



The Best Mailing List Money Can Buy

A funeral director called me recently for advice on acquiring a mailing list for direct mail marketing. He asked me where to find a really good mailing list for acquiring pre-need prospects.

My answer will be a shock to some of you and sound like common sense to the rest of you. I told him that the absolute best mailing list is not available from a list broker. The best mailing list is one that you should already own if you have been in business more than a few months.

Let me explain what I mean by showing you an example of two different funeral homes with totally different record keeping systems. And by system I am not referring to a computer program but a philosophy of record keeping. In my mind it is not how the data is stored but how the data is attained.

Funeral Home A has a very simple data system. It is simple because they don't have one. If a death occurs they have the widow's name or the oldest child's name in the file cabinet for safe keeping. Direct mail is a complete waste of money in their opinion. Their philosophy is that if they buried dad in 1975, then they will of course bury mom when her time comes. If they buried mom and dad, then of course all of the rest of the family will come knocking at their door. However, they are always shocked when reading the obituaries to find one of "their" families in being served by the funeral director down the street.

Does this sound like the way your firm operates? If so, then your firm is possibly dying a slow death right below your nose. Lets now look at how another firm (**Funeral Home B**) handles their client data collection.

When a death occurs they have a simple sign-in sheet for ALL of the immediate family to fill out. Instead of having only the name of the widow and possibly the oldest child in their files, they now have all off the immediate family information including spouse's names. If they serve 20 families per month, then by the end of the month they should have somewhere between 30-60 names in a database. At the end of one year they have between 360-720 names for future marketing. At the end of 5 years they have between 1,800 - 3,600 names.

Funeral Home A is simply running their business like a hobby while Funeral Home B is running their business like a business. No matter how you view your

profession, don't forget that you are running a business first and foremost. A business has to grow and prosper in order to survive. If you are simply waiting for the phone to ring and not marketing to the community, someone is going to take the business from you.

Now that I've shown you a simple method for building your mailing list, what should you do with it?

Most of the pre-need insurance companies have a series of direct mail pieces that they can recommend if you do not want to take the time to create your own. However, if you only want to do a bare-bones marketing campaign, I would highly recommend sending Christmas cards and an annual company newsletter. As simple as it sounds, one or two contacts by mail each year can do wonders to your business.

By simply sending an annual newsletter to your list you can make sure that your families never forget your firm. Each year, include a short biography of your staff members along with photos of their families. Readers will get to know your staff on an intimate level. People do business with people they know and trust and the funeral business is the best example of this. If your clientele knows all of your staff members by name, they will feel like they are a part of the family.

Just imagine how many families have passed through the doors to your funeral home in the past 5 years. Wouldn't it be great to have all of their names and addresses in your files right now? If you are like most funeral homes you have missed an opportunity to capture hundreds of names and contact information.

Hopefully your competitor is doing business like Funeral Home A and you are operating like Funeral Home B. If not, initiate a system immediately to collect the contact information from your families served. Make sure to include cell phones and email addresses as most people are abandoning their home phone numbers.

Alert all of your staff to immediately set up procedures for collecting contact information. Make sure that everyone at your funeral home understands the importance of this and before you know it you will have the best mailing list money can buy.

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