

How To Set Your Prices To Earn More Per Client, Work Less Hours And Get Amazing Results

When you became a dog trainer you most likely did it because you love animals and love getting to work with dogs and get paid for it!

But unfortunately the dogs don't call you for a booking. The dogs don't recommend you to their friends. And the dogs aren't the ones who pay you...

So whether you are naturally a people person, or you figured out the hard way that you kinda have to be a people person to run a dog training business, the people are the ones that you are providing a service to.

When it's time for someone to reach out to you to provide a service, often the first question they ask is, "how much do you charge?"

Have you ever quoted your rates and then heard over the phone that the client is surprised and you get the, "Thanks, I'll get back to you," line and you know you'll probably never hear from them again....?

It's a bit deflating isn't it?

It brings up thoughts like:

"Maybe I am charging too much for this area"

"I wish I knew what other trainers charge"

"Maybe I'm not experienced enough"

And worst of all, "I'll never be able to do this full time"

Stop it.

The most damaging thing that you can tell yourself about your dog business is that it's a hobby or a side project.

The truth is, dog training can be a high-earning business, even in remote areas and even part time.

This doesn't just go for dog trainers but also groomers, sitters and walkers.

It all comes down to how you price and present your services, and how you market them.

So How Do I Figure Out What To Charge?

There's a typical calculation done in business to figure out your hourly rate. Let's do that exercise first.

First, choose your **annual salary**. This is the amount you would like to make per year from your business. To start with you could base it on what you made in a previous job, or just what you would like to make.

Secondly, calculate your **annual expenses**. What do you spend on your business each year? Next, add your **profit margin**. This is profit for you on top of your salary. Typically this is 10-20% of the total salary plus expenses.

Now figure out your **billable hours**. This is the amount of hours per year that you can actually charge clients for. Don't forget to subtract holidays and time off.

Your actual hours will be a bit more than what you spend with clients to account for admin and marketing time.

So here's an example of that all put together:

- Annual Salary = \$80,000
- Annual Expenses = \$20,000
- Total Income Required = \$100,000
- Profit Margin of 20% = \$20,000
- Total Needed to Earn Per Year = \$120,000
- Billable Hours - 4 Weeks Holidays Leaves 48 work weeks
- 30 hours working with clients per week = 1440 billable hours per year
- $\$120,000 / 1440 = \83.33 per hour MINIMUM

These calculations give you a good base rate as a MINIMUM.

One error that can happen with this is that you have to choose the annual salary. Did you choose high or low? Did you find yourself looking at the figures and thinking, “there’s no way I can make that as a dog trainer?”

The truth is we sell ourselves short. We set ourselves up to fail if we go into this with the mindset of it being a passion project or hobby business.

That we do it because we love it and the money isn’t important.

But if you want to do this full time and support yourself, the money is also important for that. Doing what you love is a bonus!

Why Charging By The Hour Is Not The Best Idea

So you just figured out your minimum hourly rate. Now I am telling you not to charge by the hour / per session.

Here’s why:

If you charge by session then you have to rely on the client re-booking you after every appointment. Without the commitment of ongoing lessons, people will be less likely to book you again.

It’s not just because of the expense, it’s because life is busy. People may really intend to get back to you once they’ve done their homework but then life gets in the way and it never happens.

This isn’t just bad news for you - it also does a disservice to the client and their dog.

The less time you spend training, the less results you can achieve. Without the accountability of you returning, there is no reason for the owner to do their homework.

And the less often you achieve results, the less often your business will be recommended to others.

So it’s not just a financial drawback for you but also a disservice to your reputation.

By booking in programs instead, both yourself and the client (and the dog) is benefitted by better results and you have a more stable income earning more per client.

How much are you making per client now? Figure out how many lessons for the average client you see.

A Typical Client Now - How Most Trainers Charge

First lesson = \$110

Follow up lesson one = \$80

Follow up lesson two = \$80

No more bookings

Total = \$270

Instead, what if your average client bought a 5 lesson program from you for \$975 or more?

You've just increased your income per client plus increased your success rate as you have more time to work with the dog.

The Difference Between A Program And A Package

Some trainers have packages where the client can pay per lesson or purchase a bundle of lessons for a discounted rate, perhaps with some other inclusions and benefits.

It typically sounds something like, "You can pay \$110 per lesson or buy 4 for \$400 if you pay in advance."

Instead of selling a bundle of lessons for a discount, a program sells a **result**

There are many ways to structure a program but always remember when a client contacts you that they want a result, not a certain number of lessons, not a closer bond with their dog, not to learn how to understand their dog better... They just want Rover to stop driving them crazy destroying their house and jumping on their guests because it's stressing them out.

As much as we want the solution to be for the dog, the solution needs to be aimed at the owner as they are the one that needs to make the decision to hire you.

So programs should be solution based.

For example, a program called, "The Good Dog," could promise the result of a dog that can be a pleasure for the family to be around with good house manners and easy to walk on a leash.

The client can envision the result they're going to get when you describe it to them.

How To Price Your Programs

When pricing your programs, everything you add increases the value. Think of every asset that you have that you can include in your highest program and work your way down to your lowest.

Your hourly rate will be the base for the time component but there will be more inclusions that don't have to cost you much time.

Let's write your biggest program using the following example. Note that the prices on here will just be for you to see to figure out the value, not your client.

Program: The Ultimate Dog

Result: Imagine your dog walking right next to you on a loose lead, always coming when called off leash, being calm and well mannered around the house and listening to your commands the first time you say them.

Inclusions and values:

8 in home lessons = \$880

10 commands taught, tailored to client

Access to 10 group class sessions = \$200

Training ebook = \$30

Unlimited phone support = \$200

Unlimited email support = \$200

Training equipment included = \$300

Travel = \$100

Total value = \$1910

Psychologically there are certain numbers that work better so you could adapt the final amount down to \$1875.

Depending on what you offer, you could have more inclusions for your largest program.

Board and trains typically cost the most and if you offer a board and train service this could be incorporated into your programs.

Your biggest program may cost more or less than the example provided.

Have Confidence In Your Programs

Once you have your biggest program set, work your way down to your smaller ones. You should have 3-4 options for your programs. Keep it simple.

Selling higher priced programs takes practice and confidence. Always remember - you are solving a serious problem for them.

What is it worth for the transformation they will receive?

Of course, don't make promises you can't deliver on. But if you know you can take this problem away for the client, have confidence that it's worth a high price!

Trainers that sell programs typically start with an introductory call or lesson to demonstrate their skills and build a relationship with the client before offering a program. Once they see what you can do for them, present your programs with confidence and watch your little dog business turn into a big success!