Can We Talk? Adoption Through Conversation, Not Interrogation.

Todd Cramer, V.P. of Operations & Chief of Staff
Mohawk Hudson Humane Society
tcramer@mohawkhudson.org
This workshop builds on this mornings sessions. By the end of this session you will know how to:

• Verbally slap the bejesus out of someone

• Ship them off to another part of the country (don’t forget the health certificate)

• Cite Compassion Fatigue as your defense

• Use your one phone call to reach your TN ACA Regional Director

• Tomorrow, Sandy Rees will be teaching you how to fundraise for bail money
AGENDA

Adoption screening – what are we trying to achieve?

Adoption through conversation – no more adoption police

Exercise: Open questions and the five essentials

Exercise: Creating open questions

The adoption process
Can We Talk?

Can we talk? Adoption through conversation, not interrogation

ACC Team Profile
Adoption Screening Checklist Sample
Guide Toward More Open Adoptions
Conversational Adoptions - Open Questions Reference
Adoption Forum II 2003
AHA Adopt Forum I
• 1999: AHA/PetSmart Charities Adoption Forum

• 2003: PetSmart Charities Adoption Forum II
What are we trying to achieve when placing an animal for adoption?
When an animal comes into our care, we feel responsible for making sure he or she has a better life in the future than in the past. We hope that future will be in a new home. More than that, we want it to be a good home; a committed and loving home.
What are some of the reasons you might deny an adoption?
Please welcome...
Self-Check
Exercise: The Illusion of Control

You’ll have 3 minutes to complete this exercise

1. Turn to page 7 in the Report on Adoption Forum II
2. Read The Illusion of Control
3. Highlight what resonates with you

We’ll hear some of your thoughts.
Reflection: The Illusion of Control

• What is meaningful to you?
• Did anything surprise you?
• How does this make you feel?
We know we cannot stop anyone from getting a pet – if we turn them down, they can always go elsewhere. But at least our animals will be spayed or neutered before they go into a home. The fact that a person has chosen to come to the shelter to adopt probably means they are trying to do the right thing.

CL phoenix central/south phx  Posted: 2013-07-23, 8:10AM MST
free dogs (south moutain)
i have two chuchwawas that need rehoming I have too many they are both boys and are not fixed they are both brown and white and they are both good with kids and adults. if interested please call xxx-xxx-xxxx thanks. please don't email I will be at work all day but can answer the phone. you can pick it up anytime today..thanks again
The Importance of Risk Taking

An adoption that is turned down may mean the pet ends up dying by way of euthanasia...

...but at a minimum a declined adoption means the pet spends more time in a cage - and reduces the number of new pets that can be rescued by the agency while he or she waits for the “perfect” home.

It makes sense to take some risks – especially if we can institute programs after the adoption to reduce that risk.
What is a Successful Adoption?

How do we know when we have achieved success?
FIVE ESSENTIALS

1. The match would be suited to the individual animal and family

2. The pet would be afforded appropriate veterinary care

3. The pet’s social, behavioral, and companionship needs would be met

4. The pet would have a livable environment (including appropriate food, water, etc.)

5. The pet would be respected and valued
We can achieve **success** for the animal, adopter, and organization by **seeking reasons to adopt** to our patrons **rather than seeking reasons not to**

DO Ask yourself: “What is good and right with this adopter?

DON’T: Seek to rule out adoption but rather make one happen
Application vs. Survey (profile)

Closed vs. Open Questions

Interrogation vs. Conversation
Boston Terrier Rescue
Adoption Application

1. Name ____________________________________________

24. If you have ever had a pet lost or die at an early age or because of an accident, please explain and give details ____________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

36. Can you afford to care for your pet? _______________

________________________________________

45. Should behavioral problems arise, would you be willing to consult with a Boston Terrier Rescue Contact or professional trainer for consultation or training? ____________________________

Sometimes it takes days, even weeks to complete the adoption process. Please complete this application and someone will contact you for an interview and to schedule a visit to your home.
Sample Adopter Profile

Ready to Adopt? Start Here!

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City: _______________________ State: _____ Zip: _______
Phone (circle Home/ Cell/ Work): __________________________
Phone (circle Home/ Cell/ Work): __________________________
E-mail address: __________________________

What type of pet are you interested in adopting? Check all that apply!

_____ Dog  _____ Cat  _____ Other: __________

How experienced do you feel caring for this type of pet?

_____ No experience- but excited to learn!
_____ Some experience- have had a pet or two before.
_____ Lots of experience- my friends and family consider me an expert!

How experienced do you feel with providing veterinary care for this type of pet?

_____ No experience- but looking forward to learning!
_____ Some experience- I have a veterinarian I know I can call.
_____ Lots of experience- I am comfortable giving medication, and love my vet!

How would you describe your household?

_____ Very quiet- only a few residents and not too many guests.
_____ Average- not too quiet but not party animals.
_____ Very busy- lots of people are coming in and out!

What types of pets are currently living in your home?

_____ One dog  _____ More than one dog  _____ One cat  _____ More than one cat
_____ “Other” types of animals: __________________________

Are you aware of any restrictions (rules from landlord, condo association, etc) that would prevent you from adopting a pet?

_____ I am not allowed dogs  _____ I am not allowed cats  _____ There are size restrictions
_____ I can only have a limited number  _____ I don’t know  _____ I can have any pet
FOR DOG ADOPTERS

What energy level are you looking for in a new dog?

  ___ High energy (needs lots of exercise, running, etc)
  ___ Medium energy (daily walks, moderate exercise)
  ___ Low energy (senior or couch potato - yard time is sufficient)

What Informational Handouts would you like to take home with your new dog?

  ___ Housebreaking and Crate Training
  ___ Barking and Chewing
  ___ Separation Anxiety
  ___ Basic Obedience Training
  ___ Introducing Your New Dog to Current Pets
  ___ Finding a Veterinarian

FOR CAT ADOPTERS

What activity level are you looking for in a new cat?

  ___ Very active - a kitten or young cat that will zoom around the house and need lots of playtime!
  ___ Medium energy - a cat that will enjoy playtime and catnip, but also enjoys naps!
  ___ Not active - a calm, mature cat that will spend most of the time napping and snuggling!

What Informational Handouts would you like to take home with your new cat?

  ___ Litter box training
  ___ Cat friendly games
  ___ Socializing shy or nervous cats
  ___ Scratching Furniture
  ___ Introducing Your New Cat to Current Pets
  ___ Finding a Veterinarian

Thank you for choosing ACCT Philly for your new pet!
You’ll have 5 minutes to complete this exercise

1. Turn to page 4 in the Report on Adoption Forum II

2. Identify which of the Five Essentials of a Successful Adoption each open question addresses

We’ll hear from you
“Wow, 3 cats? Taking them to the vet must be an adventure!”

1. The match would be suited to the individual animal and family
2. The pet would be afforded appropriate veterinary care
3. The pet’s social, behavioral, and companionship needs would be met
4. The pet would have a livable environment (including appropriate food, water, etc.)
5. The pet would be respected and valued
1. The match would be suited to the individual animal and family
2. The pet would be afforded appropriate veterinary care
3. The pet’s social, behavioral, and companionship needs would be met
4. The pet would have a livable environment (including appropriate food, water, etc.)
5. The pet would be respected and valued
“I see you currently have pets. What is it about them you particularly enjoy? What do you wish were different about them?”

1. The match would be suited to the individual animal and family
2. The pet would be afforded appropriate veterinary care
3. The pet’s social, behavioral, and companionship needs would be met
4. The pet would have a livable environment (including appropriate food, water, etc.)
5. The pet would be respected and valued
I see you rent your home and am sure you wouldn’t want to lose your security deposit if Fideaux were to do any damage. What might your plan be if you run into this type of concern?

1. The match would be suited to the individual animal and family
2. The pet would be afforded appropriate veterinary care
3. The pet’s social, behavioral, and companionship needs would be met
4. The pet would have a livable environment (including appropriate food, water, etc.)
5. The pet would be respected and valued
Create an open question you can use to help determine if at least one of the Five Essentials of a Successful Adoption will be met after adoption.

Which of the Five Essentials does this question relate to?

We’ll hear some of your questions.
ADOPTION MUSTS

1. The animal must be spayed or neutered

2. No animal will be adopted to an applicant with a known history of animal or child abuse

3. No animal will be adopted to an individual who is suspected of being drunk or high at the time of application

4. No animal will be adopted to be used as a food source
Issues of concern

- Chaining
- Guard dog/mouser
- Intuitive judgment
- Outside dog
- Outside or inside/outside cat
- Landlord permission
- Pet guardian history
- Unaltered pets in the home
- Declawing
The Best Adoption Process

Treats each applicant and animal as individuals.

Uses guidelines to define topics of discussion, not rigid mandates.

Emphasizes resources the shelter can provide to help solve any problems that arise.

Is ready to re-direct the adopter to other options as needed.

Emphasizes that post adoption contact will be welcomed.
Your leadership decides how “open” your process/criteria will be

Consider revising your “application” to a “profile”.

Have a checklist of your conversation topics and open questions handy to guide you (all tie to the 5 Essentials).

Complete the adoption (or not).

The adopter should be talking more than you are.

Start your conversation: ex: “Glad you came in today. What is it about Fluffy that appeals to you?”

Follow up
Adoption Screening Checklist

The following checklist is designed to guide adoption staff with the adopter screening process. The purpose is to assist with having a conversation driven to build a positive relationship with potential adopters while determining if the potential home will meet the 5 Essentials of a Successful Adoption as outlined in the PetSmart Charities Adoption Forum II. Keep in mind, many of the suggested questions will address more than one essential.

☐ *The match will be suited to the individual animal and family:*

“What is it about (insert animal name) that appeals to you?”

“In regards to the energy/activity level of your home, would you say it is most
like a library, a zoo (as in chaos) or somewhere in between?”

“Tell me more about your current pet, ______. What is it you LOVE about him?”

☐ *The pet will be afforded appropriate veterinary care:*

“Wow! Three pets must keep you busy. What is like getting all of them to the
vet? That must be fun!”

“How do you handle _____’s vaccinations?

☐ *The pet’s social, behavioral and companionship needs will be met:*
☐ The pet will have a livable environment, including appropriate food, water and shelter.

“As you probably know, three of the most important things to a pet are food, food and sleep. What do you like to feed your pets and where do they hang out and where do they sleep?”

“When you envision the perfect match for you, what comes to mind?”

“What is ______ going to do for fun?”

☐ The pet will be respected and valued (and this relates to commitment to the pet).

“We all have our limits and there is no shame in that. What situations might leave you feeling like __________ just isn’t a good fit for you/your family and could lead you to return or re-home him/her?”

“As a renter I am sure you don’t want to lose your security deposit or have to move if __________ were to bark too much, or cause damage by having
How are you feeling about screening via conversation and open adoptions in general?

What questions do you have?
Can We Talk?

Can we talk? Adoption through conversation, not interrogation

*ACC Team Profile*

*Adoption Screening Checklist Sample*

*Guide Toward More Open Adoptions*

*Conversational Adoptions - Open Questions Reference*

*Adoption Forum II 2003*

*AHA Adploit Forum I*