



## Developing your database: Getting back to basics - Protect it, nurture it and grow it

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I recently had the opportunity to speak to a group of businessmen that represented large companies with sales of \$50 million or greater. I asked a couple of questions about their marketing and sales efforts, and we talked about a number of things that were prerequisites for any successful business generation process. One of the strategies mentioned repeatedly was fundamental database development.

I believe that, besides its people, a company's database is its most valuable asset. And it's why database protection is so critical. Employees need to understand that the company owns the database, and no one should access it for anything other than company use. It should also be specified in company guidelines and non-disclosure agreements that the database is company property. That's because the staff compiles databases while their employer is paying them. What's more, some database names are either purchased by the company or collected on company time at networking or marketing events. Of course, if a staff member brings his or her own contacts to the table when they join your organization that should be clearly noted.

Database names are managed through classifications. Databases should not be comprised of just clients, but former clients and prospects. The way you classify names and the level at which you classify them will have a tremendous impact on your ability to leverage their sales potential. See sample classifications in the chart.

If you're looking to start or better categorize a current database, probably the most popular contact management system is Microsoft Outlook. Although it is not a true CRM system, it does easily integrate into its own and other CRM systems. Even the very basic of contact management programs give you the ability to categorize contacts.

Once you classify your database, the marketing opportunitiesâ€”or rather the revenue opportunitiesâ€”are ready for your execution. That's because often the easiest sales to find are within your own database. Once you classify your customers in categories, you can easily market and upsell products and services. And using classifications like OPP and VPO, management can more easily focus its efforts on where dollars will soon be invested.

Most importantly, remember that a database management system is a database of people who are related to companies. In today's world of personalized marketing, the person's name is the focal point of customer relationship management. Where many companies fall short today is their lack of effort to migrate all valuable contacts from a company into their database. When you think about it, why limit your voice by filtering it to just one voice?

Finally, how do you grow your database? The fact is, whatever your database now is, it's too small. Remember sales and prospecting is a numbers game. If 1,000 e-mails get you 10 responses, 10,000 e-mails will get you 100, and so on. But never ever mistake quantity for quality. Don't focus

on the number of contacts you can add, but their ultimate value.

In business generation, there's nothing more fundamental than this: A well-compiled, well-classified database gives you the power to communicate with customers, prospects and colleagues efficiently and in a timely fashion. So take a moment to review your company's database. And then protect it, nurture it, and grow it.

That's Q from the street.

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