound and workable. Everything I have suggested has been developed, tried and tested in the last few years. Most of it is still in operation and has been found to be effective. We like to come up with new ideas every year. Not everything we have tried has worked wonderfully, but it hasn't stopped us trying out new stuff.

*Remember – You are only limited by your imagination!*

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## About the Author

Barry Gillingwater was born and raised in London and left school for a career in the Royal Air Force as a pilot. He spent most of his service as an instructor leaving in 1973, before travelling to New Zealand in early '74.

He flew as a commercial pilot in NZ, mostly as a flight instructor, until leaving flying behind in the mid-eighties for a career change and new challenges (one of which was marriage). Further study brought qualifications in operational and logistics management, culminating in him holding positions of responsibility in multi-national businesses, specializing in process management, management systems and 'change management'. In 1990 Manukau City Council formed a local government business unit for various compliance activities, one of which was animal control, and Barry was hired as its inaugural General Manager. Around this time Barry and Trish became parents of sons Michael and Andrew, who arrived two years apart – life became quite hectic! During the next five years Barry restructured the business unit, upgraded processes, and totally realigned and improved the whole animal control operation. In 1995 he left Manukau City to form his own business consultancy, but retained an interest in the 'dog' operation. When Manukau advertised the animal control work for tender in 1999, Barry formed a new company, 'DSS Animal Management' and won the contract. The company still contracts the Manukau City animal control, and has added Wellington City Council, Transit NZ (State Highway and Motorway animal control) and other smaller councils, to its list of clients.

In 2001 DSS Animal Management was accredited with international quality standard ISO-9001, and since then the company's processes and 'work standards' have been hailed as being a benchmark for animal control work in NZ. The company has developed its own nationwide school education programme, which it has on-sold to other local authorities as part of their bite-prevention initiatives. In 2006 DSS opened NZ's first approved training school to train and qualify animal management officers from around NZ, an operation that is growing and expanding as word of its activities spreads through the industry. As for hobbies and interests, Barry doesn't fly any more but prefers to spend time out on Auckland's Waitemata Harbour catching fish with his sons (or anyone else who is keen on fishing). He is also a qualified Small Arms Instructor, and holds the position of 'Master Instructor' with the NZ Pistol Association. He is an accomplished marksman with most types of firearms.