

5-MINUTE INTERVIEW

E-mail Appending Examined

As marketers develop creative ways to maximize ROI using existing customer lists to help offset increased postage and paper costs, e-mail appending offers a solution. Focusing on the quality, not the quantity, of your e-mail append can help make the most of this approach by leading to better response rates. Dave Fallon, Internet marketing strategist at North Andover, Mass.-based L-com Connectivity Products, recently partnered with Newton, Mass.-based e-mail hygiene provider FreshAddress and achieved a 22 percent lift in response to his company's e-mail programs. Here, Fallon discusses who should consider e-mail appending, best practices for choosing an e-mail appending provider and how to follow e-mail appending etiquette.



Dave Fallon

Target Marketing: In light of rising mailing costs, how does e-mail appending fit into the mix of marketing methods to boost effectiveness?

Dave Fallon: I'd say e-mail appending is part of an overall strategy to maximize marketing communication. Let's face it: e-mail is a lot cheaper than postal marketing communication. It probably always will be. However, e-mail addresses are more difficult to collect. An e-mail append is the ideal way to use the physical addresses you've already collected to find e-mail addresses and then engage customers in a low-cost, quick turnaround e-mail program that complements what you're already doing in print.

TM: How have you effectively used e-mail appending to increase revenue and re-engage your customers?

DF: The customers we appended were "our customers." In other words, we didn't rent them or borrow them from someone else. It made sense that we should be able to contact them in the most convenient way for both parties. In many cases, the customers did not give us their e-mail, not because of privacy concerns, but because we either forgot to ask or they forgot to give it to us. So, we did an e-mail append to re-engage those customers who we were not hitting with our regular e-mail program. FreshAddress sent each of the newly recovered e-mail addresses a brief e-mail asking them to opt in

before we sent them anything. We have a very regular e-mail program, having sent weekly e-mails last year, so we knew that the recovered e-mails would be getting regular communication from us once they opted in. We also included value-added e-mails with free content that interested our customers.

TM: What challenges have you faced using e-mail appending, and how have you worked around them?

DF: Perhaps the biggest challenge is explaining to the finance department what, exactly, they are paying for. "Don't we already own the names?" they ask. "Can't we already market to these people and ask them to sign up for e-mail without the cost of an append?" But gathering e-mail addresses is a lot trickier than it seems. Customers, when they see that you already have their address and that you are politely asking to send them valuable information, are

a lot more willing to say, "Yes," than they are to give you their e-mail address in response to a mailing.

TM: What types of organizations should consider e-mail appending?

DF: I think the best organizations to consider how an e-mail append can help achieve marketing goals are those with already-engaged customers and a regular, timely e-mail program. I envision nonprofit organizations and SMB class companies as prime candidates.

TM: What tips do you have for choosing an appending partner?

DF: Ask for references. Make sure the company you are going with has done this before and does a good job. Also, ask up front for an estimate on how many names will be gained from the exercise, given the size of your list and number of names you have without e-mail addresses. Finally, do your own list hygiene.

TM: When gearing up to send your data for e-mail appending services, how should savvy marketers prepare the data?

DF: I really want to stress how an append is not a cleanup for data. We happen to have fairly clean data at L-com, but I can see a company that has been less careful with its data using an append and thinking that will solve the problem. Also, I want to stress privacy concerns when doing an e-mail append. People are more careful about their e-mail address, so you have to respect that. Assure them that they are an existing customer and that you're not abusing the relationship.

—Kate DeBevois