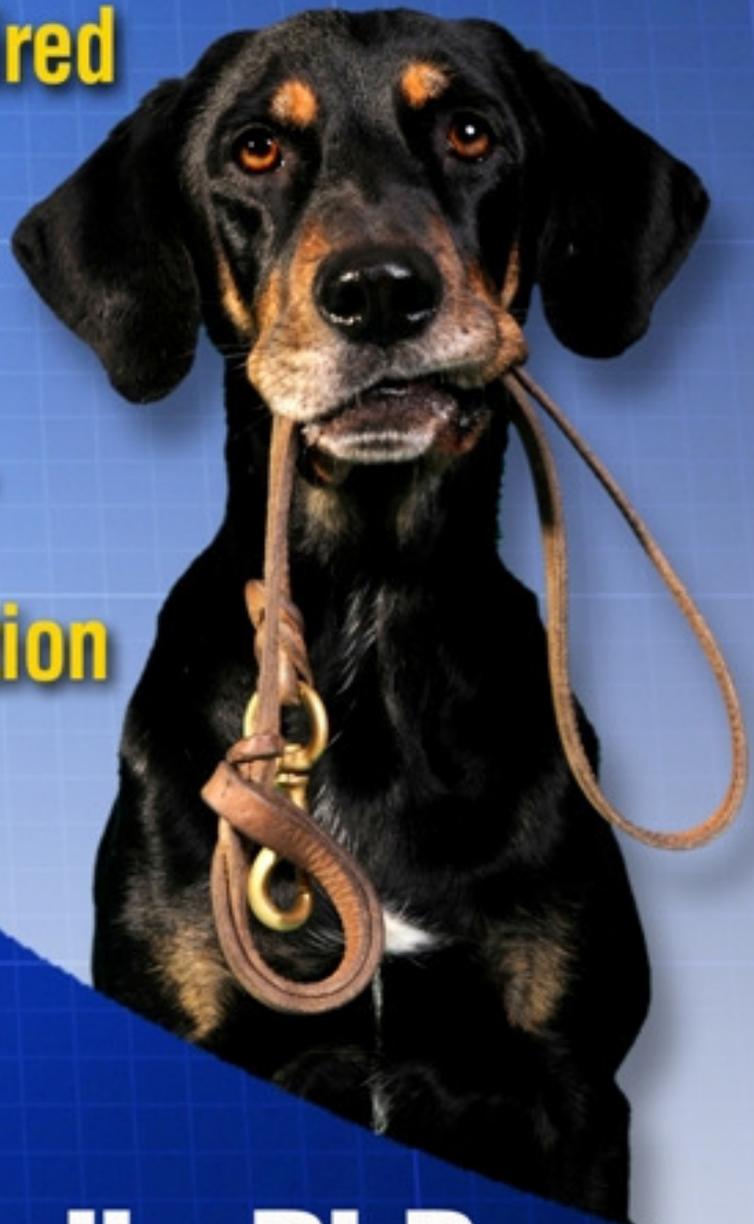


Master Your World

**10 Dog-Inspired
Leadership
Lessons
to Improve
Productivity,
Profits and
Communication**



Mary Kelly, PhD

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Lessons to Improve Productivity,
Profits, and Communication**

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Large Print Edition

Master Your World is written by Mary Kelly
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Preface

This book is different.

There are thousands of books on the market about how to lead people. Some classics have been around for hundreds of years. But the problems facing managers and leaders today call for a different approach.

“The work ethic seems to have gone out the window.”

“I can’t get my new workers to get along with my senior people.”

“No one seems to care anymore about what we do here.”

“Generation X and Y don’t talk to each other.”

Sound familiar? These and other complaints reflect real problems, and they manifest themselves in lost productivity, employee frustration, diminished communication, and slow or mixed responses to customers.

What is a manager or supervisor to do?

Master Your World: 10 Dog-Inspired Leadership Lessons to Improve Profits, Productivity, and Communications demonstrates a systematic approach that works with people from diverse backgrounds, of all ages, at all levels of the organization, and, of course, with all dog breeds.

I admit it. Talking about my dogs is my way of tempting you to pick up this book. No, it's not about training badly behaved dogs, nor is it filled with fluffy, feel-good sentiments. It is about practical, sensible strategies for understanding people and getting the best from them. This book is not nearly as furry as it sounds.

As an experienced, practicing economist who spent more than twenty-one years in the U.S. Navy as an active duty officer, I'm accustomed to working with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Working with people is both a privilege and a responsibility. I genuinely want to make the workplace

better, improve processes, reduce unnecessary paperwork, and help people enjoy their work. I have learned something valuable from every person I have worked with.

This book reflects personal experiences and tried-and-true techniques for getting the behaviors and performance you want from the people you work and live with, and, yes, even with the canines in your life. It has been assembled for new managers, experienced supervisors, and team leaders who are looking to improve their workplaces as well as parents and community leaders seeking fresh ways to deal with challenges. If you come away with some useful dog training tips, that's an added bonus.

This book includes ten principles or lessons about eliciting the right actions from the people around you. Scenarios to positively affect interaction outcomes, including techniques that worked and approaches that didn't, are described in realistic terms—cued by lessons my dogs taught me. It also cov-

ers how to work with difficult personalities, how to manage your boss, how to transform poor performers, and how to reward employees in meaningful ways. For example, Lesson One deals with the basic training principle—Reward Good Behavior—and leads into Lesson Two—Don't Reward Bad Behavior. Lesson Three might be the most difficult: Being Consistent. The seven lessons that follow get more specific with actual “how to” details to implement changes and achieve the desired results.

It is my hope that this is a leadership book that will hold your interest and add value to the many facets of your life. I hope you put your paw prints all over it. Good luck mastering your world.

Mary C. Kelly
January, 2011

Introduction

On a glorious day in May in Dallas, Texas, the sun was shining, the sky was blue, and the birds were chirping. People filed into the church. About a third of the crowd was dressed in their best military dress uniforms. My sister and I stood in the back of the church in our wedding gowns, getting ready to begin our double wedding ceremony. Our plan was to walk down the aisle together with Dad between us. If he got too nervous, we joked, we'd put him on roller skates and just wheel him up the aisle.

As we put the final touches on our make-up and hair, giggling all the while, Dad remained in the parking lot with the two grooms, dispensing a little bit more than fatherly advice. With the trunk popped open and the Igloo cooler inside, the guys were enjoying a pre-nuptial beer.

I became aware of this when my groom slid in beside me at the altar. I sniffed. He laughed.

“Sweetheart?” I smiled.

“Yeah?” he replied.

“Why didn’t you bring me one?”

Thus began our marital bliss.

I come from the kind of Irish Catholic family that believes one’s sole purpose on this planet is to provide parents with perfect, beautiful, talented, and way-above-average grandchildren. My parents were gracious. They waited a full ten months after our wedding before starting the inquiring phone calls.

“Where’s the baby?”

“B-baby?” I stammered.

We had no baby.

A year passed. Another year passed. Another year passed, and still no baby. So my husband and I did what couples of the 1990s did. We consulted experts. We read books and articles. We talked to people. We interviewed, and in turn, were interviewed. We spoke to numerous doctors. We were put on a waiting

list. After two long, arduous years of waiting, we finally got her. Bright blue eyes, a big smile shining up at us beneath a shock of black curly hair . . . and a wagging tail.

A puppy.

The puppy's breeder and first trainer, Trudi, told us, "You're allowed to have this puppy under one condition—you must train her well." My response came across a bit defensively. "Trudi, I train people in the military all the time. I'm well equipped to handle a puppy."

Or so I thought. Training this puppy—we named her Rudder Nohea, meaning beautiful new direction—gave me the motivation and inspiration to teach through this book, *Master Your World*. From the day we first saw her, Rudder Nohea taught me about enthusiasm, focusing on the task at hand, guidance for success, the importance of proper training, and much more. Thanks to Rudder and her littermates, it is my hope that others can benefit from these experiences and techniques. They

have been tested and proven effective through the filters of experience working with employees, managers, and aspiring leaders.

I have been teaching at the university level since 1993. I adore my older students and I admire them for returning to school. But I also love young people. I especially enjoy working with teenagers. I've learned to love everything that goes with being a nineteen-year-old—the Mohawks, the piercings, the tattoos, the drama—because they became our new recruits in the military. I've loved working with them every bit as much as I've loved working with my new puppy.

A lot of people dismiss these raw, untrained, and undisciplined teenagers who join the military. They roll their eyes and think, "Ugh. It's going to take two years of training before these recruits are as productive as we'd like." But I find training them fascinating, and here's why.

Think back to your years of going to school. How many teachers did you have who

truly reached out and touched your life? How many? Historically, the average number of teachers who strongly influenced your life is only two. *Only two teachers influence a student's life in a positive, long-lasting, meaningful way.* Every semester I teach, and every time I get to train, it's a great privilege. Because if I'm good enough, I might be one of those two influential teachers. As Henry Adam's autobiography states, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." That's how I feel about it too.

Sharing lessons learned through this book is another way to pass on what I've learned, and it is my sincere honor to do so.

I would also be especially honored if you shared your leadership experiences with me and other readers. It is easy to do so by leaving your comments on my blog at <http://ProductiveLeaders.com/blog>. I would love your feedback on this book, and I personally respond to every email at Mary@ProductiveLeaders.com.

LESSON THREE: BE CONSISTENT

Consequences from a Puppy's Perspective

For puppies, learning who's boss begins at birth. The biggest and strongest appear to get to the food first, but if that were consistently true, the runts would die from malnutrition and we know that doesn't always happen. The little guys figure out how to wiggle themselves into tiny spaces to get an advantage over the others. They have to be clever.

Dog moms also ensure that their littlest ones get fed. They'll move a pup from one location to another during feeding to make sure every pup gets a turn.

For puppies, mom is the boss. She teaches them to keep their sleeping area clean, washes them off, and brings wandering ones back into the fold.

She also tells them how to get along with others. If one pup is too rambunctious, mom

provides a gentle correction—like a low noise or a slow push. When the pup is downright obnoxious, Mom either puts her mouth over his snout to exhibit dominance or gives a little growl, showing her teeth in warning. If the pup tests its limits with a nip, she nips back. Alert and attentive, dog moms provide immediate corrective action.

Puppies learn their best socialization skills with their baby teeth. Sharp doggy teeth can puncture soft and squishy objects, such as human skin. And like human babies, puppies explore the world with their mouths. When teeth are coming in, biting into things just feels good. The best way to teach a pup not to bite inappropriate objects (such as human hands) is to keep the puppy with its litter mates until they are seven to eight weeks old. Why? When a puppy bites a brother or sister, a retaliatory bite follows. Bites hurt and consequences are immediate and appropriate.

So at eight weeks old, a pup knows these three important lessons about coexisting in

the litter:

- Respect the boss.
- Adapt around others.
- Actions have consequences.

Let's apply these principles to the workplace.

Respect the boss—In the dog world, the mom (or you, as pack leader) is the giver of order and discipline, the one who provides security and meals. Providing these essentials with consistency is how a pup's mom commands respect.

As a manager, you're the giver of all good things, but if your employees observe you behaving erratically and perceive that your presence has little value, they learn to discount your corrections and you lose respect.

Consider what bosses do to cause people to discount their authority and lose respect for them. They might:

- Implement meaningless rules.

- Easily lose their tempers over small irritations.
- Play favorites with employees.
- Create needless, inefficient work systems.
- Focus on small bureaucratic details instead of the big picture.
- Let ego get in the way of good decision-making.
- Ignore input from employees.
- Hoard relevant information, leaving employees in the dark.

In the work world, as in the dog world, consistency is key. Its absence fosters uncertainty, confusion, and disdain, leading to disgruntled employees and an expensive, high turnover rate. So like a puppy's mom, be consistent in your reaction and discipline so that your leadership is valued and respected.

Adapt around others—Puppies develop skills to get along with others and so do em-

ployees. Some might be bigger, stronger, or faster than the rest, yet those less gifted or a little slower find ways to “wiggle their way in” like the runt in the litter.

As a manager, you have to be aware of what’s happening and be persistent in your efforts to lead well. After all, managing is all about getting people to do what you want to support your organization’s mission and goals. In today’s diverse workplaces, that means adapting your style and approach to what works best for each employee. You take into account cultural, geographical, religious, gender, and demographic factors and harness their differences and talents to contribute to your team. This calls for flexibility, knowledge, patience, and appreciation for the strengths of each worker.

Show that actions have consequences—Behaving badly can hurt on many levels. Puppies learn that if they bite, they get bitten in return, and quickly figure out they shouldn’t bite. (I’m not saying employees should bite

their cubicle neighbors; that would be considered rude, and human resources personnel would have fits.) Put mechanisms in place to make sure employees who exhibit inappropriate behavior in the workplace get corrected—quickly and consistently. Canines know this and so should leaders.

There is No *Sometimes* in a Dog's Life

My dog's breeder and trainer, Trudi, has a mantra: "There is no 'sometimes' in a dog's life." That's great advice for dog owners—and for leaders, too!

Let's say you just got a brand new, completely adorable bull mastiff puppy weighing in at only ten pounds. You cuddle with him because, really, is there anything cuter than a puppy? (You might be thinking, "Yes. My child." I understand. But I'm sticking with the cute puppy example for the purposes of this book.)

So you pet and coo and cuddle with your puppy on the couch. He gets comfortable

playing on your couch. The couch becomes your special place to hang out together.

Ten months later, your puppy weighs 180 pounds. One day, Aunt Sadie, who is eighty-seven years old, comes to the house and sits on your couch. The bull mastiff, with its jowly, drooling face, jumps on the couch and plops his face in her lap, expecting to be cuddled, right? That's what you taught him! And in the process, Aunt Sadie gets knocked over the back of the couch.

So what do you do? You yell at your dog!

Sure, his behavior was okay when he was younger, but now that he weighs 180 pounds, you've suddenly changed the rules—not yesterday but today when Aunt Sadie arrived. That's simply not fair. Dogs are not equipped to change expectations on short notice, and frankly most employees won't handle it that well, either. That's what we mean by "there is no sometimes in a dog's life."

As a leader, what do you do when you realize you have allowed people to take the

wrong actions? You fix the situation. If you let undesired behavior continue and then try to correct it several months later, you essentially let the dog drool on Aunt Sadie on the couch. There should be no “sometimes” in how you treat employees, either. Just remember that changing expectations is likely to take some time and you, as manager, must consistently reinforce the new pattern.

Why Consistency Must Prevail

Employees need and deserve the same consistent direction as puppies. Yes, you can make policy changes; just be clear about what changes you want and what they can expect. But you have to be consistent in your communications—*always*. Remember, there is no *sometimes*.

Let’s say Sam has been coming to work twenty minutes late for a full month. When should his boss have mentioned this to him, now or a month ago? After letting this behavior slip for a month, the boss finally tells Sam he needs to show up on time, but noth-

ing changes. Not a surprise; Sam has lost all respect for his boss's authority. Remember, I can tell the dog to stay off the couch, but if I don't make it stick, he'll continue to join me after a few minutes. Employees are likely to be more capable of self direction than the dog, but some will require accountability to get the message. It's your job to monitor the situation and make sure the change is happening. Discipline isn't a *sometimes* thing.

It is difficult to be consistent. Anyone who has ever raised children knows this. Being consistent is trying because we get tired, worn down. We mistakenly hope that the behavior will change on its own. We sometimes try to delegate the consistency to others, hoping against hope that they will be consistent in our stead. Unfortunately, it's part of our job, and an absolute requirement.

Communicate expectations with consistency—Look for ways to reward people when they do their jobs well and dutifully arrive on time (or whatever you think is important for

employees carrying out their jobs successfully). If they don't, help them perform better by clearly communicating your expectations consistently. Now, if every time I did something well and my boss gave me a mocha latte (or a Starbucks gift certificate to get one), I'd be motivated. Inspired. Enthusiastic. Cheerful. Also caffeinated, but eager to do more work.

Chew on this:

How can you change your “sometimes” behavior to “always” behavior?

Are you being consistent in the actions you tolerate from employees and in the ways you reward them?

Reminders—How to lead consistently

- Respect the boss.
- Adapt around others.
- Show that actions have consequences.
- Communicate policy changes clearly.

- Be consistent: If an action was okay yesterday, it should be okay today.

Remember—Don't let "sometimes" behavior weaken your leadership.

