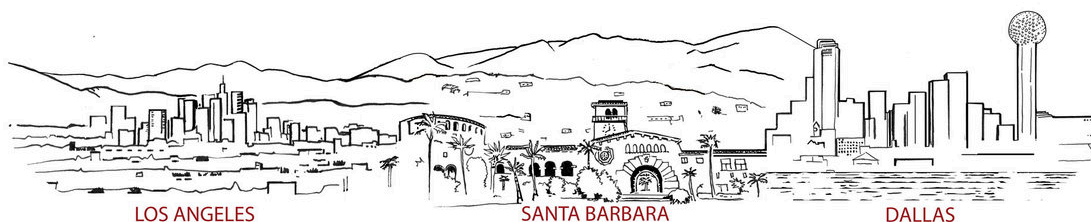


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Sure, dogs bark, but a significant amount of a dog's communication is via its tail.

Having had dogs almost all of my life, three of them sitting beside me as I write this in the yard on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, it's clear that they are highly emotional creatures. They can't fake the signal their tail sends.

Humans not having tails, you'd think that it would be a lot harder to read them. But in my experience working on thousands of negotiations, that prior sentence is a fallacy. Humans, and human organizations, do have tails, well, tails in the metaphorical sense, but tails that tell tales, nonetheless.

In the context of negotiation, most assume that humans communicate verbally, i.e., via words, whether in written or oral form. But that's hardly the case.

The person, and that term includes entities, with whom you're negotiating is communicating positions and intentions via their tail, i.e., non-verbally.

The difficulty, of course, is that although dogs are highly emotional in the sense of the tail wagging the dog, humans are, at least for the most part, less emotionally driven which leads to the possibility that their positions and intentions are kept under control. But, in my experience, even when under supposed control, their "tails" are moving, even if ever so slightly.

This leads to three simple sounding points. (The fact of the matter is, if they were so simple, one wouldn't observe their violation on a near daily basis.)

Do your best to control your emotions, and not just those that someone can physically see, but those that, on a group level, signal position and intent, such as neediness or desperation. Of course, for those who don't understand what their own tail is doing, it's likely giving them away.

Spend a significant amount of time analyzing the tales that the other side's tail has been sending. Sure, you might be wrong, but spending time engaged in the process is of tremendous value in any event. I have no hard data on this, and who knows if anyone does, but my gut built up over the decades negotiating deals is that a huge part of the signaling is unintentional, a window into the soul of your negotiating opposite, so to speak. (Of course, some counter parties have no soul, but that's another issue, one that is also important.)

To the extent that you're more evolved than a dog, and therefore a bit more in control of your metaphorical tail, understand that how it's used, both to signal actual intention and positions, and so on, as well as to purposefully mislead, is a secret superpower. Wag right, move left is a real thing.



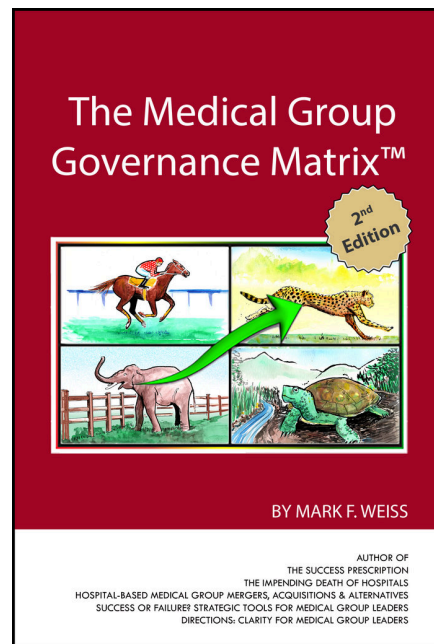
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