Data Mining

Using your database to gather leads is not as hard as you think!

In order to produce a successful direct marketing campaign, all you need to have is a great database, right? Not quite. Producing an effective 1:1 print campaign starts with having a great database, but once you have the data, you need to figure out what to do with it. Often, that means data mining.

Data mining. The very phrase strikes fear into the hearts of many marketers. The ability to connect the dots to reveal buying habits and other customer behaviors is something many see as complex, expensive and available only to the largest companies. In reality, effective data mining is well within the reach of nearly all marketers.

Keep It Simple

There are three key steps to mining data:

1) Know what data is available
2) Ask questions about that data
3) Look for useful relationships

The first step is to understand the field headings in your database. In other words, what data are you capturing? Most databases include basic information such as name, address and purchase history. Are you also capturing information such as age, gender and home ownership? This determines the scope of the queries you can run.

Running queries simply means asking questions of the data. If you are a retailer, you might ask, "Which customers purchased hardwood flooring last month?" If you know that these customers are also likely to purchase area rugs and floor conditioning products, you're off to a great start. You might then want to refine your search, sorting by age, income or gender. This allows you to cross-sell products more appropriately.

Look at Everything

The great thing about data mining is that sorting is free. Run every type of sort you can imagine. Is there a relationship between hardwood flooring and gender? How about income? You might find that data you never considered, such as date of purchase, has more relevance than you think.

For example, one retailer discovered that its sales of sporting good products spiked on the third Saturday of the month. So it created a 1:1 personalized campaign offering staggered incentives based on spending level for purchases—you guessed it—made on the third weekend of each month. Revenues soared.

Make the Most of What You Have

Every business has a database program, so make the most of it. Even basic software like Microsoft Excel® or Microsoft Access® provides some data mining capabilities. Or you might want to consider purchasing add-on data mining modules or third-party software. If you have customer information in multiple databases, think about combining them into a single, comprehensive database for use in marketing.

Even if you don't, you can often extract useful information from even one or two databases. Don't overlook outsourcing. There are plenty of companies that specialize in this process. Many will use the moniker "business intelligence" or ETL (extract, transform, load) companies, and costs for their services can be very reasonable.

We Can Help

At Unimac Interactive, we produce 1:1 print campaigns of all sizes. Your account representative can provide you with guidance to make the most effective use of the data you have on hand.
So get curious. Take some time to run a variety of sorts just to see what you can find. That curiosity could make a big difference to the bottom line.