

Acquiring a Good Prospect List

Many companies offer prospect lists for sale - a quick Google search for “marketing lists” returns about 55,000,000 hits - the question is, *who can you trust and what information can you get?*

Most list providers will offer the option of renting or buying a list, with cost running between \$0.11 and \$0.30 per name depending on the number of criteria specified. Buying the list could cost five times more but, depending on your intended use, it may be less expensive in the long run if you use the list three to five times.

Never has the old adage been truer: **you get what you pay for.**

John Smith	123 Steve St	Halifax	555.1240
John Smith	123 Jim St	Mars	555.1241
John Smith	123 Brian St	Halifax	555.1242
John Smith	123 Jean St	Halifax	555.1243
John Smith	123 Jay St	Halifax	555.1244
John Smith	123 Horse St	Halifax	555.1245
John Smith	123 Bear St	Halifax	555.1246
John Smith	123 Dill St	Halifax	555.1247
John Smith	123 Home St	Halifax	555.1248
Porcupine	Tree	Halifax	Knock

Is a porcupine →

Lives on Mars →

Be wary of bargain-priced lists especially if you are sending addressed admail where undeliverable mail is not returned to sender. You have no way to filter the list and the cost to print and mail is non-refundable. Moreover, after investing the time and resources to construct a campaign, it can be very discouraging to find out the list is compiled from Statistic Canada census data in 2006 and thus stale.

If buying a list online, look in the disclaimers to see where the data was gathered or, better yet, speak with a representative and ask directly what the source of the data was.

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A lot of organizations get poor results when they use a list because all they do is send a personalized letter or postcard. While this may have a slightly higher response rate than unaddressed admail, it also reaches fewer people for the same price.

Most lists will provide enough information to start a multi-channel campaign with direct mail and PURL's (personalized URL's like www.kkhalifax.com/joetheplumber) and while 5-15% of the data is usually stale and outdated, most pieces will reach their intended audience. Adding the PURL distinguishes the mail piece from other direct mail and gives you a tracking mechanism to see if the list works. If the offer is timely and relevant and you get no response, the list is likely garbage.

Here are some websites to check out if you're looking to buy a list:

Info Canada	infocanada.ca
Canada Post	canadapost.ca
Better Business	bbb.org/canada

Also research joining your local Chamber of Commerce (Halifax's can be found at halifaxchamber.com)

There are organizations that assemble their own lists from conferences, trade shows, etc. and these can be as valuable as using the directory for the BBB or local Chamber of Commerce which, with a little work, can also be converted into ready-to-use data. The benefit of lists like these is that we know something about the person or organization that we can use to increase the relevancy of our campaign.

Another non-traditional way to acquire a list is through partnering with other

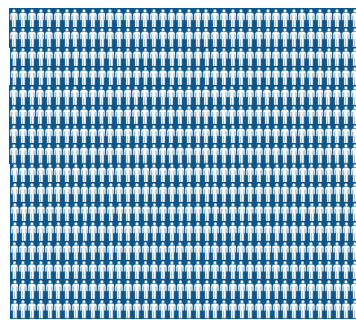
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organizations and doing a combined campaign. We might partner with a local courier company as each organization would have different customers and our message would be non-competing but still have increased credibility of a relationship with the other supplier.



A new player in the list game is Canada Post with a program called *Acquisition Admail*, a service where you rent lists and can provide a suppression file to exclude names already in your list. While in its infancy, the program is an extension of the GeoPost service and their credibility is high in terms of keeping data current.

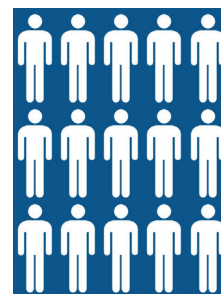
The key to any list is to track effectiveness by including some sort of promo code or online response mechanism (PURL's or microsite) so that you can see any results. In most cases, 4-5% response to a multi-channel campaign is considered good and using the 10 prospects, three quotes and one sale rule will tell you that from each 1000 names, you should get five sales. If you know your average transaction value along with reorder/retention rates, a quick business plan will tell you if this makes sense for you.



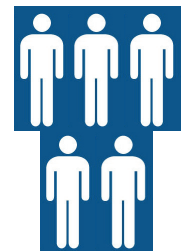
1,000 names



40-50 prospects



12-15 quotes



5 customers

Don't expect to find many ideal customers from a list alone, but a well conceived offer to a targeted list of prospects with a response and tracking mechanism will lay the groundwork for the doing so.