

Secrets to Renting Mailing Lists: A list broker's Top Ten Tips



By Suzanne Doyle-Ingram
President, [Strategic List Services](http://www.strategyclists.com)
www.strategyclists.com

Strategic List Services, Inc.
[Run Counts Online](http://www.strategyclists.com)

[Request a Proposal](#)
Call 1-888-848-1215

Over the years, I have worked with hundreds, if not thousands, of companies, both large and small. From Start-ups to Fortune 500, non-profits to home-based businesses, I have had the pleasure of guiding and teaching our clients how to find the best lists for their projects.

Direct mail is a proven marketing channel which can be used for almost any product.

I have put together the top 10 tips for improving your Direct Marketing efforts, as follows:

Always Test and Measure.

1

You cannot manage what you don't measure. Always know what your ROI is. Your ROI is your total revenues divided by your total cost.

You should use this to figure out how much money you are making or losing on your marketing efforts. If the amount of money you get back is greater than what you spent, you're happy!

I am constantly amazed at the number of companies that do not test and measure. It's the same as leaving money on the table. You must test!

Here's how to test and measure your direct mail campaign:

- a.** You've got your list. You've hired a top-notch copywriter to write a sales letter. In fact, he writes two distinct sales letters, both of which you like and approve. You print the quantity of sales letters that you need for the test. In an ideal world, you would test 10 lists of

5,000 records each, but most of the companies I work with only have the budget to test 2 or 3 lists. You would split each list in half so you'd have 2500 for one sales letter and 2500 for the other sales letter. Each mailing piece is coded (in other words, the response device, whether it's the toll-free number they call or the "Discount code" has a unique number that identifies which list and which mailing piece) so that you can track how each mailing list responds to each of the sales letters.

- b. When you start to get sales, you'll know which list and which sales letter the buyer came from because you have coded them ahead of time. (Ask your list broker about key coding for things like age, income, and so on). You keep track of these results.
- c. After you analyze your results (and count all your money), then you mail the letter that performed better to a much larger list - this is called a "roll out".
- d. When rolling out, you test another variable because you always want to be testing something every time you mail.
- e. When the results come back again for the second mailing, you analyze them again just like you did the first time. Then you roll out again to a larger group again.

Run counts and download lists online:

<http://www.strategiclists.com/buylists>

Free to register, simple to use!

2

Always target as precisely as possible.

Work with a list broker to get the most bang for your buck and don't be afraid to tell them your budget. They need to know your budget so they can recommend lists that you can afford.

I'm always amazed, when I ask someone who their target market is, and they respond, "Oh, anyone can benefit from my product!"

I understand that entrepreneurs get excited about their product and they get jazzed at the vast possibilities that exist for reaching out and acquiring new customers, but in order to maximize your ROI (Return on investment), we need to aim your direct marketing piece at your target like a virtual missile.

Here's an example: Say you developed a teeth bleaching system. Yes, it's true that anyone can use this product. But you need to look at your customer base and tell me who the likeliest person to buy your product is. You don't know? Then survey them.

Find out if your average customer is male or female; are they married or single?

Under 40 or 40 plus?

Are they smokers?

Are they affluent?

Did they graduate college?

Do they have children?

Sending your direct mail piece out to the general population versus sending it to 35-40 year old married females who read fashion magazines would have a definite impact on your ROI.

This brings me to my next point...

Don't Cheap Out on Your List.

3

Sure, renting the base record with just the person's name and address is the least expensive option, and adding selects like gender, age, income, interests and so on add onto the cost of the list, but your target will be so much narrower, it will pay for itself.

(Note: our online consumer database includes more than 14 free selects with the base record!).

If your stamp costs \$0.42 cents and your list is ranging from \$0.07 cents to \$0.20 cents per name, isn't it worth it to add on a few cents to each record? If you don't select age, income, interests, etc, then you'll get everyone from very low income 95 year old grannies to 45 year old high net worth men.

Ask yourself:

Who is the most likely person to buy your product?

What does he or she look like?

What kind of car does he or she drive?

Do they rent or own their house?

4

If you buy a cheap, untargeted list and are unhappy with the results, don't blame the list!

There are so many variables that go into a direct marketing campaign that it's sometimes difficult to pinpoint exactly where to improve upon for the next mailing.

But if you have tested and measured, you should be able to compare results and determine what to change for next time.

If you are able to communicate your results with your list broker, she should be able to figure out how to tweak the list and make it better for the next time.

Do not rush the process.

5

Take some time to figure out whom you need to reach.

So many times I have people come to our firm for a list and they need it right now and for the cheapest possible price.

I can tell you that a project that starts out like that is doomed to fail. You should use your list broker like a resource on your team. Let them know your timelines, your budget and your objectives (do you know what your objectives are?) so that they can work with you and help you to succeed.

If you're not happy with the service you're getting from your list broker, find another one.

6

Whenever possible, personalize your mailing piece.

If you require first name and last name on the list, specify that ahead of time to your broker, because not all names on a file include first names (Sometimes they have T. Smith instead of Thomas Smith).

Did you know that personalization can increase response rates by 50%?

There are some great personalized products on the market now that are very effective and variable printing has become pretty mainstream.

One that I love is actually one of our clients and they make very unique personalized calendars that are amazing and have to be seen to be believed.

You can check them out here: www.amigo365.com [This is not an affiliate link].

7

You must have a call to action if you want to see results.

If you just want to keep your name in front of existing customers then sometimes it's OK not to have a call to action.

But if you are trying to turn prospects into new customers, then for heaven's sakes, please offer them something and then tell them exactly what to do. If you don't take them by the hand and tell them what to do... they'll do nothing.

Think about what kind of incentive you can give them to act. (Kind of reminds me of trying to get my kids to do stuff around the house - hmmm...what can I bribe them with today?)

People love getting FREE stuff and they respond very well when the word FREE is in full caps.

If they buy your product, can you give them a FREE additional product to go along with it? Is your initial consultation with you FREE?



Try to keep your copy short and to the point, unless you are an experienced copywriter or you hire an experienced copywriter.

If you need a good copywriter, we can recommend Chris Custer (www.Chris-Custer.com) or Ivan Levison (www.levison.com). Both are very good.

When it comes to good copy, here's the thing:
People don't really want to read about the history of your company (Sorry to break it to you...).

They want to know:

Will your product or service solve my problem?

Change my life?

Help me somehow?

How do I find out more information?

What's in it for me?

This brings me to my next point...

9

Tell your prospect what the benefits of your product are.

Instead of saying, "This will make your teeth whiter" say,

"Take 10 years off your look!"

Translate what the product will do into easy-to-understand benefits for your customer. Use words like:

Because, Easy, Free, How To, Act Now, Advantage, Affordable, Benefits, Cancel Anytime, Guaranteed, Money back, Risk Free, Reliable, Member of, and so on....

Use headlines.

10

They sound cheesy but they work. (Of course, you are going to test them so you know which one works best, right?).

Getting back to our teeth bleaching example, instead of describing the history of your company and the teeth bleaching takes 30 minutes to apply and they come in little trays and you have to make sure you rinse them afterwards, and so on, you could say: "How to Look 10 Years Younger in 7 days" or aim it at single women and say "How to Attract 3 Times More Men!"

There's an old saying in our industry that says **Copy is King**. I agree to some extent but I have to say that the **Right List** is equally as important - if not more important - than your copy. If you have the greatest copy in the world but it's not going to the right people, they won't buy. You have to

have the right list! All the selects on each list combine to determine how successful it's going to be.

Run counts and download lists online:

<http://www.strategiclists.com/buylists>

Free to register, simple to use!

Direct mail is more important today in this economy than ever before.

It has always been an effective way to advertise, but it fell out of favor for awhile when everyone got excited about email and social marketing.

Now, everyone is coming back to direct mail as they realize the old standby is still the best way to reach qualified prospects. Just remember to test, test, test! Testing does not add on any cost to your effort and it can have a huge impact on your bottom line results!

About the Author:

Suzanne Doyle-Ingram is the President and owner of Strategic List Services, Inc. With offices in the USA and Canada, and list brokers in both countries, Suzanne and her team have been helping their clients with [direct mailing lists](#) for many years and they truly love helping their clients succeed!

To run your own counts online, visit:

www.strategiclists.com/buylists

To reach a broker, call toll-free 1-888-848-1215 or visit our website at www.strategiclists.com.