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## Building a foundation for effective e-mail campaigns

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Effective e-mail campaigns require two critical elements: good list hygiene and an understanding of customer preferences. These elements form the foundation for a successful e-mail program. Below are some quick tips for building and maintaining a good e-mail list, and recommendations on how to capture customer preferences so that you're able to deliver relevant and effective e-mail marketing messages to your audience.

### Good list hygiene

Regardless of how well an e-mail is crafted, if it's not making it to the inbox, it has no impact. Current statistics show that more than 25% of e-mail addresses churn per year. Therefore, no matter how clean your initial list, it is imperative that you have a process in place that manages and removes bounce-backs and inactive addresses.

Are your e-mail addresses accurate? Have they been updated? Are your prospects and customers still receiving communications at their listed e-mail addresses? If not, ISPs will notice that you consistently send messages to bad addresses. Left unmanaged, this will have a direct impact on your organization's ability to deliver e-mail to *any* customer's inbox. Moreover, if a significant percentage of your e-mails are not being delivered, your marketing ROI will be negatively impacted; the CPM rate you pay to your ESP doesn't discern between delivered and undelivered e-mail.

There are a number of steps you can take to ensure your list is clean and up-to-date:

Send a triggered opt-in confirmation e-mail while collecting addresses. This confirms that the address is active, and gives you the opportunity to explain what communications the recipient should expect to receive from you.

Develop a strategy to remove inactive and/or invalid addresses that bounce from your database. ISPs are increasingly measuring engagement, i.e., how many people read or click on your e-mails. Removing inactive addresses keeps engagement measurements high.

### Collecting customer preferences

Collecting and utilizing customer preferences allows you to create more relevant e-mail communications by providing your customers with (only) the information they want – when they want it.

Customer preferences help you understand two key things: your customer's specific interests, and their preferred method(s) and frequency of receiving information. Your goal is to leverage this information and create relevant messages that speak to your customers as individuals. In short, you are aligning your messages to the topics they find most important, and delivering those messages at the times and frequency they find most appropriate.

Once you collect customer preference information, you should marry it to the activity and behavior data you're already tracking: who opened what, which links they clicked, what they are buying, and how often they are buying. Understanding these *inferred* preferences will enable you to further refine your messaging and content to drive even greater results.

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\*Source: Market Tools customer survey, April 2010

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