



## Organizations, Associations & Fundraisers!

Don't be scared of commercial lists. They perform a whole lot better than you think. Go ahead, test one.

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The list industry is constantly changing. New media is introduced and new and innovative strategies are utilized. However, especially for fundraisers, the **true and tried techniques** should be the foundation of your overall list strategy. It's important to master the basics before you venture beyond...like the age old saying (or cliché if you will), know the rules before you break them.

Testing and retesting lists consistently, and having an actual **testing strategy** as a part of your direct mail program, are basic direct mail techniques that are getting lost in the midst of social networking, emailing house files, website development and online advertising.

And basic/old school and new/creative testing strategies can go hand in hand. You really can do both.

But whether you're old school and believe only proven 12-month donors are giving to non-profit causes, or you are new school and believe commercial buyers and subscribers in a 1-month hotline can be wooed too, either way you have to test, test and test. So, if for some crazy reason you missed the last 20 years of direct mail 101 (or you're an industry rookie and haven't read up on what works...yet), and as direct mail guru Denny Hatch preaches over and over, let me tell you the most essential rule for any direct mail program: **always test aggressively before you roll out.**

And here comes the fun part...and the part that is going to set you apart as a broker...creating the testing strategy and picking the lists. This is where you get to show who you are, what you believe in, and how you can bring value to your client. Ordering and mailing core lists is not an art. Picking test lists is.

So what kinds of lists should you be testing? I say...go commercial!

Why? Let me tell you why.

- ⇒ There is not a quality commercial list on the market that doesn't offer **fundraising pricing!** Which leaves the base price at the same low level as the donor lists you are using, at about \$75/M - \$85/M.
- ⇒ List managers of commercial files are a lot more open to **negotiate**. Crunch the numbers and make a proposition to the list manager: "if you give me this XYZ pricing my client can afford to order your list." So, knock yourself out and suggest everything from free selects, \$20 off the base, 65% nets etc. You will be surprised at what you can get if you just ask.

- ⇒ Commercial files usually have very large universes. And they have demographic data selectable. That's the key. Demo selects gives you the opportunity to get very narrow and targeted. You can slice, dice and select according to who your most responsive donor is. Age, income, gender, presence of children, religion, and even geographic location.
- ⇒ The stigma that only proven donors are going to give to non-profits is an outdated way to think. If Barack Obama had only used political donor files in his campaign, he would not be the President Elect today. Though political campaigning is quite a bit different than regular fundraising, the overall message and agenda is still the same. So, I ask you...is your message and mission strong enough to venture outside of the usual play-it-safe lists? I suggest you **stop preaching to the choir** and start looking for those who do not "believe" yet.
- ⇒ Buyers spend money just like donors. Looking at plain old data card stats, buyers usually spend more than donors. The avg sale on catalog files is probably closer to \$75, while avg gifts are often in the low \$20's. If you can convince a buyer that they are better off spending money on a cause rather on a new pair of jeans or over-priced bed linen, you are good to go. Can you? I believe you can.

Before I sign off...let me give you five examples (in random order of importance) of commercial lists that have worked extremely well for my charitable and civil rights minded non-profit clients.

- The New Yorker
- Neiman Marcus
- Dwell Magazine
- Sunset Magazine
- Victoria's Secret Catalog

Do your list research and crunch the numbers. But don't be afraid of trying something new when you are considering your next batch of test ideas. Isn't that what "testing" is all about? Trying something to see if it works. I would say so.