How to properly use third-party data to grow your list.

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There seems to be a lot of confusion and bad advice in the marketplace about growing email lists with the aid of third-party data sources. Some advice encourages you to rent or purchase data, then run it through an email validation service before your distribution to remove as much of the (potentially) bad stuff as possible. However, at 250k we dont believe this is a good practice. Ever. Simply put, buying data is still a no-no.

Certainly, various channels of ill-begotten email lists can rapidly grow your audience, but oftentimes this comes at a great cost to your brands reputation and mailing abilities. Purchased and rented lists are usually full of bad data or invalid accounts; you end up buying junk accounts, meaning the actual acquisition costs are significantly higher when you consider the cost per valid address. Thats even before accounting for the amount of time and effort related to your ESP terminating your account, or the costs of being blocked by a blacklist provider because of this practice. Beyond a dollar amount, youre really gambling with your email programs ability to generate revenue for your organization.

How do people get email addresses, then? Well, there are a number of ways. Lets rank them from most to least risky:

Email Harvesting (serious risk)
Using a service or group of people to scan the internet for publicly posted email addresses, then sending them communications for your products and services. This is illegal in many jurisdictions and multiplies fines issued by government regulators.

List Purchase
Buying a list of contacts, oftentimes sold to several other businesses and compiled via various methods of questionable means (like via harvesting). Purchased lists frequently include spam traps, inactive users, and invalid domain names.

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