



## List Acquisition Issues, Thoughts

- **All lists are compiled through a variety of processes**, procedures, capture mechanisms and are maintained in a variety of formats with varying degrees of thoroughness.
- **Typically you'll access** subscriber lists, association membership, opt-in lists, directories, customer/prospect, and a myriad of others.
- **The most accurate files** are those that have to be maintained for accounting or auditing purposes.
- **The critical issues** in determining the value of a list is: recency, frequency, accuracy, and usage:
  - How was the list compiled, by whom
  - How recently was it updated, merge/purged/de-duped
  - How much detail is captured in the data
  - How is the information verified
  - How often has the list been used and by whom.
- **When brokered lists are used:**
  - **Brokers may NOT control the file**, only act as the distribution point
  - **Remember that a broker is in the business of renting lists**, the more names he rents the more money he/she makes
  - **Be mindful that brokers are making a minimum of 20%**
  - **Probing a list – choosing selects** – usually incurs up-charges and usually at a premium. Be aware too that unless the list has a published rate card (data card) you may be paying “what the market will bear” prices. Always ask for a data card.
  - **A list with large numbers** does not necessarily mean “quality”
  - **An expensive list** does not necessarily mean “quality” either.
  - **Be wary of “unlimited usage” deals**, generally if you can use a list as many times as you like, so can everyone else that rents it. It also means that the broker has an inkling that the list is “loaded” and is going to be marginal in response.



- **If you are questioning** the quality of a list, the file is extremely large, or excessively priced, ask for a test file to conduct a preliminary audit through telemarketing to determine the names, titles, companies, etc. are accurate. Make sure that the test list is an “Nth Name” pull.
- **When we already have multiple files** from a variety of sources, negotiate a “Net Name” arrangement with the broker so that we only pay for the names and addresses that are not duplicated from a “free” source.
  
- **If the list is from an Association, Sponsor, Exhibitor, Directory:**
  - **Determine how and when** it was compiled. Typically these lists are not dynamic and are updated on a very infrequent basis.
  - **Associations, especially small ones**, are notorious for having bad record-keeping capability and, therefore, bad lists.
  - **Sponsor and exhibitor “prospect” lists** are questionable unless the file was generated through a lead capture program from their IT department. Records captured from field contact management programs (ACT, Goldmine, Outlook) are notoriously bad.
  - **Regardless of the capture methodology**, always use the same criteria as you would with any other list – if they don’t know or can’t meet minimum standards, don’t use the list.
  - **Any Business-to-Business file** that does not have job titles is not usable for our purposes.
  - **Directory lists age very quickly** and are already “old” by the time they are published so expect a relatively high “Nixie” count. The broader the reach of the directory and the deeper they go into titles, the greater the loss rate.
  
- **If the list comes from a publication:**
  - **ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) pubs** (paid circulation) generally don’t have titles and have a heavy concentration of home delivery. Unless we can identify the title and company or SIC we may not want to use the file since there is no way to verify target characteristics.
  - **BPA audited pubs** (controlled circulation – usually trade mags) must qualify their circulation at least once a year. When working with a trade pub list only use or request that portion that fits target, title, SIC, and geography. Be aware, however, that with a highly mobile workforce – especially in the computer and Internet industry – the subscriber file may not be as accurate or up to date as we would like.



- De-Duping
  - **Creating a mail file from multiple sources** requires that the merged list be de-duped on a same name/same company basis. Ideally we would do all of the list manipulation in-house. However, in the event a list provider refuses to provide us with the list, make sure the de-dupe process is understood by the lettershop. Under normal circumstances use Last Name, Company Name, Street Address, City, State, ZIP as the criteria.
  
- Acceptable Loss Rate
  - **All mailing lists will have undeliverable names and addresses** (“Nixies”). An acceptable non-deliverable rate is around 5%. Over 10% and the list is in bad shape.