

WHY BUILD YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS DATABASE?

Gaining your customers' email addresses will:

- Provide an additional channel for reaching your customers
- Increase the ROI of your marketing investments
- Significantly reduce your customer acquisition and marketing costs
- Allow you to easily measure the impact of your marketing campaigns
- Increase your customer participation and retention rates

With ongoing postal and telemarketing pressures impacting marketing budgets for many organizations this year, email marketing could become the "silver lining" for many marketers. But how do you create a successful email marketing campaign if you do not have a substantial email database? That question may be one of the largest Internet related challenges facing companies this year.

Research shows that the majority of organizations have email addresses for less than 10% of their postal files. So how do you level the playing field and start to add quality permission - based email addresses to your database? Here are some tips that you can use to cost effectively build your email address database and increase your customer participation and retention rates:

START TO ASK FOR IT!

Every communication or touch point with a customer should start or end with a request for an email address. By utilizing the four points below, you should be able to add email addresses for 5% to 10% of your postal file over the course of one year.

1. Direct Mail Collection

Think about how much time and money you spent for copy and design on your last new direct mail piece. Most companies have started to ask their customers for their email address information within these mailings. This is a great step forward. However, companies need to look at one major improvement if they want to increase their email address collection rates.

To date, most requests for email address information have been pushed, shoved or jammed into whatever white space remains. It should be no surprise that the success rate has been less than stellar. To improve on these efforts, you need to provide your members with a reason to release their email addresses to you. E-newsletters, purchase confirmations, petitions, and special discounts and offers are but a few of the benefits that will encourage your members to come on board.

2. Web Page Collection

Many companies have an email address collection function in place via the web. To improve your sign-up rates, add text below the email request box that informs your visitors of the special email benefits that they will receive (i.e. e-newsletters, purchase confirmations, delivery updates, etc.) upon registering. You can also utilize a pop-up link to inform users of these special benefits. Finally, your email address request function should be available on your home page. Don't make your users go and look for it. Every click away from your home page reduces the chances of your users taking an action and providing you with their email address information.

3. Existing Email Database Collection

Don't forget to ask the members of your existing customer base for email addresses of their friends, family and associates. Viral marketing is a powerful tool to use and is extremely cost effective! You could ask them either to provide you with additional addresses or simply to pass on your newsletter, email specific offers, or other information to others they feel have similar interests.

4. Telemarketing Collection

Don't assume that your telemarketing agents are asking for email addresses from potential customers. Ensure that your agents have an updated script, which outlines the previously described benefits to potential customers of providing their email addresses.

The suggestions above are a great start! Yet they really should be viewed as a secondary plan for building your email database. To exponentially and expeditiously grow your email database, please read on!

EMAIL APPENDING

Utilizing an email appending service enables you to add email addresses for up to 25% of your postal file, all within 3-4 weeks. Email Appending - is the process of adding an individual's email address to that individual's postal record in side your existing database. This is accomplished by matching the postal database against a third party, permission based database of postal and email address information.

Best Practices - Email Appending is not a prospecting tool. The DMA (Direct Marketing Association) and its interactive arm AIM (Association of Interactive Marketing) have guidelines in place that dictate that email appending only be used to append email addresses to your existing opt-in postal record house file.

The Process - Your opt-in postal file is securely transferred to an email appending provider, who will do an initial gross email address match of your file against its opt-in database of postal and email address records. Your appending provider will then send these matches a permission-based message prepared by you. All bounces and opt-out requests will be removed from the list. At that point a valid permission-based email address file of your customers will be delivered back to you. Cost - Less than the price of a postal stamp!

IN SUMMARY

The first step of any successful email marketing effort is to build a permission-based email address list of your customers. The simplest, quickest and most cost-effective way to do this is through email appending, which will enable you to add email addresses for up to 25% of your postal file. Secondary efforts of email address collection via focused direct mail, web, viral and telemarketing practices are also important and will enable you to add email addresses for an additional 5% to 10% of your base on an annual basis. Best of luck in building your email address database. As many companies have already learned, the ROI and cost savings to be achieved will far exceed your expectations.