



OUR CULTURE PLAYBOOK

The New Standard

Sterling
K-9 RETREAT



The Power of Culture in Our Service Industry

At Sterling K-9 Retreat, our work is more than a job - it's a mission. Every day, customers trust us with their dogs' most basic needs: safety, comfort, care, and a little bit of joy. They expect us to deliver all of it - and to do it safely, affordably, and without missing a beat.

They count on us to be:

- **Proactive** - spotting needs before they're spoken.
- **Responsive** - jumping in when it matters most.
- **Easy to work with** - because life's complicated enough.

But here's the thing: past wins don't guarantee future ones. The business world shifts fast. Technology changes faster. What worked yesterday might not cut it tomorrow. That's not just a challenge — it's an opening to stand out.

Our goal? Become the undisputed provider of choice for our customers, partners, and community. To get there, we lean on four cornerstones:

1. **Safety first** - for every dog, every time.
2. **Integrity always** - do what's right, even when no one's watching.
3. **Service with humanity** - because care is personal.
4. **Ambition for greatness** - raising the bar, then raising it again.

Our culture is the heart that keeps this place alive. It's what makes Sterling K-9 Retreat special to work for and impossible to copy. Building and protecting it takes effort from every single person here.

That's why we created this Culture Playbook - your guide to keeping our values alive in every shift, every decision, every "good dog" we say.

What is Culture - and Why Does it Matter?

Culture isn't just a "vibe." It's the mix of:

- **What we believe**
- **How we behave**
- **The experience our behavior creates for others**

It's the bedrock of our business - the thing everything else is built on.

Sure, written statements can help explain our culture, but paper alone can't create it. Actions do. Real culture shows up in the moments when nobody's watching.

Our core beliefs set the standard for how we treat:

- **Each other**
- **Our customers**
- **Our community**
- **Our partners**

Because culture drives behavior, it also drives performance. A strong culture fuels a smart strategy, sharp execution, and better results. In short: great culture makes everything else better.

And in a fast-changing world, culture is our anchor. It keeps the entire pet service industry team rowing in the same direction, guided by shared beliefs and behaviors. That alignment is what turns everyday work into outstanding performance.

20 Square Feet

Think of the business as a giant floor plan. Your space? Twenty square feet.

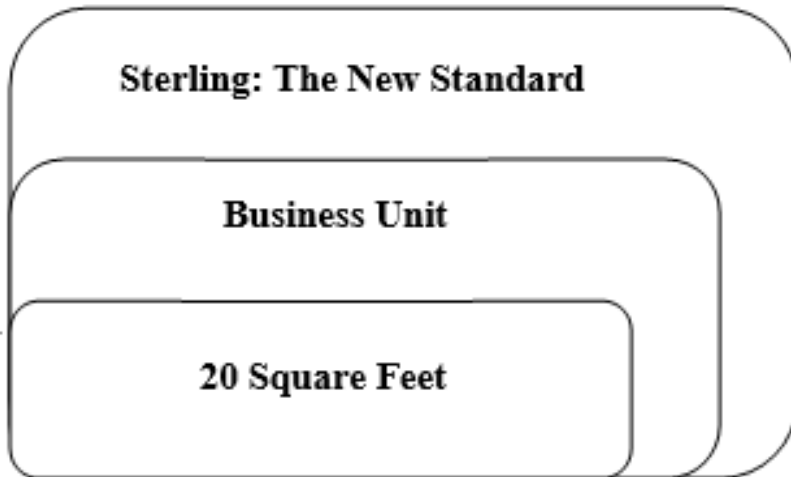
That's the part of Sterling K-9 you directly control - your station, your role, your responsibilities.

Why it matters:

- **Every single 20 square feet adds up to the entire company.**
- **How you care for your shapes our culture.**
- **How we all care for ourselves determines our success.**

Your 20 square feet isn't just physical space. It's your attitude, your choices, your follow-through. The way you show up — every shift, every customer, every pup — sets the tone for everyone around you.





Belief → Behavior → Outcome (BBO)

Flip through this Culture Playbook and you'll notice something: every belief we hold leads to behavior, and every behavior creates an outcome.

It's a chain reaction:

Belief - What we stand for.

Behavior - How we act because of it.

Outcome - The result that action creates.

Our mission isn't to just print a list of nice-sounding principles. Anyone can do that.

Our mission is to create a workplace where those principles come alive - where every single person acts in ways that produce great experiences and great results.

When we do that, we don't just do good work - we set the bar for the entire K-9 service industry. We become the safest, most reliable, most innovative, and most trusted company in the country.

Our Culture Playbook

“If it’s not safe, we don’t move forward”

Why it matters: Safety is the foundation of trust - for our team, our customers, and every dog in our care



Beliefs are our “why.”	It’s not just <i>what</i> we do - it’s <i>how</i> we do it:	Outcome is the result.
<i>Safety is love in action</i> - for our team, our customers, and every dog in our care.	• Spot it, fix it. See a hazard? Deal with it before it becomes a problem. • No shortcuts, no excuses. Safety always beats speed. • Watch each other’s backs. Speak up, step in, and keep the whole team safe.	Everyone goes home safe - every shift, every day. Safety protects our team, our customers, and every dog in our care.
<i>Passion for Team</i> We’re stronger together. When every teammate feels valued, connected, and supported, our whole company wins	• Own your role. Take responsibility for your work and results. • Care out loud. Make time to listen, connect, and show people they matter. • Be proactive - face-to-face. Talk with people, not about them.	We build trust. Trust is the foundation of lasting relationships - with teammates, customers, and the community.
<i>Relentless Pursuit of Excellence</i> “Good enough” isn’t good enough. We aim higher - every day, in every detail.	• Do the work. Get better. Every day, raise your baseline. • Bring solutions. Find solutions. No C.C.C.: don’t condemn, complain, or criticize - fix it. • Think big. See the vision, then build it step by step.	We’re better every day. Continuous improvement keeps us competitive, creative, and proud of our work.
<i>Act with Integrity</i> Doing the right thing isn’t optional - it’s who we are, even when no one’s watching.	• Think first, then act. Good judgment starts with a pause. • Be accountable. Own your choices, own the results. • Do the right thing - especially when it’s hard. Integrity shows in the toughest moments.	We build trust. Trust is the foundation of lasting relationships - with teammates, customers, and the community.

**“We deliver exceptional value to our customers and partners
We don’t just meet needs”**



Passion for Safety

Safety isn't just a rule - it's a mindset. At Sterling K9 Retreat, every task, big or small, is done with safety first in mind.

“Every day. Every job. Every time.”

Do the Work. Get Better.

Improvement takes effort - and our customers are counting on us to deliver services that are essential to their dog's well-being. We must be at our best to make sure they get what they need, without delay or compromise. Every day, competitors look for ways to meet our customers' needs faster, at lower cost, or with higher quality. Our goal is simple: to be the best K9 service organization. Period.



Stop the job if needed: Safety is always worth the pause.

Safety is the foundation of trust - for our team, our customers, and every dog in our care. We commit to spotting hazards - and avoiding them in the future. Before every job, we STOP to identify and address all hazards: visible, invisible, physical, environmental, and mental. Once a hazard is identified, we note what's needed to eliminate or reduce the risk and protect our workplace.

We also own our personal readiness - recognizing when our fitness, energy, or focus could become a hazard to our own performance.

No Shortcuts. Honor the Rules.

When we believe zero harm is possible, we prove it through our actions. There is no operating condition more important than the health and safety of all mammals - people and dogs alike.

Process control and adherence to standards protect us. Hazards like rushing can lead to serious injuries or worse. We avoid errors by:

Planning the work.

Understanding the risks.

Communicating clearly.

Listening to perspectives that may differ from our own.

The relentless pursuit of zero harm means following the rules, procedures, and processes - and understanding why they exist. We honor the rules because they work, and because every rule was written in response to a real incident.



Look Out for Each Other

Our mission isn't complete unless every teammate - and every pup - is safe. We are responsible for the people we work with, and we show we care about:

- Reporting “good catches” when potential hazards are spotted. Communicating clearly and sharing best practices.
- Giving respectful, direct safety feedback when something is unsafe.
- Thanking coworkers who take the time to point out hazards.
- Stopping the job when necessary - because safety is always worth the pause.
- When we look out for each other, we build trust, protect our team, and make Sterling K-9 Retreat a safer place for everyone.

Outcome: Everyone is safe at work.
Safety protects our team, our customers, and every dog in our care - ensuring every shift ends with people and pups going home healthy and happy.

The power of Team

Own Your Role.

Take full responsibility for your work, your results, and how you impact the team.

Invest Time to Care, Listen, and Connect.

Show people they matter - make space to hear them and build real connections.

Be Proactive - Talk to People, Not About Them.

Address issues directly and respectfully. Face-to-face conversations build trust; gossip breaks it.

Winning behavior thrives in a culture that supports it.

Because we care about each other, and because we know elite results come from teamwork, we take time to invest in one another.

We build strong relationships and listen to understand, not just to reply.

By making this investment, we bring out the best in each other, and in the whole team.

Do the Work. Get Better.

Improvement takes effort - and our customers are counting on us to deliver services that are essential to their dog's well-being. We must be at our best to make sure they get what they need, without delay or compromise. Every day, competitors are looking for ways to meet

compromise. Every day, competitors look for ways to meet our customers' needs faster, at lower cost, or with higher quality. Our goal is simple: to be the best K9 service organization. Period. valuable to the team that raises our overall performance.

Be aware of how your role shifts depending on the situation and the skills of your teammates. Flex when needed to help the team succeed. Even when we don't all agree, once a decision is made, we back it and work toward success.

Invest Time to Care, Listen, and Connect

Great teams understand each other's perspectives — and that starts with caring enough to listen.

When we care, we give our best effort.

When we listen, we build relationships.

When we connect, we build trust.

This takes time, so we choose to invest the time.

Cultivating trust means recognizing teammates as whole people with important lives outside of Sterling K9 Retreat. Be open, share more than just work talk, and create space for real human connection.





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Rosie Dalton
MEMBER OF THE PACK
SINCE 2023

Sterling
MEMBERSHIP

Be Proactive - Talk to People, Not About Them. Challenges happen to everyone, and sometimes we all need an empathetic ear. Have the right conversations directly with your colleagues, and always with respect. Constructive candor - saying what needs to be said in a way others can receive - is a strength.

Speak to others as you'd want to be spoken to, whether in private or in a group. Address concerns face-to-face so trust stays strong.

Outcome:

When we harness the power of the team, Sterling K9 Retreat is a great place to work — and we win together.



Relentless Pursuit of Excellence

Do the Work. Get Better.

Show up ready to give your best - then find a way to raise the bar every day.

Bring Solutions.

Spot a problem? Bring an idea to fix it.

No Three C's.

Don't **condemn, complain, or criticize** without offering a way forward.

Think Big.

See the big picture, imagine what's possible, and take steps to make it real.

The K9 industry is constantly evolving - shaped by new standards and the rising expectations of customers who want cleaner, smarter choices. Neither technology nor customers will wait.

We rise to the occasion by committing to continuous improvement and by thinking in BIG, bold, and better ways to operate. Every innovation we embrace moves us closer to being the safest, most reliable, and most trusted provider in the industry.

Do the Work. Get Better.

Improvement takes effort - and our customers are counting on us to deliver services that are essential to their dog's well-being. We must be at our best to make sure they get what they need, without delay or

compromise. Every day, competitors look for ways to meet our customers' needs faster, at lower cost, or with higher quality. Our goal is simple: to be the best K9 service organization. Period.

Find Solutions. No Three C's (Condemn, Complain, Criticize).

When we put our energy into building productive responses, we create positive changes. When we focus on the Three C's, we waste energy and breed negative outcomes.

Commit to making a positive difference. Find a solution - and make it stronger by involving others. Negative attitudes are toxic; positive, "above the line" attitudes are contagious.

Instead of getting stuck on what's outside our control, ask: "What can I do to make this situation better?" This means looking for opportunities to apply our skills, experience, and creativity to solve challenges. Sometimes it means taking personal risks, stepping past discomfort, and investing in a solution.



Think Big

Look beyond the “here and now.” Ask: How can this solution help others? How can we scale it to grow our business?

Don’t let “status quo” thinking or perceived resource limits kill potential improvements before they’re fully explored. Be willing to challenge assumptions, spark bold conversations, and borrow great ideas from other industries. Incremental improvements matter — but BIG ideas drive transformation. Enrichment programs, K9 Grass, and personalized report cards are just a few examples of high impact changes we’ve already made. Let’s keep going. Let’s bring more BIG ideas to life, building and sustaining a true culture of excellence.

Outcome:

By relentlessly pursuing excellence, we’re better every day. Continuous improvement keeps us competitive, creative, and proud of our work — ensuring our customers, partners, and pups always get our best.



Act with Integrity

THINK FIRST THEN ACT.

Pause to consider the impact before making a move. Good judgment starts with a moment of thought.

BE ACCOUNTABLE.

Own your choices and the results they create - good or bad.

DO THE RIGHT THINK, ESPECIALLY WHEN ITS HARD.

Integrity shows most in the moments when doing the easy thing would be simpler.

Belief

We believe in doing the right thing every time. Acting with integrity builds trust - both inside our organization and with the customers, partners, and community we serve.

Think First, Then Act

To get the best results, picture the outcome you want — and plan how to get there. Draw on what you've learned in training, be deliberate in your choices, and stay aware of the consequences.

This applies everywhere: driving, meetings, daily work, giving feedback, or peer coaching.

Our actions impact others, and we each have a responsibility to act in ways that make Sterling K9 a great place to work.

Be Accountable

Success happens when individuals hold themselves - and each other - accountable.

We do this in a positive way, through clear expectations, the right training, and the right tools to get the work done.

Every action inside our “20 square feet” matters to creating a healthy, productive environment.

We continuously work to improve both job skills and life skills, because they shape the future of our business.

Accountability builds a culture of achievement.



MY PUPS GOT INTO PRIVATE SCHOOL

COLUMBUS' BEST DOG DESTINATION
By Columbus Monthly

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Do the Right Thing, Especially When It's Hard We place high value on honesty and consistency. We engage with candor and constructive feedback - and we don't avoid the hard tasks that need doing.

Think about the "shadow you cast" and the size of the team you're part of. The measure of a person is what they choose to do when no one is looking.

We strive for a workplace where we can trust that everyone is looking out for the team, even if that means giving timely, constructive feedback.

Outcome:

When we act with integrity, we build trust.
Trust is the foundation of lasting relationships — within our team, with our customers, and across our community.

Mission: Our Purpose

We believe our customers' dogs are family members. Not in a silly or over-the-top way - but in a deeply humane way. They deserve respect, compassion, and loving care.

At Sterling K9 Retreat, our goal is simple: improve the lives of dogs and their owners. Dogs give us unconditional love, and it's our duty to give some of that back.

There's a moment we live for - the look in a customer's eyes when they realize we care about their dog exactly the way they do. When they know it's real. That moment is overwhelming. Heartwarming. It's the mix of immense trust and honorable service that makes us proud of what we do - and drives us to keep getting better.

That's why we do it.

This is our story.

This is Sterling K9 Retreat.



Culture Values: What We Believe

At Sterling K9 Retreat, we strive to create an environment where pets love spending time away from home - and the same should be true for every member of our human team.

To make that happen, we commit to building a culture that is effective, helpful, and encouraging. We take pride in having a staff that is upbeat, positive, and genuinely happy to engage with our customers and with each other.

Every team member, no matter their role, deserves to be heard and understood. We're fortunate to work with pets and their people every day - but we know this is hard, demanding work. That's why we support and encourage one another, every single day.

Vision: How We See the Future

Our vision is to be the place dogs love and owners trust - a partner in every stage of a pet's life.

We will:

- Focus on pet health and well-being by providing fun, engaging daily activities.
- Deliver personal service - knowing each pet and their owner by name.
- Partner with owners to support both health and behavior needs.
- Create an environment pets enjoy so much, they can't wait to come back.





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