

What You Must Know Before Purchasing a Mailing List

A Guide to Decipher the Various Buying Options when Purchasing a Mailing Lists



Introduction

The most important part of your direct marketing program is the list. Professional direct marketers will typically state that the success or failure of a direct marketing campaign can be attributed to the 40-40-20 rule. This rule states that the mailing list makes up 40% of the results, another 40% on the offer, and the final 20% on the package.



Without a doubt, the most important part of the package is the LIST.

Purchasing the best list available for your offer may appear simple on the surface, but there are 1,000's of issues that can cause you to acquire a mediocre product. The two biggest factors to consider are the list vendor you choose and making sure you cover all your bases when submitting a list request.

This guide will assist you in navigating through the process of ordering a mailing list and even more importantly, qualifying a good list provider.

Finding a Quality List Provider

This is the most difficult part of the entire process. It's easy to find companies who offer lists, but who are you really dealing with. There are over 100,000 companies reselling list data and it is almost impossible differentiating professionals from order takers. The majority of list providers fall into the categories listed below.



1) COMPILERS: These are the companies that compile the databases and build the lists that are used in the direct marketing industry. There are over 75,000 databases being compiled by approximately 25,000 compilers. The majority of the compilers use brokers to distribute their products to the end users and low volume resellers. Every compiler has their strong suit in the mailing list industry. For example, compiler A may have the most accurate file of consumers in the Midwest while compiler B has the best business file for states in the Northeast. A good broker will know which compiler is the best choice for each list request.

2) BROKERS (HIGH VOLUME DISTRIBUTORS): There are less than 200 qualified firms nationally who fall into this category. A good brokerage firm will have access to all the major databases at a very competitive price. A good broker will always offer the best list regardless of compilation source because there is no conflict of interest or need to sell proprietary data. More importantly, a good broker is a direct marketing consultant not an order taker.

3) RESELLERS (LOW VOLUME DISTRIBUTORS): This category represents over 95% of the companies offering mailing list. These companies rely on brokers and compilers to do the leg work and research. The majorities of low volume resellers are offering mailing list as a secondary product and typically specialize in other industries like: mailing services, printing, consulting, graphic design, manufacturing reps, etc.

4) SPECIALIST: This category refers to brokers or compilers who specializing in a specific field such as medical, alumni associations, contributors, investors, churches, home improvement, mortgage and many other segments. These vendors put all their efforts and research into one industry.

What You Should Know Before Calling

Define the primary goal of your mailing: This statement may appear simple but many marketers get it wrong. If Cannon Copiers does a direct mail campaign one might assume the primary goal of the mailing is to sale copiers. In most cases this is not the correct answer. Yes, the end result is to sale copiers, but the primary goal of the mailing is to collect information on prospective buyers and provide those leads to a sales team who will finalize the sale. Some companies may want to drive traffic to a landing page with a QR code or send potential customers to their social media pages. Understanding the primary goal of the mailing can greatly affect how you create your offer and how you select your audience.



Be prepared to discuss your marketing project: *A good list provider always wants to know as much pertinent marketing information as possible. What is the product or service being offered? What is the offer or sales pitch? What are the typical demographics of the current customers? What kind of cost or action is being solicited? What results are you expecting and do you have historical data to share or any other specific information that will assist in segmenting the best list possible? These are all important questions to ask yourself as well as the compiler.*

What demographic & geographic selections do you require: What type of list are you looking for and is it the right list for your product or service? Below are just a few of the more commonly requested selections. If you don't see a selection you need a **list consultant** can research the criteria you are looking for.

| <u>Consumer Demographics</u> | <u>Business Demographics</u> | <u>Specialty Selections</u> | <u>Geographic Selections</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Household Income</i> | <i>Business Type</i> | <i>Ailments</i> | <i>International</i> |
| <i>Age Adults</i> | <i>SIC Code</i> | <i>Seniors</i> | <i>All US</i> |
| <i>Age Children</i> | <i>Annual Sales</i> | <i>Sports interest</i> | <i>State</i> |
| <i>DOB Child</i> | <i>Employee at site</i> | <i>MLM responders</i> | <i>County</i> |
| <i>Affluent households</i> | <i>Employee all sites</i> | <i>Execs at home</i> | <i>Zip code</i> |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | <i>Head Quarter</i> | <i>Doctors at home</i> | <i>Carrier route</i> |
| <i>Home Owner</i> | <i>Branches</i> | <i>Investors by Type</i> | <i>Zip plus 4</i> |
| <i>Renter</i> | <i>Independent</i> | <i>FICA /BEACON score</i> | <i>Radius</i> |
| <i>Net worth</i> | <i>Franchise</i> | <i>Mortgage Leads</i> | <i>Mapping</i> |
| <i>Ethnic</i> | <i>Credit Rating</i> | <i>Insurance Leads</i> | <i>Neighborhood</i> |
| <i>Lifestyle</i> | <i>Executive Title</i> | <i>New Movers</i> | <i>Territory Assignment</i> |
| <i>Mail Order Buyer</i> | <i>Job Function</i> | <i>New Businesses</i> | <i>Customer file profile</i> |
| <i>Mail Responders</i> | <i>Minority Status</i> | <i>New Home Buyers</i> | <i>Voter District</i> |
| <i>Education</i> | <i>Executive Gender</i> | <i>Bankruptcies</i> | <i>Geo-Profile</i> |
| <i>Auto-Make, Model</i> | <i>Professionals</i> | <i>Women bus owner</i> | <i>Walk sequence</i> |
| <i>Students</i> | <i>Manufacturing site</i> | <i>Voter & Party</i> | <i>Saturation</i> |
| <i>Grandparents</i> | <i>Home business</i> | <i>Opt in Email</i> | <i>Census Block</i> |

NOTE: the examples above only represent a fraction of the selections available to you; a list consultant can provide you with 1000's of options depending on your specific needs.

What person or department do you want to address the mail piece to? Listed below are some of the more common address line options which include utilizing an actual **contact name** or **title/department function** into the address line.

Residential name: actual name or names at address

Residential title address: Proud Parents, Your friends at Sears, Moms Day Out, Golfer of the house, etc.

Business name: Executive by name with contact – first, last, title, gender, department, etc.

Business title address: Accounting dept, IT manager, VP Marketing, Telemarketing executive, General Forman, etc.

Business functional title: Corporate Santa, Top Female Executive, Employee Travel Coordinator, 401K admin, etc.

Note: By adding the title line of **“Or Current Occupant”** under the contact name or on the address line will ensure that every mail piece is delivered to all USPS qualified addresses even if the intended recipient is not at that address.

Important qualities you want in a list vendor:

- Access to **all** the major databases on the market
- Will take the time to **learn** your business, products, offers, and selling methodology
- Can easily answer your **list questions** and makes additional recommendations
- **Experience is very important** so look at the company history. If you have an experienced vendor then chances are they have built a list in your industry and can make suggestions based on what has worked in the past.
- Verify each list for **compilation sources, update cycles, and guarantees.**

Conclusion

Your list is easily the most important portion of your direct mail campaign. If you do not reach the correct target market then you are wasting money on the design/production of the mail piece, the cost of shipping, and the money spent on the list itself. If you are attempting to sell dog toys what good will your advertisement be if it reaches people who only have pet fish?

Before contacting one of the companies you are contemplating working with know what type of consumer you are looking for, and tell the vendor about your product or service so that they can work with you to reach the best possible audience. Take note and look at the advantages and disadvantages of each list provider. What can one provider offer you that the other cannot and which company has the best track record? Experienced mailing list specialists have a tacit knowledge of which data compilers offer the best file for you mailing list selects. For example, one compiler may have the best new mover file while another can provide the best file for business owners trying to reach doctors. Every data compiler has their strengths and weaknesses and the vendor who you work with should know this information.

Direct mail has the ability to reach clients that virtual marketing efforts cannot reach or does not appeal to, but if you choose a poor vendor who sells you a bad list you run into the same issue. This is why it is important to choose a good quality list seller, who can work with you to really critique your campaign, and analyze results to see an even more targeted list in follow up orders. Grow your business and build a name for your company that helps people recognize you as an expert in the field.

If you are a business owner who is ready to start building a [Mailing List](#) click on the link or call us at (800) 685-4787.

Take a look at our blog which covers best practices, pitfalls, and other topics concerning various marketing subjects. [Click Here](#)

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