

Progress_Meeting_2_Minutes_Jan9_2026

Progress Meeting 2 - Meeting Minutes

Best Way Amazon Launch Project

Date: January 9, 2026 (Thursday) **Time:** 12:27 PM EST **Duration:** ~2 hours 41 minutes
Attendees: Greg Kowalczyk, Todd McDaniel, Douae Lahlou

Overview

We spent about 2.5 hours going through specific products from the 15-item priority list. Main focus was trampolines, Coleman air mattresses, and the Bestway pump filter. The discussion covered what makes each product viable or problematic, how to price them, and what it'll take to actually make money on Amazon.

Main takeaways: - Trampolines look decent - split into two markets (kids vs adults) - Coleman items are blocked - can't sell without brand approval - Pump filter is a strong opportunity - supply gap in the market - Freight costs make a huge difference - flat rate vs cubic volume changes everything - Target 16% margin on established items, 10% minimum - April launch makes sense for seasonal products

Product Discussions

Trampolines

We have two sizes: 36-inch for toddlers and 40/48-inch for adults/exercise. Todd initially thought we should just pick one, but they actually target different customers so both could work.

The market: The trampoline market does about \$500K total, but 70% comes from just a few keywords. Big brands like Little Tikes have terrible Amazon listings - poor SEO, weak images. That's an opportunity because Amazon buyers care more about how the product looks in photos than brand names (unless they're specifically searching for that brand).

Premium trampolines with better construction (adjustable handrests, better padding) actually sell well even at higher prices. Parents buying for their kids will pay more for quality and safety - it's visible in the photos.

Average price is around \$110. Cheap ones go for \$60-80. Best Way has a foldable handle feature that Little Tikes doesn't, which is a differentiator.

The problems: - Insurance is a pain. The provider doesn't like trampolines or children's inflatables. Major retailers want \$5M minimum liability coverage, which is expensive. - The purchase cost difference between the 36" and 40/48" is only \$12, so we need to figure out if we can justify the retail price difference. - Retail thinks in categories (toy vs exercise), but Amazon is all keyword-driven. We can't just copy retail thinking - have to focus on how customers actually search.

What to do: Split the analysis into two separate niches - one for kids, one for adults. Target \$110 price point. Need detailed photos and specs from Todd to do proper competitive analysis. Both products could work if priced right.

Coleman Air Mattress

This is a blocker. Can't proceed at all.

The situation: We're not authorized to sell Coleman products on Amazon. Bestway USA manages the brand registry and sent a request to Coleman (the licensor) for approval. Amazon wants proof of a purchase order before they'll approve us. But we can't get a PO without being approved to sell. Classic chicken-and-egg.

Todd is trying to get written approval directly from Coleman to break the logjam.

The market reality: Even if we get approved, this is a highly competitive market. A few brands dominate. Coleman's pricing is significantly higher than competitors, and Coleman mattresses need an external pump while many competitors have built-in pumps. Competitors have better listings and features.

The only reason to even consider it: Coleman does \$5M/year in retail sales on a single SKU. It's the #1 camping brand in Canada. Todd feels an obligation to keep supplying small and medium retail customers.

Decision: HOLD. Don't buy anything until brand approval is resolved. This could take a while.

Bestway Pump Filter

This is the most interesting opportunity we discussed.

Why it's good: There's a supply gap. The specific replacement pump for pools Best Way sells isn't available in the market right now. The existing listing already has 106 reviews at 4.6 stars, so there's credibility. It's a high-ticket item (\$249) with very cheap PPC costs because there aren't many sellers. The competition (mainly Intex) sells 20-30 units/day during peak season starting in April.

It's not just any pump - it's specific to the pools they already sell, and it works as an upgrade for other pools too. Once customers know it exists, they'll find it (destination purchase).

The concerns: Need to verify it's the 110v North American version, not the 220v European one. The current listing might be FBM (Fulfillment by Merchant), not FBA, which hurts buy box chances.

The big issue is shipping costs. At \$249, the product can be profitable, but only if we use flat-rate freight allocation instead of cubic volume. That makes a huge difference in the margins.

Amazon might also penalize us if we price higher than Canadian Tire's equivalent item. Have to watch that.

The plan: Order 24-48 units as a test. Verify it's the right voltage. Optimize shipping costs. Allocate funds for FBA fulfillment (critical for winning buy box). Small daily PPC budget should be enough since competition is limited. Focus on improving the listing quality.

Listing Strategy Discussion

New vs Existing Listings:

When there's already a listing for a product on Amazon, you have to decide: use it or create a new one?

Using an existing listing means you lose what Greg calls the "honeymoon period" - Amazon gives new listings 60-90 days of extra traffic to gather performance data. If the old listing is poor quality or abandoned, you're better off creating a new listing with a new UPC code.

The product has to be re-labeled with the new UPC because the existing UPC is tied to the old ASIN, even if that listing is closed.

Sometimes a second launch works better than the first because you learned from mistakes. But it requires an initial marketing investment to capitalize on the honeymoon traffic.

For our products: - Pump filter: existing listing has good reviews (106 at 4.6 stars), so probably use it but optimize the hell out of it - Trampolines: depends on what we find when we dig deeper - Coleman: can't even get to this question until brand approval sorted out

Margin and Pricing Discussions

This got into the weeds on freight costs and how they affect what we can actually make on each product.

Margin targets: - 16% = good for an established item - 10% = bare minimum - Below 10% = not viable for ongoing business

For new launches: Might have to go negative on margins initially. ACoS (Advertising Cost of Sales) could hit 60%, TACoS (Total Advertising Cost of Sales) around 30%. That's just the reality of getting a product onto page one of Amazon search results. Heavy spend in the first few days forces the item in front of customers so Amazon's algorithm picks it up.

Once it starts ranking organically, those percentages should drop. The goal is transitioning from paid to organic traffic over 60-90 days.

Exception: Established brands like Coleman and Bestway might not need aggressive PPC. They already have keyword recognition. Could launch just monitoring organic rank.

Freight allocation - this matters a lot:

Right now freight costs are calculated by cubic volume - bigger/bulkier items pay more. But Greg suggested a different approach: flat rate.

Example: \$3,500 container ÷ 700 units = \$5 per unit flat rate.

This dramatically improves margins on bulky items like trampolines and pump filters. Can make products that looked marginal actually viable. Some items subsidize others in the same container. For small mixed orders, flat rate makes way more sense.

Amazon-Specific Strategies

Visual presentation beats specifications:

Pictures communicate value way better than specs on Amazon. Parents looking at trampolines can see the construction quality, safety features, adjustable handrests in photos. That justifies premium pricing more than any spec sheet.

Listing optimization has to prioritize high-quality images showing what makes the product better.

Amazon SEO is not retail categorization:

Retail divides things into departments and categories (toy vs exercise). Amazon is keyword-driven. Customers search for specific terms, and the algorithm rewards products that match those keywords in title, bullets, and description.

Can't just copy retail category thinking. Have to focus on how customers actually search and what terms they use.

Brand exclusivity:

If Best Way has brand recognition and loyal customers, need to secure brand exclusivity through Amazon's Brand Registry. Prevents unauthorized sellers from listing under the Best Way name and undercutting prices.

Best Way is already shutting down unauthorized sellers in the US and Canada. Official listings can lock this down.

Buy box dynamics:

FBA (Fulfillment by Amazon) sellers are heavily favored over FBM (Fulfillment by Merchant) for winning the buy box. The algorithm strongly prefers Prime-eligible products.

One strategy: use coupons to lower the customer-facing price without changing the list price. This helps win buy box while maintaining price parity with retail partners like Canadian Tire and Walmart. Important for protecting those relationships.

Amazon calculates all fees (including referral fees) on the post-coupon price. There's a 60-cent coupon fee per transaction.

Data Dive Platform Issues

Douae couldn't see the niches Greg created in Data Dive. Todd (as account admin) needs to enable niche sharing in the settings so the whole team can collaborate.

Greg is sending a screenshot showing exactly where to flip that switch.

Dive creation process: Douae was looking for the "dive box" on individual product pages. It's actually on the search page where you can select multiple items. Need to be on search view, not individual listing view.

For Canadian market, 10-15 competitors is usually sufficient for analysis. Use a "hero keyword" to get focused comparisons - apples to apples.

Custom tray: Adding items to the custom tray doesn't count as a new dive. Only counts when you add them to an existing dive and actually run the comparison. This preserves the monthly allocation of 1,000 dives.

Tray is useful when you need very specific competitor selection or when items don't cluster well under a single keyword.

Business Strategy Discussions

B2B Amazon Business opportunity:

Todd has a list of small brick-and-mortar customers. Greg suggested setting them up with Amazon Business accounts so they can order from Amazon at B2B pricing.

Benefits: - Brings external traffic to Amazon (Amazon rewards this with better organic ranking) - Maintains retail relationships - Creates another revenue channel - Can provide affiliate links for tracking

Initial item selection logic (Todd's 120-item list):

Todd explained how he picked the initial items: 1. New products for 2026 season that retail customers haven't selected yet - get ahead of the retail cycle 2. Complementary products to existing sales (pump for pools already sold, premium covers, etc.) - known demand 3. Coleman brand products - obligation to supply small/medium customers, #1 camping brand in Canada

The advantage: strong retail sales data validates the market. That \$5M Coleman air bed number isn't speculation, it's real market performance.

Future expansion: Over 1,000 items in the Best Way catalog. Private label opportunities with 10 different factories. But focus on current items first - get them optimized and performing before expanding SKU count.

Inventory strategy (year-round vs seasonal):

Year-round items: go deeper on inventory, safer investment, maintain algorithm recognition.

Pure summer items: bring less inventory, test the market, minimize investment until validated.

For seasonal products that are off-season: competitors keep listings active and use limited advertising 2-4 weeks before peak season to "spark" the algorithm. Maintains recognition.

Critical point on stockouts: Don't run out of inventory. When you stock out, Amazon's algorithm stops recognizing the listing. Keywords tank. Very hard to reestablish position. Have to maintain continuous inventory even if it's just small quantities.

The ability to order 24 units is actually a significant advantage. Keeps high-ticket items (like pumps) active. Once the footprint is established, customers will find it.

External Challenges

Chinese seller competition: Chinese sellers now represent over 50% of third-party sellers. Many use DDP (Delivered Duty Paid) shipments and undervalue or reclassify items to avoid tariffs. Creates pricing pressure for legitimate sellers operating above board.

Insurance: Provider "not keen on trampolines or children's inflatable swimming inflatables." Major retailers require \$5M minimum liability coverage. Very expensive. Limits which products can be sold.

Customs/logistics: Factory partners aren't set up with KARM (Canadian customs system). Todd and Douae will handle customs directly. Additional cost step but manageable.

Timeline and Next Steps

Immediate priorities:

Todd: - Get written brand approval from Coleman (critical blocker) - Obtain detailed trampoline info - pictures showing all features, complete specs - Read through the file Greg shared and finalize costing - Enable niche sharing in Data Dive admin settings (Greg sending screenshot) - Process Phase 2 invoice - Create spreadsheet of best-seller and hard-to-get items with retail sales data for validation

Douae: - Complete dive on “bballs” item today - Work with Todd on remaining items from 15-product list - Send Greg any blockers or questions - Bring findings to next week’s review

Greg: - Send Todd screenshot of admin settings for niche sharing - Adjust file permissions so Douae can access - Continue analyzing remaining priority items - Prepare recommendations for next week

Timeline: Want to finalize order within 1-2 weeks. Target April launch when seasonal categories pick up. Chinese New Year in February affects production scheduling, so timing matters.

Todd confirmed receipt of Phase 2 invoice. The education-first approach is working better than “blindly ordering” small quantities like they were about to do before.

Product Decision Framework

Based on this meeting, here’s how to think about go/no-go on products:

Proceed when: - Target margins work out (16% good, 10% minimum) - There’s a competitive advantage (features, pricing, or exclusivity) - Market demand is validated (competitor data, retail sales) - Listing strategy is clear - Brand approval secured (if needed) - Freight costs optimized - 24-48 unit test makes sense financially

Hold when: - Brand approval pending (Coleman situation) - Need more data (incomplete analysis) - Pricing viability unclear (waiting on final costing) - Technical verification needed (pump voltage, etc.)

Reject when: - Margins unacceptable even with optimization (<10%) - Competition too strong (market dominated) - Pricing disadvantage can’t be overcome - Brand approval impossible - Insurance prohibitive

Key Numbers

Margins: - 16% = good - 10% = minimum - Negative OK temporarily for aggressive launch

Launch marketing: - ACoS: 60% initially - TACoS: 30% initially - Heavy spend first few days/weeks - Should decrease as organic ranking improves

Freight: - Cubic volume: varies by item - Flat rate: $\$3,500 \div 700 = \$5/\text{unit}$ - Flat rate dramatically helps bulky items

Test batches: - 24-48 units typical - Sufficient for high-ticket items - Maintains listing presence - Minimizes risk

Competitor analysis: - 10-15 competitors ideal for Canadian market - Use revenue as indicator of actual buying activity - Focus on “hero keyword” for accurate comparison

Specific Product Recommendations

Trampolines (36” and 40/48”): PROCEED - Split into two niches (kids vs adults). Target \$110 price. Need detailed specs and photos from Todd. Insurance is expensive but manageable. Both sizes could work if priced correctly.

Coleman Air Mattress: HOLD - Cannot proceed without brand approval. Todd pursuing written approval. Highly competitive market, pricing disadvantage. Only justification is retail relationships and \$5M annual sales validation.

Bestway Pump Filter: PROCEED WITH TEST - Order 24-48 units after verifying 110v version. Supply gap in market. Profitable at \$249 with optimized shipping (use flat-rate freight allocation). Cheap PPC, established listing with good reviews. Focus on FBA fulfillment and listing optimization.

Minutes prepared by: Greg Kowalczyk **Date:** January 10, 2026 **Next meeting:** TBD next week - review remaining product analyses