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## Target Marketing: Improving Your Aim

LORI TURNER

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A small-business owner asked me during a seminar how he should determine what his target markets are.

It's an important question, and I've run across more small-business owners than you'd think who aren't sure who they're targeting and what those prospects have in common.

Target marketing is about segmenting your prospective customers and choosing a vehicle and message with them in mind.

It's generally more efficient to attack a single segment or two at a time. This is especially true when you have a limited marketing budget.

It's important to generate enough reach (number of prospects within that segment who see/hear your message) and frequency of message (the number of times those targeted prospects hear/see your message) before expanding to additional segments.

Begin by identifying your most profitable current customers. Segment the top 10 percent.

Now think about what they have in common. What is their demographic profile? Demographic information might include age, gender, geography, education and average household income.

Sharpen the profile with psychographic traits such as values, interests, activities, attitudes and lifestyle. For instance, is your target conservative or liberal? What hobbies or causes do they pursue? Are they fun loving, environmentally minded, family oriented or cutting edge?

If you don't know your most profitable customers quite this well, don't despair. There are a few easy ways to gather this information.

A data or list broker can take contact information on your most profitable customers and "append" or add demographic and psychographic data to it. Then just look for the commonalities.

You can also survey your most profitable customers to determine their habits and preferences.

Once you have the profile, you'll have a much better idea of the marketing channel and message combination that will appeal most

Take the example of an investigative services firm that determined divorce lawyers were its most profitable client segment. Instead of cold calling law offices or mass mailing, the firm created its own targeted referral program.

Firm staff went to the courthouse library and slipped business cards into law books that were most likely to be used by divorce attorneys. A steady stream of divorce lawyers using the books saw the cards and assumed other attorneys used the firm. The tactic implied third-party credibility and generated more calls than the firm could handle.

In the words of Henry David Thoreau, "In the long run, men hit only what they aim to." Why not make it a profitable prospect?

*Lori Turner is a managing partner at RedRover Sales & Marketing, [www.redrovercompany.com](http://www.redrovercompany.com).*



Lori Turner

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MORTGAGES	120	331	8,263
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BANKRUPTCIES	61	283	7,175
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