

Email List Rental

By John McCabe

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We have all heard the hype about fantastic response rates from email marketing – and they do exist – but how do you get them. Low response rates are a result of cheap, poorly maintained lists being offered from unscrupulous sources. A good list does not automatically mean a great response rate – you have to be aware of other factors such as the offer, the timing, the price etc, - but it goes along way to achieving those high response rates we have all heard about.

Here are some typical questions that I am asked about email address lists, which I have attempted to answer in order to shed some light on the subject.

How is an email list compiled?

In the same way that good direct mail data is compiled, b2b email addresses are collected through the process of telemarketing, subscription and surveys. Consumer email addresses tend to be collected as a result of visits to specific interest or hobby websites, where lifestyle information is collated on registration.

Who supplies the emails?

Email addresses can be rented through specialist email solutions providers, traditional list brokers, or directly from the owners or managers. The list owners are normally the organisations which compiled and now maintain the list from which your selection will be taken. Many list owners deal directly with the end user, although the vast majority will appoint an exclusive agent known as a List Manager. Most List Managers will have several list owners in their portfolio, often with complementary lists.

A word of caution - email list owners and managers rarely if ever will recommend a list outside of their portfolios. Email list brokers however are different. They are the users' representative from whom an end user can expect advice on good email list selections, applications, etc. Recognised brokers have a commission-sharing agreement that enables each of them to access any lists managed by any of the List Owners/List Managers.

Some brokers are stronger on consumer email and others business lists. Some also have international dealings. Choose your broker carefully.

Before attempting to rent an email list, be sure you understand the various selections which may be offered to you. The price you pay depends on the combination of selections you order.

List brokers will want the end users to issue a brief. The broker's interpretation of your requirements will be a reflection of the brief. The more comprehensive the brief, the more accurate and detailed will be the list proposal.

Copying and pasting the following URL into your browser will enable you to view an email list broker brief:

<http://www.ukmarketingmanagement.com/Downloads/Email-List-Broker-brief.pdf>

A responsible email list broker will take your brief and respond in the form of a List Proposal. This will include essential information about the email list. A typical template can be viewed by visiting:

<http://www.ukmarketingmanagement.com/Downloads/List-proposal-template.pdf>

What is the quality of email addresses?

Assuming that the email broker has all the relevant information they should be able to get a good match to your requirements. No list whether email or traditional mailing lists are 100% accurate, but if you put in the preparation work this will eliminate wasted communications to disinterested people. Responsible email brokers will use reliable sources who maintain their email addresses to the highest standard. Many

will put in writing the procedure they use to ascertain the email address, and also vouch for the authenticity of the claimed Opt-in status. I will get list owners to sign an affidavit to back up their verbal claims. If nothing else, it is a measure of the confidence with which the list owners view their own data. To view an example of an affidavit by visiting the following URL:

<http://www.ukmarketingmanagement.com/Downloads/Affidavit.pdf>

Prior to broadcasting, many will "ping" their file – sending out a message that determines whether an email address is still alive. They will also over broadcast to ensure that if you pay for 10,000 email addresses that your message gets to 10,000 people. Responsible owners also ensure any bouncebacks and fails are excluded from future email broadcasts, and will then go through the verification process to ascertain a new contact email address for the recipient.

Good email brokers know which list owners take the quality issue seriously and which don't. It will almost always pay to use a broker rather than approaching a list owner direct.

Why can't I have them to broadcast my self?

The only lists you should consider renting have an opt-in status. This means that the recipient has explicitly agreed to receive third party promotional emails from the list owner. If the list owner was to release the email addresses to third parties, they would lose control of the messages being sent.

Who broadcasts the emails?

List owners often have the facilities to broadcast themselves, but as often as not they will contract a large specialist broadcaster to send your message on their behalf. This way they don't have the bandwidth, bounceback, and failure issues.

How do I know that a broadcast has been done?

Some broadcasters are able to provide results real time through logging on to dedicated websites. Others will issue reports via email direct from their servers. Typically you will get results telling you;

- How many email were sent
- How many live connections were achieved
- How many bounced back or failed
- How many recipients opened the message and therefore the open rate
- How many recipients clicked through on each link and therefore the click through rate
- How many unsubscribed from receiving further emails from you

You should always insist that you are seeded on the file so that you will see the transmission when it happens.

What do I do now?

Things can go wrong but don't be put off as there are now a number of good email consultancies and management companies that can walk you through the process, and hopefully avoid the pitfalls. They will take you through the process from concept to completion – sourcing the right list, negotiating a price, creation of html, broadcasting the message and tracking & reporting the results.

So the first port of call is go and get a good company to help. I recommend talking to a broker not an owner. Then ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for things in writing – this often sorts the wheat from the chaff. Issue a List Broker brief, and make it detailed. Concentrate your efforts then on good creative – short, concise and attractive. Then sit back, allow the broker or consultancy to do their work. There are no guarantees in this world but you can be safe in the knowledge that you have done everything possible to ensure your initiative has the best chance of being successful.

If you would like me to help, send mailto: john@ukmm.info

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