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If there is one thing I can't say enough it is that the most important part of your mailing campaign is your mailing list. It is vital that you put the right amount of energy into learning about lists - who to mail to - so that your mailing efforts aren't wasted. There are a few different ways that you can get an adequately targeted list.

As always the first step is to determine who your target market will be. Should you market to consumers or businesses? For this example consider that your product is a set of home woodworking tools. This should be marketed to consumers because it is not an industrial grade product. Good, now we have narrowed it down to only 291,324,219 people in the US. As a minimum, your mailing campaign should send to the same names three times. So all you have to do is send out 873,972,657 postcards at \$0.185 per piece & you get the point. We need to narrow it down some more.

So how do you accomplish the narrowing of your list? Many factors can be considered, including age, gender, zip code, annual salary, profession and number of children are some of the more common qualifiers. It may take a while to figure out what combination works for your specific product. Don't worry about political correctness when considering whom you should mail to. It is perfectly acceptable to test certain lists that may be considered "stereotypical". Many times these lists will work well. But you never know until you test them.

A special eye cream would go to women over 40, right? You need not worry that you're targeting "older women" or that 40 is no longer considered old. No matter how great an idea you have about a certain market, ALWAYS DO A SMALLER TEST MAILING FIRST! Average test mailings run around 1000-1500 names. Once you see acceptable returns on the smaller mailing then you can jump in with the larger numbers. You may think 40+ is a good age to start with the eye cream, but you may get better results purchasing age 50+. Test test test!

Sometimes, like with our home woodworking tools, you have a product or service that you are not comfortable that you can adequately narrow your list by the normal qualifiers. You can make certain assumptions about people who are woodworking hobbyists: Mostly Male, Probably Homeowners, but what else do you really know? At this point you may want to consider using a privately "managed" list. These lists are going to cost more per name but will give you a much better way of pinpointing possible customers. For example you could order the subscriber list for Fine Woodworking Magazine. The cost per name would be \$0.095 per name compared to the normal average cost of \$0.05 per name. These names are nearly double the cost, however you are guaranteed that all of the names you get are for people interested in woodworking and therefore are much more likely to be interested in

your product. With the "women over 40" example - some may be wrinkly and some may look quite young and aren't even thinking of eye cream yet.

Managed Lists are not appropriate for all situations, but can be a major help when a very specific target is needed. Don't fret over the extra cost, the more targeted names will undoubtedly show greater overall returns in the end.

The purpose of special mailing lists is to target a specific type of customer for your specific type of business. The eventual end result is more customers and a better bottom line. And this is what we all want, right?