

Service Dogs for a Service-Dominant Industry



Photo credit: Gordy Powell

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Gordy Powell

One of the most challenging hurdles in the crime, trauma and death scene cleaning industry is helping a client manage and cope their way through a life-changing, traumatic event. The other challenge is marketing such a sensitive service without being offensive, appearing non-sensitive or overbearing. For almost four decades, we have always tried to reinvent how to market this industry in a tasteful, yet practical and successful way, and at the same time leave the client with a great experience.

I have been told my entire entrepreneurial career that the most important aspect of owning a company is leaving the client with a grand experience of your services. Again, this is a paramount challenge when interacting with a family after a horrific loss of a friend, family member or loved one – especially if the loss is that of a family patriarch and matriarch.

Back Story

My bride Sheila and I, both empty nesters, learned of a breed of dog that we did not know existed. While awaiting a flight after numerous layovers in the Miami airport a few years back, we came across what is referred to as a Miniature Australian Shepherd. We have raised the standard Australian Shepherds but had never run across the miniatures. So, we acquired our first one and named him Johnny Cash. A year later, we adopted another puppy and to keep with the theme we named him Merle Haggard. Those two are Sheila's dogs without a doubt. So, I wanted one of my own that would travel with me. At last, we drove out to our breeder in Alabama and collected our new, forever, female pup, Miranda Lambert, registered name: Gunpowder n' Lead.



Photo credit: Gordy Powell

Then, in July 2021, I attended an AIR Conference where the topic of “What is Your Business Culture?” came up. Nick Levy of Orlando talked about his company’s business culture of having dogs in the office, how his tech would interact and would look forward to seeing the dogs at the end of the day. This really helped the overall morale. This was the catalyst that started the thought process over the next few days about Miranda and what her involvement could possibly be with Georgia Clean.

In our travels socializing Miranda and observing her interaction with people, I wondered if she would hit the marks to become a PTSD service dog for clients. This was not what we adopted her for, but there was

certainly a possibility. Then the marketing potentials were endless.

Moving Forward

Miranda was quickly hitting all the high marks for becoming a PTSD service dog. Her additional features like her medium size (25 pounds), her engaging blue eyes and her uniquely softer coat of fur made her more appropriate for the clients she would be engaging with. When speaking with local public safety K9 officers, they mentioned that they would be called in to a trauma scene to use their K9s in just this same manner. Public safety officials liked the idea of Miranda as a PTSD service dog because, unlike their dogs, Miranda was not an intimidating dog to enter the home and to confront a grieving family, due to her size and features.

Looking forward we soon figured out that Miranda could be a tremendous asset in our marketing to detectives, medical examiners and coroners. Just imagine public safety having access to such a resource from your company to aid in easing and calming a family member should they need to be interviewed.



Photo credit: Gordy Powell

The Investment

If your company decides to go this route, I strongly suggest an eye-pleasing, medium breed dog with a higher intelligence. Having the appropriate dog with the right personality and demeanor is just the beginning. Expect to be fully committed to the dog and plan on a \$5,000 to \$10,000 investment. It may be a year until the dog is fully prepared for these services, but after a few months you can use the PTSD service dog to start your local marketing campaign.

Miranda is with me more than my wife Sheila is. Miranda also has a co-handler in our office who she trusts and understands that, when I am not available,

her go-to person is Rachel. Rachel is every bit involved in Miranda's training and day-to-day activities. Miranda will go home with Rachel at times to interact with her family and pets. Miranda will obviously not be needed or required for all trauma scenes, but her availability makes her priceless for public safety use.

FULL ACCESS REQUIRED BY LAW

SERVICE DOG

The ADA mandates that this animal and owner have full access to all public places


Reg No: US-SAR-500352917

Animal Name: MIRANDA LAMBERT

Animal Breed: MINNIE AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD

Handler Name: GORDY POWELL

State: GEORGIA



In case of accident do not remove service animal from handler, they are to be transported together

Year Issued: 2021



Photo credit: Gordy Powell

Training

Training begins immediately. Socializing in the puppy stage with both people and other animals is very important. Go into as many pet stores and big-box stores that will allow you in as possible so that you can socialize your dog. You will start off with basic obedience, then on to intermediate and advanced puppy training. You will need to seek out a company that is recognized as a service dog trainer. Usually, a specialized service dog trainer or company can provide all the levels of training from start to finish.

Interview as many training services as you can. You will discover that the services, price of services and the

degree of professionalism will vary greatly, but in the end, you always get what you pay for. Make sure you have a confident and comfortable relationship with the trainer. And get ready for a lot of advice to be thrown your way.



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You will then reach a point in the dog's age and level of confidence in their advanced training when you can introduce him or her to therapy session groups. Find one or two groups that meet once a week. Let the leader of that group know what you are training your dog for, and that you want the dog to be able to target in on their stress and to be trained to ease that stress.

Training is ongoing. It is a lifetime commitment and how quickly your K9 adapts is up to you and your level

of dedication. Something that I have incorporated into Miranda's training is showing her a hand signal along with verbal commands. You and your co-handler will be the only ones allowed to train, operate, transport and, yes, even feed the dog. You are creating and building not only a trust together, but a bonded relationship. This is so that anyone can interact with your K9, but only you and your co-handler will have immediate control, by a simple word or gesture.



Photo credit: Gordy Powell

Miranda has her credentials to where she is welcome in all environments, such as a restaurant, hotel or plane. You need to know the rules and laws for service dogs. These laws and the rights your service dog has will amaze you. Miranda received her credentials early,

because when you invest in the program you are fearful of leaving the dog alone, even in a vehicle. It is like leaving \$10, 000 on the front seat – that looks cute. Again, this commitment is real and you must be dedicated to the dog. The dog is your new best friend and will depend on you for everything. It will be your shadow.

Miranda Lambert, A.K.A Gunpowder ‘n’ Lead

We have fun with Miranda because of her name. When she is introduced to people there is an automatic engagement and recognition with her name. Yes, she has even been to Nashville, to Miranda Lamberts bar. To keep the fun moving, Miranda has unique catch phrases for her commands. Potty is, “Let’s go backstage.” To go for a ride we tell her, “It’s time to go on the tour bus.” Shaking hands is simply, “Autograph time.”

I have heard and I have been asked over the years, “What’s the best way to market in this industry?” I share with you what will work for us and what I wish I would have thought of many, many years ago.

I cannot imagine a better way to have doors open for you. This will need to be a service that your company provides to public safety for the families they are dealing with. Yes, I am sure you will be called out to

scenes where trauma services may not be required. But that's where you build relationships, and relationships build a business. The best part is that you have now left the client with a remarkable and, more importantly, memorable experience they will share.

Miranda is a very affectionate little dog. We like to tell people that Miranda Lambert K9 cannot control her licker. We invite you to follow us, learn more and see Miranda's progress in the field at MirandaLambertK9.com and on Facebook at Miranda Lambert K9.



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