



A Mailing List Grows Up

Using the information you have to communicate with the customers you want

By Dana Kader Robb

Do you have a database or do you just have a mailing list? The fastest way to find out is by looking at it. What's in there? What can you do with it? If the answer is "not much" then you probably have a mailing list.

So the next logical question is "what difference does it make?" And the answer is, tons. If you need to know where you first met a prospect, the birthday of your biggest client, the last time someone ordered from you or how much they spent, you need a database. It's a simple word that really means just what it says — a base in which to keep your data.

But I have my Rolodex and manila files and index cards, you say. Those things are all great but can you sort them by zip code in less than one minute? Can you filter out only those clients who have shown an interest in the new purple widgets you're marketing? Can you merge their names and addresses

with a personalized letter offering a 10% discount if they order before midnight tonight? You could if you had a database.

A simple database is easy to create in a variety of different software programs. If you have a "works" program, like Microsoft Works, that will do it. Other people use software like Microsoft Excel, which is actually a spreadsheet but can serve some database functions. Any of these are pretty good for small, service businesses. For those who need more sophisticated capabilities, there are relational databases include ACT!, Goldmine and Microsoft Access.

At some point, you decided it was time to upgrade from a typewriter to your computer. Now it's time to move from a mailing list to a database. And if you're one of those who never made the transition to a computer (we know you're out there!), call us at 414/778-0602 and we'll be happy to manage your database for you.