



## Increasing Performance and Results With the Internet

*Excerpted from "Leveraging the Internet for Marketing Efficiency: Which Online Database Marketing Methods Get Results, and How to Make Them Work for Your Organization" by Doug Borchard, Vice President, D&B Sales and Marketing Solutions*

For today's busy marketing professional, the Internet is one of the best tools available. Traditional marketing methods work, for the most part, but they don't give marketers two critical capabilities — the ability to react on the fly to changing market conditions as well as have complete control over the marketing process. Enter the Internet, a tool that solves both of these problems.

At the most basic level, the Internet allows marketers to build lists and access them immediately, no waiting required. On top of that, the Web gives marketers the ability to create integrated campaigns that combine outbound and inbound efforts. For instance, if you sell 401(k) plans and are running a campaign targeting businesses with 401(k) plans due to expire in a certain month, you would first build a list targeting that group. You would also want to push prospects to your Web site, where they could research your 401(k) plan. You could then use Internet technology to enhance the incoming leads with critical pieces of information, such as the prospects' demographic profile. Again, you can do this immediately, on the fly.

Indeed, the Internet gives marketers greater power and control in determining how best to deal with inbound leads, no matter where they originate — a direct mail campaign, online visitors, an online seminar, or some other way. Marketers can use Internet technology

to quickly enhance incoming leads, so that they can more effectively deal with them — while they are still hot. They can instantaneously obtain additional information about the lead — their demographic profile, their industry, revenues, employee count, etc. — to determine whether it's best to send them a brochure, make them a special offer, give them a call, or tuck them away in the tickler file. The Internet allows you to answer these questions much more efficiently, so that you can pounce on the good prospects, without wasting time on those that aren't appropriate.

The Internet also gives marketers the power to conduct their own analyses, capabilities once available only to companies with large budgets. Pre-Internet, the main approach to analyzing your database was to farm the job out to a service bureau. Today, marketers can compare their customer and lead files to the databases available online, determining which qualities their best and most profitable customers have in common. Using that information, marketers can then search for prospects meeting that exact demographic profile. They can also determine which markets present the best opportunity for them, how deeply they've penetrated those markets to date, and create strategies and campaigns for infiltrating those markets moving forward. This kind of analysis needs to be done

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often, to coincide with changing market conditions and your place within that market.

Another bonus to using online database marketing techniques is the ability to test lists. Years ago, marketers couldn't quickly segment lists by certain details or characteristics, so that they could run several smaller, test campaigns before determining where to spend the bulk of their effort. Today, it's simple. That same company selling 401(k) plans might test campaigns on several groups of prospects - one targeting companies with between 25 and 100 employees, and a second with between 100 and 500 employees. They may further segment based on revenue, industry, or title. They can create these test lists in less than an hour, and then run campaigns to those groups. Once they examine the results, they can then quickly build a full, comprehensive list to the targeted audience most likely to buy.

Online database marketing is important for small and large companies alike. Smaller companies often don't have the time or resources to buy lists or work with service bureaus. The Internet provides them immediate, affordable access to all of the data and analysis tools they need. As for larger companies, they often target multiple audiences with multiple products in countless geographic locations. They need to ensure that they are targeting each group of prospects appropriately, and need to constantly analyze how they are penetrating each target market so

that they can adjust efforts appropriately. The Internet gives them the ability to achieve those objectives. On top of that, both small and large companies benefit from technology that integrates data from a number of sources into one online database. Again, this helps marketers target more effectively, by giving them the ability to drill down based on highly detailed criteria and obtain the very specific information they need, exactly when they need it.

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