

Using the NextMark List Search System in A Database Marketing Course

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April, 2004

I use the NextMark system to amplify student learning with regard to list procurement, evaluation, and selection. Specifically I use the system in conjunction with a case we study called “The Independent Adviser for Vanguard Investors”¹ The case portrays the situation where a manager is confronted with a set of available lists and must decide which one(s) to select for a customer acquisition campaign. The case is very useful for illustrating the role of customer lifetime value in list selection. However, the natural question is, “Where do these lists come from in the first place?” The NextMark system answers that question and several more.

The students use the system to identify potential lists that could be used by Vanguard management for customer acquisition. Students enter the NextMark system and use its search functions. The experience helps students learn about the following:

- *The number and variety of lists available:* Students are not generally aware of the extensiveness of the industry and how specifically one can identify lists. They are strongly impressed with the number of lists available under the heading “financial newsletter” or “investor newsletter subscribers.” The appreciation students gain for the size, breadth, and depth of the list industry is indispensable and using the NextMark system is ideal for developing this appreciation.
- *Criteria for selecting lists:* Using the NextMark system encourages students to identify criteria for identifying lists, including match to target group, cost-per-thousand, segmenting capabilities, and merge-purge percentages.
- *How the list industry is organized:* The students’ NextMark experience sets the stage nicely for a discussion of the industry and helps them to appreciate the roles of brokers and list managers.
- *The capabilities of an online search engine:* Students learn firsthand how easily a search engine can help them identify appropriate lists. NextMark sets a standard for them on the specificity and number of lists that can be identified for customer acquisition campaigns.

In summary, the NextMark system introduces students to the *real world* of list evaluation and selection. It gives them the experience to go along with the knowledge they need to deal with a list management problem when they run into it on the job.

¹ Case UVA-M-0451, prepared by Professor Phillip E. Pfeifer, Darden School, University of Virginia. The case is available from the Darden School.