



Association of Professional Dog Trainers Strategic Plan

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10-30 YEAR PLANNING HORIZON

~ CORE IDEOLOGY & ENVISIONED FUTURE ~

*Core ideology describes an organization's consistent identity that transcends all changes related to its relevant environment. Core ideology consists of two notions: **core purpose** – the organization's reason for being – and **core values** – essential and enduring principles that guide an organization.*

*Envisioned future conveys a concrete, but yet unrealized, vision for the organization. It consists of a **big audacious goal** – a clear and compelling catalyst that serves as a focal point for effort – and a **vivid description** – vibrant and engaging descriptions of what it will be like to achieve the big audacious goal.*

CORE IDEOLOGY

Core Purpose:

To educate, develop and support the professional dog trainer.

To advance excellence in the profession of dog training and behavior consulting.

Core Values:

- Passion – loving dogs and caring for the welfare of dogs.
- LIMA – “least intrusive, minimally aversive” techniques are likely to produce minimal risk of producing adverse side effects.
- Professionalism – acting respectfully and responsibly to dogs, people and colleagues.
- Excellence – lifelong learning, continuing education, pursuit of knowledge.
- Integrity – honesty and integrity; conduct business with professional ethics and respect.
- Inclusiveness – we welcome everyone to our community
- Collaboration – working collaboratively with colleagues and allied animal professions.
- Service – belief in the value of our members' contribution to our association, and to the clients and communities they serve.

Core Beliefs:

- We believe in the fundamental value to society of the profession of dog behavior consulting and training.

- We believe in treating our human clients and their dogs with honesty and respect.
- We believe that dog training and behavior modification should be based on LIMA, critical thinking, open inquiry, shared knowledge, and standards of practice.
- We believe that positive reinforcement-based training enhances the human-animal bond.

ENVISIONED FUTURE

Vision – APDT’s Big Audacious Goal:

- Dog training and behavior consulting is a profession with set minimum standards (based on LIMA) providing integral services focused on the welfare of dogs and humans.

Vivid Descriptions

- APDT holds a body of common knowledge, embraces universal ethical standards and maintains professionally-accepted self-regulatory mechanisms. APDT’s established path for anyone wanting to become a trainer includes LIMA, the body of knowledge and professional business standards.
- APDT will be essential to success as a dog trainer. Membership will be considered a must if you are a trainer. APDT will be the go to resource for dog behavior and training. The APDT will be the first place members go to for their professional needs; the leading/ edge provider (or facilitator) of education, knowledge and professional competency.
- Dog training will be a successful and lucrative profession. It will be common for dog trainers to make a full time living.
- APDT will be the recognized voice of the dog training profession. We will have the clout to defend threats to our profession from legislative and scope of practice issue.
- *APDT will be recognized as the premier experts in the industry;* pet owners legislators, media, trainers, community and allied pet professionals will all value our expertise.
- Dog training will be seen as essential to responsible pet ownership. The public will see the value and benefit of APDT and dog training, and pet parents have more and better choices of trainers.
- APDT will help increase public access for dogs, and promote dog ownership as an integral part of society that enhances the quality of life.
- APDT will become a place for collaboration and mutual respect within and among training professionals and allied professionals as the profession embraces LIMA and keeps the welfare of the dog in the forefront. Being an APDT member will reflect the highest standards of ethical behavior.

3-5 YEAR PLANNING HORIZON APDT'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

During the strategic planning session, the Board identified its competitive advantages in order to focus on what has the greatest value for members and distinguishes APDT from the number of trade associations, training programs and schools:

- *Trainer specific focus with a holistic approach to their success*
- *Leadership - open collaboration between Board and its professional staff*
- *Inclusivity – open to the diversity among trainers in order to advance the profession for all*
- *Values outside perspective and expertise – engages experts and thought leaders in other fields to address subjects important to its members, e.g. technology, business skills.*
- *Industry authority with a broad voice – sets the stage for the industry*
- *Progressive – evolving with the industry to help shape the future rather than being reactive*
- *Alliance Building – embraces collaboration with other organizations to advance the dog training profession*

~ OUTCOME-ORIENTED GOALS ~

***Goals** are outcome-oriented statements that represent what will constitute the organization's future success. The achievement of each goal will move APDT towards the realization of its vision. The goals are not in any order of priority. Every goal will need to be accomplished if the organization is to fully achieve its vision.*

*On the next pages, each goal is accompanied by a set of **objectives**, which represent key issues affecting APDT's ability to achieve the goal and articulate milestones against which to measure progress.*

During its strategic planning session, the Board of Directors identified several critical issues that need attention in the coming years:

- There are no standards for the dog training profession.
- APDT has lost members due to allowing trainers using all training methods to be members; it must balance its inclusivity with its support for positive reinforcement training methods.
- There are no licensing requirements or regulations of the dog training profession.

To address these issues, the Board adopted the following Goals;

GOAL 1 – PUBLIC AWARENESS

There will be increased public awareness of dog training and behavior consulting and of the APDT.

GOAL 2 – MEMBER COMMUNITY

APDT will build and foster a community that supports members to be successful trainers.

GOAL 3 – EDUCATION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

APDT will be the elite education provider for the dog training and behavior consulting industry.

GOAL 4 –INDUSTRY STANDARDS

APDT will professionalize the dog training industry with LIMA as the standard.

GOAL 5 –STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Develop relationships with like-minded organizations to promote the profession/industry.

GOAL 1: PUBLIC AWARENESS

Goal:

There will be increased public awareness of dog training and behavior consulting and of the APDT

Objectives:

1. Increase number of media requests and media coverage.
2. Increase awareness among veterinarians and allied animal professions.
3. Increase use of APDT materials by the public.
4. Increase ease of access to APDT materials.
5. Continue expansion of use of social media.
6. Increase member participation in the promotion of APDT.
7. Increase awareness of APDT among non-members who are dog trainers.

GOAL 2: MEMBER COMMUNITY

Goal:

APDT will build and foster a community that supports members to be successful trainers.

Objectives

1. Help members build better dog communities in their locations.
2. Develop business templates and resources to help members enhance local and community outreach.
3. Increase formation and participation in regional networks, increase communication with local reps and members.
4. Increase member opportunities to collaborate with each other.
5. Increase partnerships with others in dog industries.
6. Increase awareness and support of APDT's LIMA principle.
7. Increase participation and education for leadership, committee volunteers and chairs

GOAL 3: EDUCATION/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Goal:

Be the elite education provider for the dog training and behavior consulting industry.

Objectives:

1. Increase member awareness of APDT educational offerings.
2. Increase actual and perceived value of giving and receiving APDT educational offerings.
3. Be the leader of education offerings
4. Explore alliances with like-minded organizations for joint educational opportunities.
5. Maximize use of technology in all education opportunities, including virtual education.

GOAL 4: INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Goal:

APDT will professionalize the dog training industry with LIMA as the standard.

Objectives:

1. Collaborate with like-minded organizations to review and potentially adopt joint Code of Ethics, Standards of Practice and position statements.
2. Establish trust in our online trainer search by ensuring only those who adhere to LIMA are listed.
3. Develop minimum level of competency for the dog training industry.
4. Develop state packet of model licensing legislation and regulations.
5. Explore the membership's position on regulating and legislating the dog training industry.
6. Explore developing an assessment tool for trainers based on APDT's BOK.

GOAL 5: STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Goal:

Develop relationships with like-minded organizations to promote the profession/industry.

Objectives:

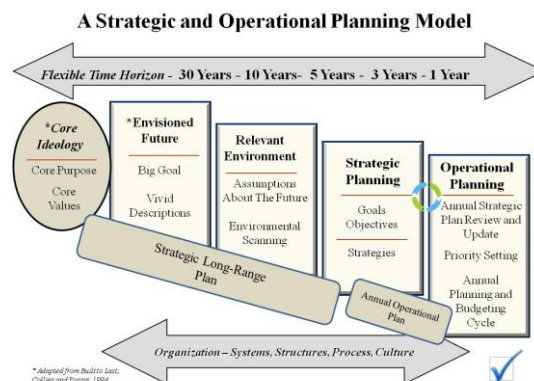
1. Explore opportunities with the heads of other like-minded organizations to create and maintain open dialogue.
2. Engage in cross promotion with like-minded organizations.
3. Ensure APDT is represented at other industry conferences.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) has developed the following strategic long-range plan. It describes a desired vision and what will be essential to achieving that vision. It is grounded in *core ideology* and driven by an *envisioned future* that realizes the full potential of APDT’s ability to support its members. APDT’s commitments are articulated in *goals* that declare the outcomes or attributes the organization intends to achieve. *Objectives* represent key metrics affecting APDT’s ability to achieve the goal and articulate the direction in which these issues must be moved.

In the future, the APDT will not be able to be all things to all people, but it must be different things to different people as the plan evolves to meet the needs of a constantly changing professional community. Therefore, underlying this plan is the adoption of an ongoing process of planning and thinking strategically, designed to ensure relevance of direction and action over time.

In developing this strategic plan, a framework for planning was utilized, based on a model that organizes conversations about the future into four distinct planning “horizons.” It helps organizations in prioritizing and executing outcomes as well as in ensuring relevance of long-range direction over time.



Envisioned future. The “four planning horizons” framework consists of crafting a comprehensive strategic direction based on the balance between what doesn’t change--the timeless principles of the organization’s core purpose and core values (core ideology) -- and what the organization seeks to become within a 10- to 30-year horizon--what would be possible beyond the restraints of the current environment. The 10- to 30-year horizon is characterized by the articulation of an envisioned future--a BAG (big audacious goal)--and a vivid description--what it will be like to achieve the goal.

Critical factors. The articulation of the envisioned future guides the organization as it considers the factors that will affect its ability to achieve its goals. Building foresight about the 5- to 10-year horizon--assumptions, opportunities, and critical uncertainties in the likely relevant future as well as emerging strategic mega-issues--suggests critical choices about the

potential barriers the organization will face. This foresight also suggests the responses the organization will need to consider in navigating its way toward achievement of its 10- to 30-year goal, or BAG.

Strategic plan and operational planning. The linkage continues into the 3- to 5-year horizon through the development of a formal long-range strategic plan, in which the organization articulates the outcomes it seeks to achieve for its members. How will the world be different as a result of what the organization does? Who will benefit and what will the likely results be? Further, the articulation of strategies will bring focus to the organization's annual operational allocation of discretionary resources. Action plans, checkpoints, and milestones will be developed through a process of operational planning, indicating progress toward each goal in every planning year.

A strategic long-range plan is not intended as a substitute for an annual operating plan. It does not detail all the initiatives, programs, and activities the organization will undertake in the course of serving its membership and the industry, nor can it foresee changes to the underlying assumptions on which key strategic choices were based. Instead, the strategic plan identifies what APDT is not doing today, but must be doing in the future to be successful. Consequently, the strategic plan implies change--doing new things or doing more or less of current activities to ensure successful outcomes.

Ongoing Reevaluation. In order to achieve its vision, strategic planning for APDT is the methodology for the organization's operations and serves as a catalyst for the "process of planning strategically," at all times and at all levels throughout the organization. APDT has an operational philosophy of ongoing reevaluation of the critical knowledge bases that form the framework of its world, including:

- Sensitivity to member needs, insight into the future environment
- Understanding of the capacity and strategic position of the organization
- Effective analysis of the ethical implications of policy, program and service choices.

The APDT's Strategic Plan represents a compass the organization will use to guide its work over the next three to five years. Each year of its life, the plan will be updated based on experience or new circumstances or as new opportunities or challenges emerge.

5-10 YEAR PLANNING HORIZON

~ PERCEIVED ASSUMPTIONS

ABOUT THE RELEVANT FUTURE ~

Perceived assumption statements developed by the group will help APDT purposefully update its strategic plan on an annual basis. Since the outcome-oriented goals that will form the basis of the long-range strategic plan will be based on the vision of the future that

appears in this section, an annual review of this vision will be an appropriate method of determining and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the goals.

DEMOGRAPHIC

1. The population of the US will continue to become more diverse, and pet ownership will follow that trend.
2. Busy working professionals will continue to own dogs and are likely to put them in daycare, changing the landscape of services that the industry needs to offer.
3. Increase in the number of rescue dogs.
4. Increased transfer of dogs through regions and countries will result in cross contamination and spread of new diseases.
5. As consumers increasingly take their dogs everywhere, there will be less public tolerance for undesirable dog behavior, resulting in a growing need for dog trainers.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND CONSUMER

1. There will be less public tolerance of undesirable dog behavior and higher expectations for dog behavior in general. But the culture of dog people may not necessarily be aligned with these expectations.
2. There will be greater consumer expectations that dogs will be able to go anywhere, and there may be challenges in terms of societal acceptance and public safety.
3. There is an increase in awareness of ethical training practices.
4. Online forums and social media expose bad training practices and animal abuse.
5. People will turn to the internet as their first and possibly only source for dog training information.
6. People want immediate fixes to their problems.
7. Individuals will continue to be motivated by social, cultural and mission-driven change.

ECONOMIC

1. People will be working longer/harder, have less time and may have less disposable resources in some regions. There may be a widening of the wage gap/income disparity. The haves will have more, the have-nots will have less, the middle is being squeezed, and this may narrow the clientele base and the types of clients that dog trainers will have.
2. Consumer confidence is still relatively low, but some dog training-related activities are on the rise as new options for available disposable income become available.
3. Local businesses will struggle to compete with big box/franchise corporations and emerging online providers.

4. The dog training profession is recession proof.
5. More corporations are looking to trainers to test and endorse new products in the market.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY

1. There are no standards for the dog training profession, that is what constitutes the professional qualifications of a dog trainer.
2. In the future, there may be the potential for regulation of the profession at local, state and national levels.
3. There will be a continued focus on the state and local level on the marginalization of dog ownership (BSL, limit laws, mandatory spay/neuter, etc.)
4. Regional trends in zoning laws may impact where trainers can operate.
5. There is a possibility of the banning or restriction of certain tools in some local communities.
6. AVMA and veterinary behaviorists may push for behavior work to be restricted to veterinarians.
7. There is no regulation in how service dogs are trained, used, or designated.
8. There's been an explosion of companion animal laws (e.g. service, breed-specific, protection, etc.) affecting trainers.

NATURE OF THE PROFESSION

1. Many dog trainers have not had specific education and training, resulting in confusion among the public as to what qualifications trainers should have.
2. The profession will continue to be transitory, with people coming and going due to changing economic conditions and lack of clear career path. However, with more millennials entering the profession, seeking education and training from the beginning of their careers, the profession is expected to stabilize.
3. Sheltering and rescuing do not always follow best practices, and that results in increased behavioral challenges for adopters.
4. Trainers often don't have a business background and need help developing successful and profitable businesses.
5. Trainers have lots of competition for dog owners' attention – veterinary behaviorists, animal behavior experts, etc.
6. The expanding role of the dog has opened a number opportunities for trainers to specialize.
7. The trainer's classroom is growing beyond four walls.
8. There is unclear communication to/from and among members and pet owners due to the influx of available information/misinformation.

9. The industry is still volatile as it relates to training philosophies and tools.
10. There may be an increase in the number of other pet service providers looking to add training to their services.
11. There may be an increase in the number of other types of allied professionals moving into the “pet dog training” world.
12. Dog trainers have the tendency to be territorial and competitive, rather than cooperative. For example, trainers would benefit from networking and developing relationships with other dog experts and refer business to one another should there be an issue they can’t address.
13. Dog trainers are often isolated and need socialization

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. Young families will become more tech-savvy and will increasingly look for tech-savvy trainers.
2. There will be growth in the use of the internet and social media by dog owners wanting to get advice for free and not wanting to see a professional.
3. There may be growth in the number of behaviorists or behavior consultants doing online consulting, and there may be new opportunities for trainers in working full-time as employees for other trainers.
4. The industry is splintering based on differing training preferences and the multitude of training organizations including for-profit organizations and schools.
5. There may be continued interest and an increased understanding of ongoing scientific research into canine behavior, cognition and brain physiology.
6. Technology will continue to make the business side of a trainer’s work easier with smart phones, web based applications, social media, webcams, etc.
7. The internet will continue to make it easier for businesses to share information without “gatekeepers” or intermediaries.