

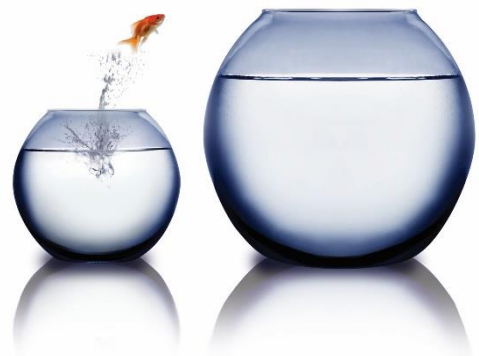


Business Success & Happiness



A Guide to Customer Database Marketing

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HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR CUSTOMER DATABASE

So you've been to lots of networking events, visited some exhibitions or even bought a database, and now you have collected lots of business cards and names, but you don't know what to do with them. Or maybe you've been in business a while and have got an existing database of customers, but you don't use it for anything other than finding their contact details.

A database is your company's biggest asset, yet many business owners fail to make the most of it, because they simply don't use it effectively. Here is a step-by-step guide to making the most of your database.

1. Use a proper CRM system

CRM or Customer Relationship Management is the overall name for a system that is used to manage the relationships with your customers, prospects, suppliers and anyone else you care to add to it. Google "CRM systems" and you will find that there are many different systems available. If you are a well-established company it pays to speak to an expert about the best one for you, as they range in price a lot. If you're a small company or a start-up you might like to start with a lighter version of the system, although always make sure that you can upgrade easily over time. You don't want to have to re-input all of your data into another system once you've outgrown the first one.



Here's the minimum they should be able to do:

- * Record all customer information in separate fields (first name, last name, Company name, address, telephone numbers, extensions, email addresses, postal address, website, social media contact info, industry, source etc.) so that they are all individually searchable
- * Allow you to segment in any way you want
- * Record contact history
- * Record communication history
- * Set tasks and reminders
- * Have an integrated calendar

Useful additions are:

- * Internet based so you can access it anywhere, any time
- * Integrated email marketing
- * Create sales funnels & processes

2. Enter as much detail as possible

If you want to be really good at marketing, you need to be able to find your target audience and speak to them as individually as possible. That is why you need to have the first and last name as separate fields, so that you can address them personally when you write to them, whether that's by email or by letter. You also want to be able to track the success of your various marketing methods, so you'll need to have a field that records where they came from. Make sure every contact has an ID status (see below), as well as information about what industry they are in, or what their business does. If it's important for your business to record personal details (such as birthdays or pet names), do that too. More is always better than less.



3. Set ID status

One of the most important fields is that of the ID status. This is very often the main way of segmenting your data, and here are some suggested general statuses:

Prospect

Hot prospect

Customer

Lapsed customer

Supplier

Potential supplier

Strategic partner

Potential strategic partner

Contact (not ideal)

The better you are able to categorise your contacts, the easier it will be to market correctly, so it's best to avoid the general "contact" one, although sometimes it's unavoidable.

Make this as specific as possible for your business. So if you are a Financial Adviser for example, you might add categories such as mortgage, life insurance, investment opportunity etc. Or if you supply telecoms to businesses you might have things like broadband, telephone, cabling etc.

The aim for this is to be able to quickly and easily group people together that have something in common that you could help them with. So in the example of the telecoms business, you might have a special offer on for broadband, which ideally you would only want to send to those customers who actually have your broadband, or who don't have it, if it's an offer for new customers only.



The people you communicate with want to feel special, and nothing will put off an existing customer more than being offered a special deal for new customers of a product that they have already been taking from you for years, and for which they might even pay a higher price.

4. Set categories

Apart from the ID status, it's also a good idea to have categories. They can be anything you want, but good ones might include information about the size of their turnover, whether they're A, B or C clients, how much staff they have or how many branches they have.

5. Train your staff

A database is only as good as its entries, and it is crucial that everyone who enters the data, is fully aware of its importance, and does it in a uniform way. If you use a system that lets you set compulsory fields you can be sure that those are always filled in, but regardless of that, you'll still need to provide some training as to what needs to be entered. Remember especially to enter where the contact has come from, as this will allow you to track the success of your marketing methods. It might be the receptionist who gets this information, in which case they will need access to the system to be able to record it. You can set various categories for this, such as:

- * website (what was the search term)
- * networking event (which one?)
- * LinkedIn
- * Customer referral (who?)
- * Exhibition (which one?)
- * Sales call
- * Rep visit



6. Start marketing

Once you have a properly segmented database full of relevant contacts, you can start to market to them, as it's only then that this information becomes really useful. The most important thing to remember here is that whatever you do, it needs to be either relevant or interesting to your prospects and customers. By having lots of small segments, you can really target your marketing, making it much more successful.

For example, you might have a gift shop with an online ordering system. Ideally, you will have recorded your customers' ages, whether they have kids or not, maybe their wedding anniversaries, their birthdays and their preferences (do they like gadgets or art, books or a certain type of music). By having all of this information, you could send out an email to a grandmother whose grandson's birthday is coming up in one week, and offer her a selection of appropriate gifts. Or you can contact a husband whose wedding anniversary is coming up, again with suggestions for appropriate gifts.

Or you might have an antiques shop and you know that some of your customers are particularly interested in crockery. If you have a new piece come in, they can have an exclusive "first come first serve" preview of the piece before it goes on general sale. If they know you offer this, they will be only too happy to give you this information when you ask for it.

7. Continue marketing

It's crucial that you have a systematic approach to marketing. Some people take up to 10 "touches" before they will buy from you, so you need to do this regularly and not give up too soon. You also don't want to bombard them with stuff, but this is why a good database is so essential: it will allow you to make it relevant and useful for people, in which case they will read it, or at least not unsubscribe from it.



Existing customers need to be kept happy and one way of doing that is by sending them relevant offers for products or services that they already buy from you, or other things they might like. Think of Amazon and its "customers who bought this also bought x" function. How often have you looked at something that was offered and even bought it, because it was relevant to you? However, companies offering you free supplies of nappies when you don't have kids, or want to sell you insurance for the over 50s when you've only just turned 30 are just getting it completely wrong and end up alienating you. Even if they did have products or services that were of interest to you, you probably don't want to deal with them out of principle.

8. Continue adding to the database

Last but not least you'll need to continuously update your database. As soon as you get a bounce back from an email, remove it from the system. If someone tells you they are moving, update their details. And most importantly, keep on adding to the database.

If you have a restaurant, offer people access to special offers in return for their name and email address. If you have a garage, ask for their details so you can tell them when their MOT is due. If you have a shop, have sign up cards at the till. If you find it hard to get people to fill in their details, think about offering them something in return, like an immediate discount, an extra muffin or a voucher.

Those are my top tips for making the most of your database. Let me know if there are any other things you do that have made a real difference to your business as it's always good to learn from other people's successes. Good luck!



A little bit about me:

I'm Inge Dowden and I'm the **Business Growth and Happiness Coach**, helping people be happy and successful at work. I offer both business coaching and career coaching, and I specialise in leadership and employee engagement. I believe that when you are happy, you are more motivated, creative and action orientated, which in turn will make you more successful.

My typical clients are owners and employees of small businesses who want to grow their business locally, nationally or even internationally and who realise that they need to be at their very best to achieve this. I use the DISC personality profiling system to help people understand themselves and others better, to improve communication and to avoid conflicts in the workplace.

I'm also the author of *"The Happy Worker: how to find a job you love and love the job you have"*, which is available to buy from **Amazon** or through the website www.thehappyworker.co.uk.

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*"Because you deserve nothing less
than happiness and success"*



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