

10 top tips to becoming an Expert List Buyer

A key ingredient to the success of a Lead Generation campaign is the quality of the list used.

No matter how brilliant your Direct Mail piece is or how persuasive your Lead Generator can be, if the list is of poor quality or badly targeted, then your returns will undoubtedly be negatively impacted.

To help you to procure the best list possible, here are 10 tips to help you:

- 1) **Where is the best place to get a list from?** There are a number of excellent list brokers in the market who obtain professional lists from a range of sources. Their pricing is often fairly similar and lists usually come with a guarantee of accuracy. The biggest downside, especially in the high-tech sector, is the lack of 'green fields'. The reality is that suitable lists tend to come from the same two or three ultimate list owners and many other companies are renting the same lists for a similar purpose. If you can find an alternative source, this could leverage you into some less 'well trampled' areas of the market. The downside, however, is that the list integrity and quality may be suspect and there is often no guarantee of accuracy.
- 2) **Should I rent or buy a list?** Purchasing a list outright is around three times the cost of renting, and usually unnecessary in the first instance. Most professional list brokers will allow you to rent a list and then trade-up to a permanent purchase, if you want to keep the list long-term. Our advice is to always rent so you can 'try before you buy'.
- 3) **What is the best way to specify the market segments I need?** The traditional industry segmentation is by **SIC (Standard Industry Code)**. For many campaigns, this classification is often too broad, such as '**Manufacturing**'. An alternative is to select companies by **key-word**, by specifying a range of words that best describe the attributes of the organisations that you are looking for.
- 4) **How many contacts per organisation should I ask for?** The optimal number of contacts is 3, as this enables you to try multiple approaches and to also disguise cold calls by exhibiting knowledge of the targeted organisation.

Lists are usually compiled through the roles that you specify, along with other selection criteria. To rule in as many organisations as possible, it's best to ensure that at least one of the roles you choose is a fairly common one, i.e. '**HR Manager**'. Try to avoid the common trap of just specifying 'C-levels', as these are often the hardest people to reach. If possible, include some operational or less senior roles in your list of preferred contacts.

Whilst you may want only a maximum of three contacts per organisation, it is recommended that you specify a preference list of more than three roles. This is to ensure that you get good contact coverage in every organisation, in the event that any of your top three preferred roles are not available. Roles can usually be specified by implication, such as '**the most senior finance contact**' or through specifics in the actual Role description, such as '*any person with **Compliance** in their title*'

- 5) **How do I get a balanced sample of the market I am targeting?** If, like most campaigns, you have a limited budget, then you may only have scope to target a sample of your market. To

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get a balanced sample, you will need to specify the sample size you want, such as 500 organisations in NSW, VIC and QLD, and your company size preference by revenue or number of employees, e.g. between \$50m and \$200m, starting with the largest companies first. Getting the best sample is usually an iterative process, whereby the list supplier provides counts split by State and Role along with some sample data.

If your selection criteria is too prescriptive, this may result in an under-sized sample. In this case, you will either need to broaden your criteria or consider the viability of the campaign in a very niche market.

- 6) How do I avoid hidden extras?** A common mistake is to assume that any criteria that are used to select your target list, such as Industry, will be included in the data that is delivered to you. This is often not the case and fields such as : Revenue, number of Employees, full Postal address and Industry description are often an extra cost. Make sure you let your list supplier know exactly which fields you need so that they can include them in your quote.
- 7) How do I exclude organisations that are already customers or prospects?** Most list suppliers will be willing to exclude any organisations that you don't want, if you supply them with a list of names. This can involve a complex matching process and there is usually a charge for this service. You will need to determine which option is the less expensive route. In any event, it is highly advisable to give the list a final wash to remove existing clients and prospects before calling commences.
- 8) Should I get a telephone list pre-cleaned?** If you have a telephone list that you know or suspect is 'dirty', the inclination is to get it cleaned by a low-level resource before presenting to an external Agency or higher cost sales person. This practice can usually be false economy and delay getting your campaign into the market. A good Lead Generator should be able to use a dirty list to their advantage and without incurring much overhead. It also minimises the number of times you touch an organisation or contact, which is important in reducing audience fatigue.

If your list is for a Direct Mail piece, then list quality is of paramount importance to protect your investment. In these circumstances, procuring a list from a reputable source or pre-cleaning a suspect list is highly recommended.

- 9) How many times can I use a rented list?** Rented lists can generally only be used for a single campaign. Once you have made a positive connection with a contact, you may then continue to call them for as long as and as many times as you like. Avoid the temptation to use the list again or give someone a copy - as you will get caught! List owners protect their IP by seeding the list with 'friendlies' who report back to them whenever they have been contacted and for what purpose.
- 10) Is it worth building or commissioning a list myself?** The DIY approach can be tempting as it initially appears to be the cheaper route and can help to establish a list that is both unique and the sole IP of your organisation. This is not an undertaking for the faint-hearted! The downside is that list research - done thoroughly - requires a significant amount of skill and

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time to build. This can become an expensive exercise in both time and money, and should be considered carefully against the backdrop of your overall strategy.

For more information on '**How to become an Expert List Buyer**' and '**Smart Lead Generation**', please contact Andy Kyiet of Demand Flow Intelligence on; T: +61 9439 3839, M: +61 2 402 456 027, E: akyiet@demandflow.com.au

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