

# Insights on Incentives

## Great Lakes Scrip Center

Driving the next generation of fundraising for schools and nonprofits by offering Amazon Gift Cards

Jill Whalen is Vice President of Retail Partnerships at Great Lakes Scrip Center, a company that specializes in scrip fundraising for schools and nonprofit organizations. They work across all 50 states and over 300 retailers. Since the company was founded, Great Lakes Scrip Center has worked with about 35,000 organizations, a number that continues to grow.

With over 13 years of experience, Jill has played a vital part in various roles including customer service, technology and marketing. She now manages the Retail Partnerships team in creating and maintaining relationships with all of their suppliers.

### Q: What was the initial trigger to working with Amazon?

JILL: We started our strategic relationship with Amazon back in 2003 and at that time, Amazon was quite different than it is today. However, we saw the potential Amazon had as a growing online retailer and they were a great online brand to bring to our portfolio. Also, we saw them as something that was a good fit with our customer base. Our main customers are families with school-aged children, so of course books and reading are big things for them. **Now, everyone knows about Amazon and it's fortunate for us and our customer base that we have had such a long-term relationship with them.**

### Q: What kind of results have you seen?

JILL: **As Amazon has grown and expanded into pretty much every shopping category, the breadth of options they offer has facilitated greater growth and loyalty in the scrip market than we initially expected.** Amazon is unique in its product expansion and is even becoming a leader in different product categories, which our customers know and appreciate. Also, we've worked really closely together with the Amazon Gift Card team on the purchase and delivery of gift cards to make it as easy as possible.

**Amazon has been able to accelerate the growth in fundraising dollars faster than we expected when we first started out. I can tell you that we've had double-digit growth every single year with Amazon Gift Cards since the first time we used them.** In fact, we've had growth of up to 50% with Amazon Gift Card sales, which is incredible. We've also seen great success with digital cards as 59% of Amazon's card sales with us are digital, and we expect that percentage to continue to rise.

### Q: How has Amazon helped your business processes?

JILL: One of our core business functions is inventory management. We're one of the largest resellers of gift cards, but we work on really small margins. We want to pass as much of the discount that our suppliers offer to the nonprofit organizations. That means it's really critical for our business to be able to manage inventory really well.

Back in 2008, we were able to connect to the Amazon API to retrieve codes in real-time, so when we have a purchase we can get a code delivered within seconds.



**Jill Whalen**  
Vice President of Retail Partnerships  
at Great Lakes Scrip Center

Being able to retrieve codes in real-time through Amazon's API has really improved our inventory management, which is a huge plus for us. Also, real-time activation plays a big part in helping our inventory and Amazon does a great job of it. The ability to activate the Amazon codes immediately allows us to eliminate the risk of inventory outages. **Overall, Amazon is superior in removing friction from our consumer experience.**

That's really important to our business as we want to make the process as easy and as fast as we can.

**Q: What feedback do you receive from end users?**

JILL: I can honestly say that none of our customers have ever been opposed to using Amazon for their fundraising. We receive positive feedback on the overall convenience of the Amazon Gift Card and its seamless connection to our program. We've even had comments through our customer support email address and on our Facebook page about how easy it is to use the Amazon Gift Card. Because Amazon provides us the code within seconds and makes the checkout process very easy for our customers, everything is extremely convenient, seamless and very quick. There are no redemption issues because the Amazon process is completely streamlined.



**Q: How has your relationship with Amazon evolved?**

JILL: We've had a very close relationship with Amazon over the years and have had opportunities to try out very new and different things. One fall, we decided to do a promotion where customers who purchased an Amazon Gift Card from us during specific dates received a card with a special offer added to it. So when the customer applied the code to their Amazon account, they also received a discount on the Fire HD Kid's Kindle product. It was a really neat promotion for us because of how well the product fit with our customer base and the way the whole process was very seamless and easy. Amazon even had a custom page up on their website that was branded with the "ShopWithScrip" logo, so it was well integrated and really neat. **Throughout the promotion, we saw evidence of increased gift card sales on our end and strong redemption rates on Amazon's end.** So we're actually working with Amazon to do more things like that in the future and we're really excited about it.

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