

Creating and Using Mail and Email lists

Database marketing, including permission based emails and direct mailing, can build strong, successful, and lasting relationships with your customers, if used correctly. Building relationships with your customers will enable you to bring your customers back more often which will help you generate profits more rapidly. It is important to know that you must think about your objectives before collecting information. Ask the question, "How will I turn the database into profit?"

Here is a step-by-step plan for a database marketing strategy:

1. **Decide what you want to accomplish!** Do you want your players to buy more often, spend more when they come, play slots after bingo, refer friends or simply keep you top of mind when they want to play bingo.
2. **Create a control group** - This group is not part of your database marketing efforts and does not get special attention so the actual results of your relationship building efforts can be measured. When upper management tells you they are cutting your marketing budget, you can tell them exactly how much it will cost them...not save them. Essentially, you will have data that will show your marketing dollars are an investment that generate actual returns.
3. **Quantify your goals** to project your revenue growth. Possibilities (with sample numbers) include:
 - a. Increase your repeat business by 20%. Compare your control group with the 'special attention' group. Did you meet your goal?
 - b. Get recently acquired customers to play a 2nd time 20% more than the control group. Since players who play twice, often play more...what's that worth?
 - c. Get current players to spend \$2 more per visit than the control group.
 - d. Get your top 20% to continue to play at a 100% rate (Not including movers and deaths) compared to 90% in the control group. – This is the group you want to keep well informed and feeling appreciated.
 - e. Increase the cross over to slots by 10%. Quantify how much your players cross into slots compared to the control group. Bingo halls located inside casinos actually compete based on profit per square foot with slot machines and table games. Quantify the number and amount of dollars bingo players play in slots before and after bingo....you may find that you are more valuable than you think
4. **Determine what your message should be to modify your player's current behavior to meet your goals** – The message will be different for each goal and each group you are targeting. Send focused and relevant information using both direct mail and email. To which customers will you send a monthly specials calendar through the mail? Who will you email to send bingo information, winners pictures and information about callers.... Does it make economic sense to send a birthday card to a one time player? Does it make sense to send a monthly schedule, with the cost of postage, to a player who can pick one up at the bingo hall because they are there 5 times a week? Does it make sense to send a coupon to your non-profitable players? Will you use surveys to listen to your customers? Be careful, customers answers may be dependant on how you ask the question. Compare your results to your control group. If you are not meeting your goal, change your message or method.
5. **Determine how much you are prepared to spend to achieve your goals.** Create a long range budget so that enough time passes to fairly measure your results. Tip – Share the cost of direct marketing with a local business... or better yet, your casino.
6. **Build your list** – Design your information gathering form and process to meet your goals. Be sure to collect both the mail and email address and any other relevant information that will be used immediately or in the future.

Creating your list

Once you have determined your objectives and created your information gathering form, you are ready to start collecting information. Here are the pros and cons of 3 popular methods.

Drawing – If there is a big screen TV (or similar) in your budget, it is a good way to collect player information. Offering your players an opportunity to win an attractive prize by simply filling out your form is a quick way to build your mail list. Players complete a form with their name, address, email information and other information you may need to meet your objectives and deposit it in the drawing box. Don't ask for more information than you need. Do ask how they would prefer to be contacted: Mail, email or no preference.

Advantage – The advantage of this process is that you can collect names quickly and requires no extra labor.

Disadvantage – Because the reason for the player supplying the information is tied more to winning the prize than an actual desire to receive your information, the players may supply incorrect information or they may opt out shortly after the drawing.

Employee Contest – In this process the employees receive an incentive to collect the information at the buy-in window from players who are genuinely interested in receiving your information. The winner is the employee who collects the most valid addresses over a given period of time.

Advantages – The information that is collected is more reliable and is from players who are looking forward to receiving your information.

Disadvantages – This process does require employee time to collect the information.

Join Our Mail List box on your website – We will have a future article that will cover this subject in more detail. Various modest incentives can be offered by way of caller announcements during the sessions to encourage players to sign-up. (If you offer something of value, tie it to their next session, rather than the current session. For example, 'Receive 20 percent off your next purchase'. This will help you collect valid emails and addresses. If you provide the benefit on the current session, you are less likely to receive reliable information.)

Advantages - You are sure to get just those players who want to be on your list.

Disadvantages – Your list may be grow very slowly.

Be prepared to answer the question from your players, "What do I get out of signing up on your mail list?"

Here are a few possible answers depending on your method:

- a. Monthly Information in a usable format that fits nicely on the refrigerator.
- b. First chance to reserve seats at special events.
- c. A caring birthday card.
- d. Special offers
- e. Information about their friends...That means your staff.
- f. Pictures of Winners and Jackpots won.
- g. Last minute specials information via email.
- h. Notice of large Jackpots.

Final Thoughts...

Database management is a very dynamic process that requires creativity and flexibility. It should be viewed as a long term project that needs regular monitoring, evaluation and adjusting. Done successfully and your results will be evident clearly in your bottom line.

Some of you have mail lists and have used them successfully. Others have not. If you have created and used your own mail list successfully, send us your story and we will share it on this site with other managers who could benefit from your experience.

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