**Finding the Right Mailing List to Promote Your Company**

You’ve probably noticed in our Marketing Kit that we’ve provided you with several ways to grow your business each month. And, we’ve created the exact template you can use immediately to begin to find new prospects. In each month’s task list there are two promotions we’ve given you that use direct mail. You may have asked yourself: “Wow! This is great, but I don’t have a list I can use to send these promotions.”

When you’ve finished reading this short piece, you’ll have all of the knowledge you need to find a list, and to get someone to do all the research for you for free.

The first hurdle you have to cross will be to clearly define who your ideal prospect is. In creating this definition, you need to just concentrate on two simple things: *demographics and psychographics.*

**Demographics**

You must think clearly about who your ideal prospect is, and where they live. So start with a simple check-list of demographic considerations:

* Gender
* Age range
* Education
* Where do they live
* Do they own a home or rent
* Occupation

Depending on the kind of business you may be in there are other demographic considerations such as having children at home; owning their business. If your primary customer is a business there are several demographic considerations:

* NAICS Code(s) (this used to be called SIC Code) – this is a code that is used in Canada, US and Mexico that identifies the type of business your prospects are in. You can learn more about NAICS Codes here: <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/>
* Number of employees
* Annual Revenue
* Are your prospects in the headquarters of their company, or a branch

One additional consideration to make regarding demographics is how far away does your prospect live/work from your place of business. Do you want to harvest all names and addresses that are located in one or more specific Postal Codes? Would you want your prospects coming from an entire Province? Or, are you looking at a broader geographic consideration such as a country, or North America, or all English speaking countries.

Alternatively, your business may serve only very local customers, and you only want to concentrate on reaching your ideal prospect that is found in a five mile radius of your place of business; or a one mile radius; or a 100 mile radius.

You can see that you need to be very clear where you want your prospect to come from. And, with that clarity, combined with the other demographic characteristics, you will find that identifying the right mailing list or lists will be easy. But this process will be even easier when you also take into account psychographics.

**Psychographics**

Unlike demographics, psychographics take into account a lot of personal characteristics about your ideal client. Here are a handful of psychographic elements to consider:

* Hobbies
* Memberships
* Religious affiliation
* Sports interests
* Favorite magazines or periodicals
* Favorite music

You can see that when you add these personal considerations to the general demographics, you paint a very clear picture of who your ideal prospect might be. And remember that if you are selling in business-to-business, your prospect is still a person. So he or she will have their own interests that you will want to take note of. And in a B-to-B environment, identify the trade associations that your prospect might belong to; and the top trade publications that they would read.

**Demographics & Psychographics are Identified – *What’s Next?***

Now that you are clear with these details you can, if you are so inclined, do some research into the possibilities for mailing lists that might be available. The best place to begin is to look at the NextMark website (<http://www.nextmark.com/>). This is a fairly complete database of every mailing list available in the world. You can use NextMark to do a cursory evaluation of the lists that are available, but it won’t be as thorough as using another free resource that we guarantee will be invaluable. Talk with a list broker.

**Get Your Mailing List from a Reputable List Broker**

You may feel that you would be better off and save a ton of money by using NextMark to find and then obtain a mailing list. That’s where you would be dead wrong. Your best resource to help you obtain the exact list or lists that fit your ideal prospect profile is to use a mailing list broker. And, their services are free!

The amazing thing about mailing list brokers is that they are paid by the owner of the mailing lists. If you rent a list using a list broker, or instead go directly to the list owner, your investment will be exactly the same. But, your list broker can help you in so many ways. They know the exact questions to ask you about your prospect, and they know how to talk with the list owners to manipulate a list to fit your exact needs.

The list broker can find out what other kinds of promotions have been found to be successfully used for a specific list. They can identify aspects of the list that list owners won’t disclose to you like: when the list was last updated; how accurate are the addresses that are supplied on this list; who else is using the list, and for what purpose.

And, a list broker has no real incentive to push one list or another. They have access to every list in the world, and will find the exact list or combination of lists to fit your needs. List brokers are creative at combining lists to create a target audience that is exactly who you want to reach. For example, a good list broker can be so targeted that he/she can, by combining several lists, get a list of all blond, blue-eyed women who love tennis and live in Portland, OR. This is a bit extreme, but a list broker who understands your demographic and psychographic targets can be very specific.

The only caveat in dealing with a list broker is finding someone who is ethical and qualified. We recommend that you contact your local or national direct marketing association for recommendations. Here are a couple of resources:

* Canadian Direct Marketing Association - <http://www.cdma.org/>
* US Direct Marketing Assoc.(includes Canadian companies as well) - <http://www.the-dma.org/>
* British Columbia Association of Integrated Marketers - <http://www.bcaim.org/>
* Direct Marketing Association of Toronto - <http://www.dmatoronto.org/>

**What to Look For in Mailing Lists**

The first rule of thumb that should be covered regarding mailing lists is that you are not actually purchasing these lists. Instead, you are renting the list for a one-time use. If you feel that you might want to use these lists more than once, you should ask your list broker to negotiate a multiple use arrangement for you. (Note – These lists are “seeded” with names that the list owner uses to keep track of your use. While it may appear that you can use the list more than once without someone catching on, list owners have put in place several ways to catch multiple use).

Second, you will have to be clear how you want to receive your mailing list. Depending on the list owner and the number of names and addresses you rent at a time, the lists can be delivered in: mailing labels (simple labels or peel and stick labels); in a document format with names and addresses printed on a sheet of paper; or in electronic format. If delivered electronically, they may be able to actually send you the file in a CSV format and deliver it via email; or it can come in other electronic media.

**Email Lists**

Last, many people ask us about getting a list of email addresses for prospecting. The use of email in prospecting is so tempting because of the low cost that it seems like a pretty exciting opportunity. But, the reality is that email promotions to a rented list are in general not very effective. Email is one of the best vehicles for communicating with someone who has agreed to receive messages from you because it is a low cost medium that can actually be somewhat automated.

But, using email to begin a relationship with a new prospect is in general not effective. The lists are expensive, and the response to a lead generation message is very, very poor. While the cost to deliver an email is fairly low, the cost to rent that list is often close to being equal to the cost of renting a direct mail list plus the cost of printing and postage.

As a result, we recommend that you invest your time and marketing budget in direct mail for prospecting. Once you have developed a relationship with your prospect using direct mail, we strongly urge you to ask that prospect if you can communicate with them using email in future promotional efforts. You’ll find that the combination of direct mail and email can be very effective in acquiring a prospect, and converting that prospect to a customer.