

EMAIL

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Don't Sacrifice Your Brand for Leads



By [Albert Gadbut](#)

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**The president and CEO of AcquireWeb, Inc. offers pointers to consider when evaluating your email acquisition marketing programs.**

When an offer is too good to be true, it often times is. So when an ad-media sales person calls and offers to sell you leads that you do not need to pay for in advance but rather when they are delivered to you, beware. Do you know where and how your brand is being exposed in order to capture those leads?

Some significant questions to consider when evaluating your customer acquisition email and lead generation programs and whether or not they're right for your brand include:

For email leads

- How many total emails will be sent out with your brand in them to capture the leads?
- Will the email provider forward all the opt-outs and SPAM complaints associated with your offer so that you can remain CAN-SPAM compliant?
- Can the email vendor guarantee tracking and targeting on the offer, and provide that information back to you?

For lead generation

- Which sites is your brand being displayed on?
- Are you sure that when you sign a lead-generation deal that your leads are not also being sold on sites that are affiliated with the lead-generation vendor?
- Are all of those sites, both affiliate and otherwise, consistent with your brand image?
- If you appear on a gambling site or a site with mature content, are you comfortable with the public associating you with that kind of content?

You don't have to sacrifice your brand in order to implement a successful email acquisition or lead-generation marketing program. Following are some tips on how to ensure your brand remains strong, and the correct people are seeing your email message.

## **Targeted data vs. pay-for-performance**

If you accept an email deal that is pay-for-performance, agree in writing up front the maximum number of unique emails that will be sent with your offer, and the maximum number of messages each unique email address will receive. This will allow you to calculate how many people are being contacted with your brand as compared to how many people convert. Many people do not realize that pay-for-performance email is going out to millions of people who may not be interested in your products or services in any way. If the data is not targeted well you could do a lot of brand damage on several levels, including:

1. People may have a negative view of your product or service, which can impact sales both offline and online.
2. The ISPs will place your brand on a watch-word list, resulting in your messages being filtered in consumer communications, both acquisition and retention and in your B2B communications.

For example, you may find that the vendor is sending 1,000,000 emails resulting in 1,500 leads that yield 50 orders with 1,000 opt-outs or SPAM complaints in regard to your order. Without this front-end quantity guarantee and backend information at your disposal you might feel that the campaign is going great and that the email vendor is providing a value-added service.

However, when you are empowered with this information you could determine that contacting 999,950 people who were not interested in your offer, and worse 1,000 people who opted-out or submitted SPAM complaints -- all to get 50 orders -- may not be the marketing direction you want to take. In this case the amount of unsubscribes and un-targeted prospects far outweighs the positive impact of the revenue generated from the 50 orders. Furthermore, contacting people who are not your target will have a negative affect on your brand that may not be recognized for months to come.

## **Offer placement and your brand**

On the Survey and Banner Lead Generation sites, do you know how many impressions you are serving for each conversion? The Lead Generation sites do know that answer, and it impacts where your offer is served. The other factor impacting offer placement is the bounty that you pay for an offer received. If you are not paying enough or your offer does not pull well relative to others, you will have bad placement and this will damage your brand.

## **Emails-to-leads ratios**

Do you know the ratio of emails that are being sent with respect to the number of leads that you receive? If it is several orders of magnitude different from what you see in your retention mailing, or if the percentage of leads received to conversions from those leads is off by an order of magnitude, then you have a serious problem.

In conclusion, select lead-generation and email acquisition programs that enable you to control your brand message by reaching the right audience and focusing on qualified leads. Watch where your brand is being broadcast within emails or websites to ensure it's consistent with your focus and will lead to your ideal prospects. Make sure you understand conversions and use well targeted lists to minimize the risks of filtered messages and negative views of your company and/or product. And finally, monitor your offer placements and calculate and use your emails-to-leads ratios to enforce your brand.

*Albert Gadbut is the founder of [AcquireWeb, Inc.](#) [Read full bio.](#)*