

## Target Profiling

*By German Sacristan, X1 Head of Marketing and Customer Experience, UK and author of 'The Digital & Direct Marketing Goose'*

Marketers tend to build profiles based on what they know (big data) instead of what they need to know (right data). Marketers need to ask themselves a simple question: Based on what I sell and where I sell it, what do I need to know that will help me be more relevant and helpful when communicating with my target? Then profile based on that. Just because a marketer has information about an individual, does not mean that they have to profile that person based on what they know unless it is relevant to what they sell and where they sell it. The main purpose of profiling is to have the right information about your target so you can engage them successfully. Defining first what is important to know will provide focus and will make it easier and faster for marketers to get what they need to know earlier; either from data sources or from their market place itself. It is critical to build a data collection plan that proactively and constantly searches for what marketers need to know. Data will help profile your target and classify different individuals in different groups that share similar characteristics. Once this is done is much easier to be informative, helpful and entertaining to your target.

### Define what you need to know

There are two critical questions that marketers need to ask themselves to be able to gather the appropriate information to create strong profiles of their targets that can be implemented to create a more relevant and helpful engagement.

1. What do you need to know from your target based on what you sell and where you sell it that will help you be more informative?
2. What do you need to know that will help you be more helpful and entertaining outside of the products or services that you sell?

Good sales people do it instinctively during face-to-face visits. They want to know information about the customer that is relevant to what they sell, so they are able to demonstrate their product's unique value to their customer's personal needs and/or wants. At the same time they are also interested to know their customer's personal interests so they understand the context in which s/he operates. The first kind of information is used to sell the value of the product or service, while the second is to build relationship and interest. A very simple example could be the relevance of knowing your target's gender so you can better show the value of your product depending if you are engaging males or females. In order to keep focus and build the right information and therefore profiles that relate to what you sell, I will break it into different categories:

- Personal Characteristics and Lifestyle (also called demographics, psychographics and behavioral profiles). The most typical profiles in this group are based on age, gender, income, different status (such as marital), life situations (such as having children, retired, grandparenthood), education, activities, interest and opinions. What personal characteristics and interests make your customers or potential buyers different from each other? Most of the time, a simple profile based on age, gender and income will go a long way.
- Shopping Style for when (frequency and timing), where (on and offline) and how much (purchase size) a customer or potential buyer will buy. The same as the previous point, low risk assumptions can be made based on your target's demographic information.
- Buying Criteria. Your customers buy for different reasons and therefore need to be profiled that way. Sometimes, buying criteria might be linked to your target's personal characteristics and interests. Simple demographic information about your target will often help you make low-risk assumptions about their buying criteria.
- Purchase History. Different products already owned by a customer or potential buyer that are relevant to what you sell. Sales reps have been cross- and up-selling successfully for hundreds of years. Therefore, a proper profile based on purchase history is very relevant. A marketer should make recommendations to customers and potential buyers based on prior purchases. If this is done with sensitivity and respect, suggestions can be perceived by customers as helpful instead of spam. This again speaks to relevance.
- Sale Cycles. Also profiling your customers based on sale cycles will be very helpful as you do not want to be trying to close customers when they are on the awareness stage; neither creating awareness when a customer is in the buying decision phase.

When gathering and collating information about your target's personal interests attempt to link it to products and/or incentives that you can provide. If I want to know what is my favorite customer's football team is because I have enough relevant content to share and/or be willing to provide incentives for someone interested in football.

It is also wise to analyse what you already know from your data sources so you can learn other relevant habits and/or behaviors that might contribute to shaping up your profiling even further.

*If you're interested in a personal assessment to help you improve your chances of a better direct marketing campaign ROI please contact German Sacristan on 01753 215307, or email [german@x1.ltd.uk](mailto:german@x1.ltd.uk)*