

Adopters Welcome: Develop an adoption marketing action plan

Adorable pictures, meaningful descriptions, creative advertising and special promotions get people's attention and help move pets into loving homes faster.

If you need to jump-start your adoption marketing, start by checking out what other adoption agencies are doing by visiting their websites and social media pages. Find additional ideas at humanepro.org/topics/adoptions. Assemble a list of ideas—even big ideas that aren't realistic for all animals should be included.

To make sure you don't miss an opportunity to promote a pet, develop a marketing action plan. The sample provided is part timeline and part checklist for your individual strategies (outreach events and organization-wide specials won't be included). Some basics should be in place early for all adoption-track animals. New strategies should kick in as time passes. The strategies and timeline will vary by organization, but the goal is to help every adoptable animal find a loving family as soon as possible.

Code Green = Ready for adoption (the basics)			
	Take an upbeat picture that shows off good looks and personality.		Write a profile description that's positive, creative and highlights the animal's best features.
	Be clear about what medical and behavioral support adoptable pets have received (vaccinations, training, spay/neuter) to increase adopter confidence.		Set reasonable adoption rates that are competitive or, if you anticipate the pet may be more difficult to place, waive the fee altogether.
	Post pictures and profiles to national adoption websites and to your local online pages.		

Code Blue = Available for adoption after more than two weeks			
	Highlight positive changes or training successes that show a pet's progress and potential.		Take a new picture that captures personality, ideally with a human. Upgrade with silly props and colorful backdrops.
	Identify behaviors that may be driving adopters away. Move to a foster home or have a volunteer take a dog off-site to learn more about (and document) their personality.		Highlight as "Pet of the Week" through local newspaper, television and radio stations.
	Add a short video featuring play and other fun activities to online profiles.		Write a new profile description illustrating unique and special qualities. Stay positive and use humor.
	Relocate the animal to a different location within the shelter, main lobby or off-site location.		Create a personalized cage sign by using just a few words to say something extra special.

Code Orange = Available for adoption after more than four weeks			
	Evaluate for emotional or behavioral signs of stress or deterioration. If any signs appear, transition to foster care for further support.		Ensure the profile highlights the pet's best qualities. Use puns and rhymes, and play on current events.
	Identify any new behaviors that are driving adopters away. Move to a foster home for behavior modification or enlist the help of a positive-reinforcement trainer.		Take a set of new pictures using better backgrounds, accessories and popular themes. Prioritize photos and videos of the pet with other animals or humans or in a home environment.
	Promote socially by adding photos on social media and your organization's newsletter or blog, etc., as a "Pet of the Week."		If the pet is comfortable, bring to special events, popular parks and other high-traffic locations to maximize exposure.
	Spotlight the pet on your website and ask local businesses to do the same.		Find volunteers to take dogs to training classes or clicker-train cats and promote as a special feature.

Code Red = Top five animals with highest number of days until available for adoption			
	Waive the adoption fee.		Find sponsors for adoption fees and any additional medical needs.
	Encourage staff and volunteers to add the pet's picture and tagline to email signatures.		Create and share flyers on social media asking followers to print and post at work, coffee shops, etc.
	Decorate housing by using popular themes and match colors or patterns throughout bedding and toys.		Send out on regular field trips in the community to meet adopters where they are.
	Connect with local community centers to display the pet's profile and host an adoption event in a new community.		Run senior bloodwork, perform dentals or have the pet groomed to add value and peace of mind for potential adopters.