

Every organization with a sizable donor file has at one time or another grappled with the question of whether to rent/exchange their list with other groups.

The internal debates go back and forth. All parties weigh in. Sometimes the discussions go on for years with no consensus.

Having managed active donor files for hundreds of clients, I've come to the conclusion that there's no good reason to not put your list on the market and ample reason to do so.

The fears about making your list available never come to pass. Here are some of the more common misconceptions.



1420 Spring Hill Road,
Suite 490, McLean, VA 22102

***Finding Donors
You Can't Find On
Your Own.***

Your Mailing List Is Your Biggest A\$\$\$et



Why Are You Wasting It?

Here Are Five Common

Myths & Misconceptions

You Should Be Aware Of

1 "Respectable organizations don't give out their mailing lists to anybody."

Hundreds of diverse and respected groups rent and exchange their list all the time. The American Heart Association, the American Breast Cancer Foundation, Amvets National Service Foundation, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Heritage Foundation and People for the American Way are just a few that we've all heard of.

2 "My donors will all complain if I sell their name to a third party."

Yes, you may get a few complaints. By a few I mean three or four. When this happens explain to your donors that list rental is an easy way to generate revenue for the programs they've supported. If they are not pacified you can offer to flag their name as "non-rental" and they'll get no more solicitations from others.

By ~ Michael Hiban
President, Omega List Company

Myths & Misconceptions

3 "I respect the privacy of my donors and I don't feel right violating it."

If privacy is to be interpreted that broadly, you already infringed on your donors' privacy when you plucked them off somebody else's list to begin with. As the U.S. Supreme Court famously said when ruling on this issue, "It's a short walk from the mailbox to the garbage can."

4 "I don't want competitive groups scarfing up my names."

It's one thing if similar groups want your list without giving reciprocity. Hey, you've got to give action, to get action. In that case you can use your mailing list as leverage to get names in return. But "your names" are probably on dozens of other lists and are going to be exposed to this competitive group one way or another. You might as well create a transaction that you can benefit from.

Look at your mailing results from the last two years. How many of your donors came off "competitive lists?" Do business with your "competitors." You'll find it mutually beneficial and the cause you both espouse will prosper also.

5 "My house mailings will suffer if somebody else is hitting my names."

Again, your donors are already being solicited constantly. They may be special to you, but they aren't unique to you. Case studies have been done showing that renting your list won't impact your house net in the slightest.

By refraining from marketing your list you are leaving a great deal of revenue on the table. If you won't play ball with your names then you have to rent rather than exchange prospect lists that you use. The cost differential between rental and exchange can be as high as 12 cents per piece of mail. Multiply that by the amount of mail you send out each year and you get a general idea of how much extra is being spent.

Even groups that will exchange but not rent their file are not capitalizing on their biggest asset. If your list is large enough you can make thousands of dollars of revenue on just one list order without lifting a finger. Your list manager should do everything. He approves the copy. He sends the order out. He bills and collects the invoice. All you do is go to the mailbox (remember that short walk?) to pick up the check.

If this makes you curious, ask your list manager to do an estimate on how much list revenue he can generate for you next year. When you get your answer, start thinking about what you can accomplish with that new found money.

1420 Spring Hill Road, Suite 490, McLean, VA 22102
phone: (703) 821-1550 fax: (703) 821-8794
email: mhiban@omegalist.com



As a member of the ECG leadership team for more than twenty years,

Mike Hiban is widely recognized in the list industry as one of the most knowledgeable experts in the country when it comes to evaluating the quality of nonprofit donor files.

ECG copywriters rely on Mike to give them reliable information on mailing lists and to make recommendations on new list tests.

With his broad and deep knowledge of lists, he bases his recommendations not only on list usage, but on list results. In addition, Mike has raised millions of dollars for his clients in list royalty income over the years.

A graduate of the University of Maryland and of The Leadership Institute, Mike and his wife Caroline are active in their church.



Eberle Communications Group, Inc.

Eberle Associates, Inc.
Fund Raising Strategies
Campaign Funding Direct
Omega List Company
Next Step Philanthropy