Facilitating Adoption of Animals from Animal Shelters

Helping pets find a good home

Convincing the average citizen to adopt a pet from an animal shelter can be difficult. Many people do not know enough about taking care of pets to feel confident adopting one. Even if they want to adopt, a person can struggle to find the time to go to a local animal shelter and search for a compatible pet. That means that there are pets in shelters that might have been a perfect match for specific people, but never got the chance to meet them. At the rate of euthanasia in animal shelters, it is imperative that solutions be implemented to give adopters a better chance at successfully bringing home a new pet.
Finding the Right Pet

Pet adoption is not a decision that is made quickly or easily. Pets are long-term members of a household, which means that they must be carefully selected by the adopter to be exactly what they want. This process can be confusing and stressful if the adopter does not know what that is.

The consequence of not finding the right pet are high. At best, the adopter will have to put up with a pet that they do not like for as long as it is living. At worst, the adopter may have to return the pet to the shelter. Either situation is certainly undesirable.

Considerations for adopting a pet
- Pet type
- Age
- Good with children
- Inside/outside pet
- Special needs
- Medical history

Finding the Time

Not everyone has the time to go to the animal shelter, especially if the shelter is far away from one’s home and place of work. If that is the case, a special time slot has to be allocated for an adopter to travel to the shelter. It is likely that they will need a large segment of time as well, since picking a pet is not a fast process. If an adopter is working eight hours a day, then they may not want or be able to get away from their daily routine long enough to try and adopt a pet.

Pet Euthanasia and Rejection in the US

In 2017, The Dodo wrote an article about a disturbing trend in dogs coming into animal shelters in the US. Fans of the show “Game of Thrones” would adopt a husky, malamute or similar dog, quickly realize that it was too much for them to take care of, and dump them at an animal shelter. This problem could have been solved by giving those adopters the right information. The rate of euthanasia in animal shelters exacerbates the problem. American Humane states that an estimated 3.7 million animals were euthanized in American animal shelters in 2008. If that statistic has remained stable over the last ten years, then there are still millions of pets that are euthanized every year. They could have found a home if the adoption process was easier.
Existing solutions and drawbacks

Choices
As you start looking for future pets by websites or online applications, you will need appropriate approaches. This opportunity for choice provides ideal alternatives and best-in-class solutions. When a standard is developed or suitable solutions are offered, many future adopters adhere to those technology specifications.

Existing Solutions

Pet Finder
https://www.petfinder.com

Pros
● Browse local pets’ photos and basic information online and save time.
● Apply filters to select pets to specific search results.
● Locate pets’ supplier on the map.
● Basic pets’ care knowledge.

Cons
● Not connecting local shelters’ inventory with the website and application.
● No adoption documentation available for the adoption process.
● Lack of adopter education materials.
● No clear adoption flow chart for pets’ suppliers and adopters.

Adopt A Pet
https://www.adoptapet.com

Pros
● Social media connection to Twitter and Facebook.
● Pet adoption tips.
● Volunteers and shelters sign in.

Cons
● “My favorite pets” list.
● Pets supply vendors’ advertisement.
● No adoption documentation available for the adoption process.
Shelter aims to cover many of the weaknesses that have been found in existing applications, in order to make the adoption process a more streamlined, enjoyable experience. The difficulty of the adoption process should never be something that turns a potential adopter away from the idea, when there are so many pets that need good, happy homes. In addition, with many of Shelter’s competitors, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done outside of the website or app in order to be prepared. Shelter aims to bring everything together into a one-stop shop.

After installing Shelter, the world of animal ownership is at your fingertips. You can put in as much research as you think you might need, thanks to a robust collection of education materials collected in the app to be easily searched and browsed. Information for first-time pet owners in general, as well as specific information about every breed of animal available, is all housed directly inside the app. Once a user has educated themselves on pet ownership, they can browse animal types, or search directly for exactly what they’re looking for, and they can rest assured that the information provided is up to date, thanks to how easy it is for employees of animal shelters to use Shelter as well.

With a dedicated Employee section, it’s easy to keep your shelter’s stock up to date with a few taps of your fingers -- easily update animal profiles when vaccinations are done, spaying or neutering has happened, or even if a specific allergy or illness is discovered in an animal. Profiles are automatically removed once animals have been adopted, too, as the paperwork for the adoption process is built right into the app. All employees have to do is push the electronic paperwork through to a user’s Shelter profile, and they can complete the process completely digitally.

Shelter’s combined features bring about a new level of user friendliness to a process that has remained largely unchanged for years, and it’s never been easier to do the world a favor and adopt an animal in need.
Case Study

Through a series of interviews with a wide range of potential users, we found that by far the biggest limiting factor in adopting a pet is a lack of time or interest to go to a shelter. Many people were concerned that they would not have the heart to spend a large amount of time seeing all of the animals in a shelter, caged and scared. They also worried that having to check every pet in the shelter to find their medical information, background, etc. meant that some things could be missed or overlooked.

With the Shelter app, however, these issues are mitigated. Potential users of the app were very responsive to the ability to browse pets without having to go to a shelter, which is an understandably somber place. The ability to see all of the relevant information about a pet, including health concerns, vaccination dates, spay/neuter status and more tested very well. Any features that simplified the process and required less overall time commitment from users was well-received. Most user concerns revolved around intrusive ads and issues with user privacy, as well as the interface of the app disrupting the usability of it. Our very simple test design was very popular, and user input about simplicity and the importance of functionality guides our design in that regard.
Conclusions

There is a large opening in the market for exactly the sort of application that Shelter aims to be. While there are a few competitors out there, they do not quite tap into the same ideals as Shelter. Where they aim to aggregate animals submitted by other users, Shelter aims to create a large-scale network of all nearby animal shelters and their ‘stock’ of animals, to streamline the process not only for users but for the shelters as well.

Most importantly, the biggest advantage Shelter has over its competitors is the all-in-one design. The entire process can be completed within the app, with the only external requirements being a visit of an animal. This is streamlined significantly since the user will have already chosen the animal to visit within the app, meaning they do not have to spend a large amount of time wandering the cages of a shelter hunting for an animal. They will already have all of the relevant information for the animal, meaning they can simply come in, visit the animal, and decide whether or not to adopt. This reduces the time to adopt drastically, and the combination of shelter browsing and a wealth of animal ownership resources means that the user themselves is empowered with the ability to fill in the holes in their knowledge without having to search Google for a million different pet ownership resources. Shelter takes advantage of a severely lacking niche in the market of pet adoption to make things easy and fast for the end user as well as the shelter, meaning more pet adoptions and less animal euthanizing as a whole.

About the Company

The Shelter Team is a small, dedicated group of individuals that love pets. We were moved by the plight that animals face by not getting adopted, and wanted to do something about it. Shelter is the result of our combined passion, our way of making the world a better place to live, for people and pets alike. We continue to dream, discover and develop new ways to improve on past designs, and make the experience ever better for our users.
References
