

# How To Coax More Info From Listeners

Tips for harvesting demographics, lifestyle data from e-mail registrants

**T**hanks for visiting our website. Please tell us all about yourself (by filling out the following five pages), including your age, marital status, number of kids and household income, so we can monetize our database using your information. Oh, yeah, we'll send you something useful. Thanks!

While your website doesn't specifically feature the message above, this is essentially what you are telling your listeners if your sign-up page contains more than a few questions or collection points for basic information.

Our goal as marketers is to use our listener information to build a relationship so we can extend our brand and market our station to listeners one to one. We also want to have our database generate income for us so we'll be covering both the things that we have a hand in: ratings and revenue. So how do we collect information beyond the basics?

**By asking one question at a time, you have a much better chance of retrieving not only a response, but a truthful response from your listener.**

## First, Get The Basics

Let's define the basics and how much information your listeners will give you. On any sign-up page on your website (to receive a newsletter, join a club, enter a contest, etc.), you should be asking only for essential information: first and last name, e-mail address and birthday.

Because a birthday may not seem like basic information to some listeners, you may want to put a note on your data-collection page stating that you collect it only in order to comply with the law that requires participants to be at least 13 years old. If you are registering listeners for a contest, you can also ask for their home address, explaining that you need it in case they win.

In addition to the basics, each time

a listener signs up for a particular contest, we will learn more about that listener. If a listener signs up to win a pair of tickets to see Billy Joel, we can generally assume that they like Billy Joel, or at least like going to pop music concerts. We can use this information to alert that listener next time the station has a Billy Joel contest (or one with a similar artist) or when the station knows that Billy Joel tickets are going on sale.



Craig Zimmerman

## Incremental Profile Building

Now that we have the basic information from our listener, how do we obtain more to build a profile? The method that seems to be most effective is asking your listener for a small piece of information each time they return to your website. This is the least intrusive way to approach listeners, and it will help you accomplish your goal of building a full profile on each of them.

The first step is to create a list of questions. For example, you may want to know how many children the listener has or if they own a pet. In a best-case scenario, each time a listener returns to your website, they would be asked the next question in your series. For example: "It is our goal to provide you with information and/or offers that you find relevant in your daily life. In order to do that, we would like to get to know you a little better. Can you tell us if you own a pet?"

By asking one question at a time, you have a much better chance of retrieving not only a response, but a truthful response from your listener.

From the technical standpoint, depending on how you collect and store listener data, there are a few ways to go about adding this info to your database. If you require your listeners to enter a user name and password each time they come to your site or if you use cookies, you will know who the listener is, and your system can append the new data to the listener's record.

If you have listeners re-register each time they come to your site, you

can use a system that will search the database every time they register, match up the duplicates and then combine the information.

If you don't use some type of online database tool and instead collect information via e-mail, incremental building is going to be very labor-intensive. While it can be done, it will require a lot of time and effort to get the data in, then query out the data you want. This is probably something you are not going to want to do in-house unless you have a web programmer on staff or a large budget. And if you have a good budget, you're better off investing in something more sophisticated than e-mail for this research.

## Build Profiles Through Surveys

A survey is another great tool you can use to collect additional information. If you keep the survey short — just a few questions — you will get more information from more listeners. Just like us, listeners' lives are so busy that they aren't going to take the time to answer a lot of questions unless you provide a great benefit.

I strongly recommend offering participants an incentive for answering your questions. There are two ways to go about this:

1. Enter everyone who answers the survey in a drawing for a great prize. The more questions the survey has, the larger the prize should be.

2. While the first approach may net you a number of responses, you will garner even more if you guarantee something to the listener. A great prize for something like this would be passes to a movie screening, where you can get several hundred at little or no cost. For example, the first 100 listeners to fill out the survey would get a pair of tickets. On a side note, if you want to add a TSL component, one of the questions could pertain to something they had to listen for on the air.

Above all, make sure the listener knows there's no obligation to buy anything, ever, in order to qualify. There are Internet surveys that offer attractive gift cards to major retailers to those who respond to a survey, only to reveal later that they have to subscribe to something or buy something to get the gift.

Over the past few months I've gotten various survey requests, and, as life gets more and more hectic, I'm less inclined to spend my time providing feedback or information to a company unless I can see a direct benefit for the time spent. This will be the case for many listeners as well.

## 60-Second Copywriter The Art of Understatement

By Jeffrey Hedquist

Increase the believability of your radio commercials by understating the benefits. Benefits are all the listener cares about, but they have to be realistic.

Features tend to get overblown. So much of advertising is based on hyperbole. Advertisers feel they have to promote themselves as the greatest, best, cheapest, largest, most efficient, latest, coolest and most fun. A great *New Yorker* cartoon illustrated an exasperated man yelling at his TV set during a commercial, "A quart is a quart, damn it! How can it be a big, jumbo quart?"

After hearing claims like that a few thousand times, consumers don't buy it anymore. We (and our clients) sometimes forget this. When we continue to use these adjectives, they become part of the great wave of "commerciales" that washes over us. They just blend into the background and signal the listener that there's no need to pay attention. Not exactly what we were hoping for.

So do something different. Tell the truth. Simply be more conservative in the claims you make in the commercial. You'll catch the attention of the listener and increase your client's believability. You'll tend to be more realistic in describing benefits than features because you'll be describing the effect a product or service can have on someone's life.

Ask yourself what the true benefit would be to a buyer, then talk about that benefit in realistic terms. Let's say it's a shirt. Describe how the buyer will feel having bought it.

*"We can't promise you'll turn heads or stop traffic everywhere you go, but we can say that you'll feel cozy with the soft, brushed natural cotton next to your skin, and a maybe a little more confident in this well-tailored yet rugged look."*

Or a stereo system:

*"How much can you save if you buy a new system during our grand-opening sale? Enough to buy 12 of your favorite CDs. Now that's something to listen to."*

Listeners are pretty smart. You may get more of them to respond when you underpromise and make more of them into repeat customers when you overdeliver.

*Have a question, challenge, rant or comment about radio creative? Want some feedback? Send it to Jeffrey Hedquist at Hedquist Productions, P.O. Box 1475, Fairfield, IA 52556; 641-472-6708; fax: 641-472-7400; jeffrey@hedquist.com or via www.hedquist.com.*

## Protect Their Privacy

As you collect information from your listeners, you are building your relationship with them. You need them to feel that their data is secure with you and that you aren't going to sell or give away their information to third parties (as a lot of websites do).

One key to making the listener feel secure is to have a privacy policy. In this policy you can state exactly what you are planning to do with the data. Most listeners won't actually read it, but just knowing you have a policy posted makes many feel more secure. Your privacy policy should state that you won't sell the data, but you may use it to market products or services of interest to listeners.

Offering this pledge doesn't mean that third-party offers won't come to the listener via your station, it just means you won't hand over their personal information to someone else. For those listeners who do bother to read your privacy policy, that will make them feel better about providing you with more data.

In the long run, permission mar-

keting like this is a two-way relationship. The more comfortable the listener becomes with your station, the more they'll be willing to tell you. And the more they tell you, the more they are going to want in return, whether it's information customized to them or more chances to win.

As we know from all the other marketing that we do to our listeners, establishing one-to-one relationships will help build ratings and on-air revenue. Once you have better profiles of your listeners, you can begin to carefully use your database to increase nontraditional revenue.

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