

# The List Is The Thing

By Ken Leonard, JR.

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Ken Leonard, JR.  
ken@kenleonardjr.com

Home of New Marketer Ezine <http://www.kenleonardjr.com>

Many companies begin their online sales ventures with the wrong strategy to build long term success. Thinking that a website is the core of their business leads them to focus on getting website visitors.

Making the site "sticky", by using a member-only area or a community feature such as chat or a forum, may get some of your visitors to come back for more. Unfortunately, the large part of your viewers may not use these features, and being in a hurry, they are just a click away from another new and interesting website. Many of your "hits" are just that, a quick click, and they're gone forever.

The visitor that clicked away likely found your site by using a search engine. They were interested in the search term that was one of your site's keywords. That means that they may be your "target customer".

Isn't it a shame that you only had one chance to sell this visitor on your product or service? Don't you wish that you could follow-up on that "lead" at a later time? With a better offer or a different related product?

You can.

The focus of your online sales business "has" to be capturing lead information (email addresses) and building a database of prospects and previous customers. This "house list" enables you to keep in touch with your leads, building a relationship and your credibility over time. The website is an important part of the sales "machine",

but is not the primary focus, building your house list is.

Many people might think that the value of a house list is determined by the number of leads it contains. This is true, to a point. Affecting the value even more is the quality of the leads, or subscribers. A small list that is highly targeted, with responsive leads, is more valuable than a large list that is not targeted.

Quality comes from the methods used to build the house list. You want leads to opt-in, or subscribe, to your list. These people are interested in your niche, or they wouldn't have joined the list. Using emails from one of those " One Million Email Addresses For \$10" CDs will get little or no response. You will also be labeled as a spammer. Buying subscribers from list brokers is another option, but you have to be certain that the leads opted-in to the list. If not, they are practically worthless.

Build "your" house list, do it properly using opt-in methods, and reap the rewards of a responsive and loyal group of contacts. Follow-up with your leads on a regular basis, and you'll have it made.

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