Training Playbook:
Creating an Amazon Wish List

Introduction

Why create a wish list? Developing an Amazon wish list allows potential donors to select items you need from a list you create and have those items shipped directly to your shelter. It's similar to a gift registry you might use to select and send a wedding or baby gift.

All donors love the convenience and wish lists work especially well for donors who want to know exactly what their gifts will support and/or donors who want to give tangible items.

Since the inception of Amazon wish lists in 1999, they have produced millions of dollars in donations of tangible items for shelters, rescue groups and other nonprofits, and have inspired other vendors to set up similar registries. By creating one or more wish lists, you'll get more of what you need with less effort.

Program Overview

After establishing an Amazon account for your organization or agency, you'll draw on items stocked by Amazon to create one more wish lists for the public to view.

You'll promote your wish lists to potential supporters, adopters, foster caregivers, volunteers, and the general public through as many communication channels as you have bandwidth to execute: website, social media, email campaigns and (if your organization is a municipal shelter) other ways that your public information officer may suggest.

Supporters will see what you need, buy it and have it shipped directly to your organization or agency. Shipping may vary by state (especially to Hawaii), so always check to ensure that you can receive items in your area.

You'll want to keep your lists updated, and you can improve your results by applying some of the suggestions below, but a wish list is generally not a high-maintenance tool.

Program Composition
Get started

1. Create an Amazon business account if your organization does not have one. If possible, pay for an Amazon Prime account. In most states (be sure to inquire about your state), this account will enable you to qualify for free shipping.
2. Familiarize yourself with Amazon's instructions and the wish lists of other organizations. Start with the Amazon wish lists of Best Friends. (Click the orange "Shop" button at the end of each Best Friends location to get to the actual list).

3. Think about what you need and get input from other members of your team. Assemble your list in writing so that you have a comprehensive sense of your needs and priorities.

Make your list

4. Create a primary list containing 6-10 items that are truly critical: the "must have to operate" consumable items such as food and paper trays for food, bowls, cleaning agents, trash bags and other items you need every single day.
5. You can add all the other things you need to this one list (if you don't have the time to segment) or you can use the recommendations below to segment your list and improve your results.
6. If you are making more than one list, omit toys and treats from your primary list. Many donors default to the items that they believe make the animals happy, leaving you with critical, constant needs unmet (for example, donors might choose cat toys over cat litter).

Upgrade your list by segmenting it

Creating a wish list is a great first step in asking your community for help, but with a few simple upgrades, you can increase your donations and donor satisfaction exponentially. Here are some ideas:

7. Create a second wish list for facilities-related items. Include the "larger ticket" items that you need to make your facility better and safer (e.g., dog beds, a commercial janitorial cart, fence screening, garden tools, fans, swamp coolers, trash cans, a trash can dolly).
8. Create an adoption supplies list. Include items you give out with every adopted animal, such as bandanas, toys, collars and leashes.
9. Create a veterinary supplies list. Include consumables like sutures, scissors and syringes. You could also include facility-level items (e.g., stainless steel tables, glass-front steel cabinets, lamps) or put those on the facilities list.
10. You could create a low-priority list that contain things that are nice to have but are not critical everyday items, such as things that improve the aesthetics of the shelter (e.g., community garden items, sculpture or other artistic touches).
11. Prioritize your lists and also prioritize the items on each list, based on your organization's needs.
12. Decide who else should be able to view and edit the account, and use Amazon's instructions to act on those decisions.

Promotion ideas for improving your results

13. Add your logo to the top of every list.
14. Promote your lists differently. Think about which ones appeal to which audience segments in your community. Rotate offerings to experiment with what works best.

15. Prioritize the amount of promotion you'll give to each list. For example, in social media posts, you might feature your primary list more often than any other list.
16. Give each list a short descriptive paragraph at the top of the page.
17. In describing your critical, constant-use items, try sentences like these:
    - "These are things that benefit the animals every single day and cost us the most because we use them constantly."
    - "If you want your gift to deliver the biggest bang for the buck, five gallons of Rescue is a massive gift!"
18. For all other lists, be sure to include how many of each of the items you need. Amazon can then allow you to "count down" as items are purchased. Potential donors can see how many remaining items are needed. This can be a powerful motivation for donors who like to help close out, wrap up or put an endeavor over the top.
19. Give each wish list you make a different link on your website and ensure that each promotion contains the unique link for the right wish list. Try to avoid directing people to a generic all-purpose list. Too many choices can be overwhelming and cause people to make no choice at all.

Bonus idea: AmazonSmile

Tangible items are great gifts to receive, but you still need cash. If your organization is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you can make that donation easy, too, by promoting AmazonSmile to your community. Donors can make your organization their charity of choice when they shop through AmazonSmile, and their purchase will trigger small contributions for you that really add up over time.

Expand your options beyond Amazon

Amazon wish lists may be the most well-known, but Walmart and Chewy.com also provide ways for donors to select and send tangible items to shelters. Now that you're a pro at creating wish lists and keeping content fresh and well -promoted, use the following to turn Walmart and Chewy customers into your donors:

- Check out the Chewy site and then email rescue@Chewy.com to set up an account for your shelter.
- Walmart's Registry for Good can help both organizations and individuals who want to donate.
- Make sure you are aware of any additional registry's shipping rules.

Conclusion

By investing just a few hours in creating, maintaining and promoting one or more wish lists to your community, you can help your agency or organization obtain critical, constant-use supplies as well as items that upgrade your facility and improve quality of

life for all your animals. A wish list is a low-maintenance, high-return tool that should be in everyone's toolkit.

Resources

If you need more guidance on how to create a list, check out this teacher's step-by-step guide. The steps are essentially the same whether you're getting supplies for your classroom or items for your shelter.

Sample wish lists:

- Check out this social media post from Friends of Pima Animal Care Center and follow the link to their wish list.
- The Richmond SPCA promotes both Amazon and Chewy wish lists on its website.
- PAWS Chicago does a great job of segmenting lists on its own website, adds the Amazon option, and also publishes a list of items PAWS does not accept. Publishing what you don't accept is a proactive way of dealing with potential donor dissatisfaction and a way to avoid the clutter or disposal of unwanted items.
- Including your hours of operation on the same webpage as your lists, as Southern Pines Animal Shelter does, offers your potential donors and added layer of convenience, making it easier to give. If you only accept donations during a certain window of those operating hours, include that information.