

## 5 Tips for Choosing the Best Lists for your Direct Marketing Campaign

*How to get the right people on your direct-mail list*

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What good is a well-crafted direct mail marketing piece if it doesn't go to the right audience? An oft-cited set of statistics says the success of a direct mail campaign depends 40% on the list of names used, 40% on the product offer and 20% on the creative presentation of your mailer.

As e-mail marketing has taken hold in recent years, many of the same rules apply, plus a few new regulations. If anything, your list selection is even more critical. Permission-based e-mail marketing, which is sent only to people who have specifically requested to receive marketing messages for products and services like yours, is critical as even one misstep can result in e-mail distributors' blacklisting your future efforts. Sending an offer to a list that has not specifically opted in to receive e-mail about your product or service, or using a list gleaned from membership directories, for example, could result in complaints.

List selection is an ongoing process with an ever-changing market. Names that were highly responsive today may not be tomorrow. But by testing, changing and trying new lists and campaigns, your direct or e-mail marketing can become very successful. Here are some suggestions to help you achieve that goal.

**1. Never waver from looking at RFM.** Recent purchase history, Frequency and Monetary value. When did the customer last purchase? How often does your customer buy a competing product? How much is the average order value? (A good list broker should easily be able to provide all the selection criteria available.)

**2. Don't be fooled!** A list might say it is for a certain targeted buyer, but there may be an invisible person in the mix. For example, if you are trying to reach doctors, you'll find plenty of lists of physicians. But remember that many doctors don't open their own mail — their nurses or office managers act as gatekeepers. So, you'll need to either find a way to get the doctor to open your package himself (sending express mail or even overnight service can often bypass the gatekeeper) or target the person who is opening the mail.

**3. You get what you pay for.** The more recent the responder, the more expensive the name. "Hotline" responders' (responders inside of 90 days) names are coveted by all, since a recent mail responder is many times more likely to respond to another offer than a dusty old name (even 18-month-old names begin to turn stale, so ask how recent the list is that you're considering renting

**4. Get older and better!** When it comes to direct mail names, older people respond better than younger people. These days, over 35 qualifies as "older." Sad but true.

**5. Just as in life, timing is everything. Post-Christmas holiday and January mailings remain popular because they work.** Mailing in July isn't as effective for most products as summertime travel habits make it more difficult to accurately reach targeted addresses. Know your market and when it's best to reach the most likely responders.