



## ***How Puppy-Training is Much Like Dealing with New Employees***

By Patti Hathaway, Business Advisor & Author

Managers should deal with new employees much like they would approach training a puppy. Until 5 years ago, I never had a dog before. We quickly learned that our little 3 pound puppy, Sparky, can run really fast when we were trying to get him to come back into the house. By 7 months old, he was housebroken but far from obedient. A friend said to us, “You really need to get a dog trainer for Sparky because he’s a little out of control.” As a control freak that really values order, not chaos, this was a blow to my ego.

We hired their dog trainer, Mark. I liked the fact that Mark came to our house for one-on-one lessons. Upon meeting us, Mark’s first question was, “Who is the weakest link in this house when it comes to Sparky?” Well, that was obviously me because Sparky did not listen to me at all. Mark said to me, “Since you are the weakest link, I will train you and you will train the rest of the family.”

Our first job was to buy a shock collar. I must admit that initially I was reluctant about the shock collar. Sparky was such a cute little puppy that just needed a little taming, not something as brutal as a shock collar. Mark reassured me that eventually the shock collar would provide our dog with greater freedom than the majority of other dogs because of his level of obedience. We bought the shock collar. I quickly learned that the shock collar was like having power steering on a dog. We could bring Sparky and his collar anywhere with us. It was a remote control obedience device for our dog.

The first day of dog obedience training, Mark took the remote control from me. He said, “Since I know you are the weakest link, I will control the shock collar until you can be strong enough to push the button. If Sparky doesn’t obey, I will zap him.”

Lesson #1: Heeling on a short leash. Mark explained the heeling procedure to me and we began our first walk. I’m nervous and telling Sparky under my breath, “Okay, Sparky, you better obey because I’m telling you that bad man back there is going to zap you if you don’t. Heel, Sparky.” Sparky was doing great until he got distracted a bit and started to wander off. ZZZZap! The shock collar was initiated. Sparky runs back to my side. We did this routine several times and soon enough Mark trusted me to use the remote. Suddenly, I begin to see that this shock collar is a very powerful tool. Our totally out-of-control dog was suddenly obedient. He was totally dependent on me for instruction

**Phase 1: The Manager's  
Role and Responsibilities  
with New Employees**

Share vision/mission,  
culture  
Show where everything is,  
who does what  
Set clear  
guidelines/outcomes for the  
department and each  
employee's job  
Define task – outline the  
process so that the  
employee understands  
Get employees on-board  
correctly  
Manage training

Tell your expectations

Measure performance  
Immediate consequences for  
poor performance

Provide oversight  
Be the technical expert  
Be the problem-solver  
Provide Answers

and correction. I finally had control and I was confident that he would come every single time we called him.

Keep in mind that the goal of pain/discipline (the shock collar) is to prevent greater pain. If Sparky wasn't well trained, he could have run into the street and gotten run over by a car. Likewise, a new bank employee might unknowingly cause a fraud situation in the bank or the customer might get the wrong checks or you could lose a customer. There is always a purpose for pain in training a new employee.

Mark was right – once Sparky was trained (a 3-4 month process), he did have a lot more freedom than most dogs. He goes everywhere with us and never needs a leash. In fact, two months after we completed the dog training, Sparky earned his "canine good citizen" certificate and was certified as a "therapy dog." Never could we have imagined such an obedient, well-behaved, and loving dog. He's a delightful dog because he knows who is in control and we enjoy mutual love, admiration, and respect in our home as a result.

Through our dog-training experience, I began to understand in a new way how powerful it is when a manager dictates exactly *what* a new employee needs to

do and *how* they do it. When an employee is new, they completely depend on you to provide direction, explain the rules and procedures, and give you instructions on how to do your job. As the manager, you hold the key to your employee's rewards and consequences. Nobody can do anything unless you say they can do it. When employees come to you with a question, you have all the answers. This is Phase 1 in Leadership. If you handle the new employee correctly, this will be the shortest phase and your employees will quickly become independent (like our puppy) and move into Phase 2. This is where the fun can really begin.

Excerpted from Patti Hathaway's new book, *Secrets for Unleashing Employee Greatness: The Step-by-Step System to Maximize Every Employee's Greatness*, 2005. Patti Hathaway, CSP, *The CHANGE AGENT*, is one of fewer than 7% women worldwide to have earned the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association for her proven presentation skills. She is a Business Advisor and the author of 6 books that have been translated into 5 languages and have sold over 100,000 copies. Patti solves your people challenges by providing highly customized solutions to meet your needs. Contact Patti at 1-800-339-0973 or at her web site: [www.thechangeagent.com](http://www.thechangeagent.com) for information on her speaking and consulting services or to receive her free e-mail newsletter/blog.