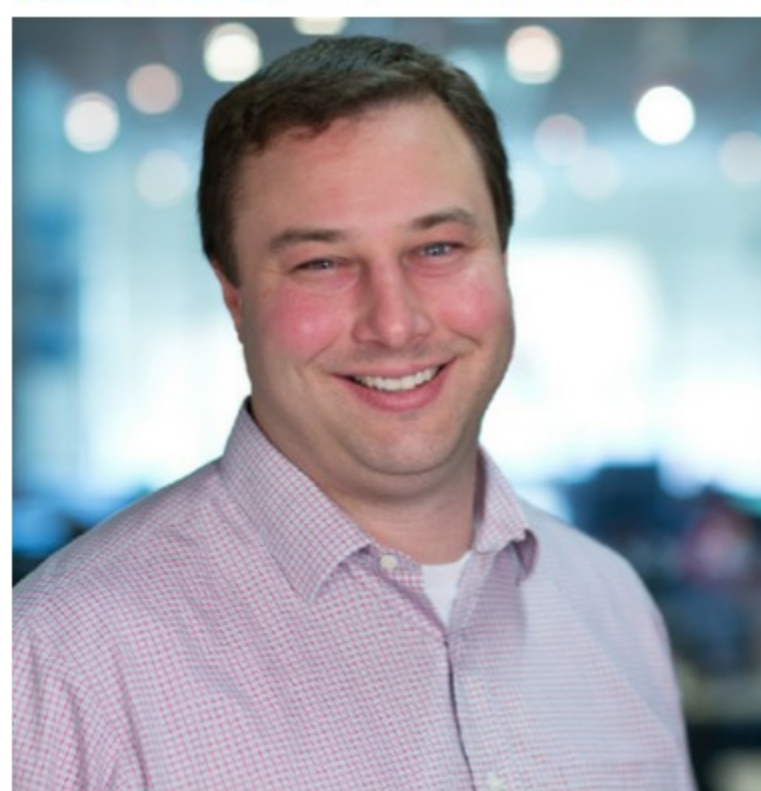


Stop! Before You Delete Your HubSpot Leads, Do This First

POSTED BY NICK SALVATORIELLO

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"Every person in your database has value; you need to determine what that value is."

MIKE VOLPE
Angel investor and former HubSpot CMO

Every time you check your HubSpot contact database, it seems the number creeps higher and higher. You're closing in on your limit (**1,000 for Pro, 10,000 for Enterprise**). Your HubSpot rep is contacting you about upgrading your subscription — which, of course, means paying more.

Time to get rid of the dead weight. What do you need all those contacts for, anyway? All they're doing is costing you money, right?

Actually, no.

An indiscriminate liquidation of your contacts database may be satisfying. And it may indeed keep you below a costlier tier of HubSpot pricing. But we've learned from experience helping hundreds of inbound marketers that, in the long run, deleting contacts also means deleting money.

That is, if you know what to do with them, **almost every contact is worth something.**

"Every person in your database has value; you need to determine what that value is."

-Mike Volpe, Former HubSpot CMO

Fight the Urge to Purge Those Contacts Right Away

I understand why a ballooning contacts database may make you nervous. For many HubSpot users, the size of the contacts database goes hand in hand with disorganization. And nobody likes a mess.

But here's the upside of that overflowing heap of contacts: It's what all your inbound marketing efforts — the reason you invested in HubSpot in the first place — have been about. **A growing contacts database means you're doing something right!**

So congratulations! Reaching another tier in HubSpot pricing isn't a punishment. It's a reason to celebrate — and to double down your inbound marketing efforts to make the most of your hard-earned contacts.

Of course, there's still the matter of the mess in your database. But that can be cleaned up. **Don't slash it; optimize it!**

What Is an Optimized Contacts Database?

As inbound marketers, we believe that every contact should be valued — because contacts are people. We don't just delete people. We try to understand them and what we have to offer them.

So:

An optimized database is one in which every contact is valued and qualified.

By "qualified," I don't mean "ready for a phone call with sales." I mean dividing your contacts database into "buckets" based on how each contact has engaged with your organization. You can then market to these different buckets based on what you know about them and their value.

Here are five suggestions for buckets that will get your unwieldy contacts database under control. I guarantee there is not a single contact in your database that won't qualify to fall into one of these.

Bucket 1: Fans

Who goes in this bucket?

Fans are **subscribers**. They're people who have downloaded and shared your ebooks. They've liked your business on Facebook or followed you on Twitter. These are the contacts who like, share and comment on your content or at least have the potential to do so.

Fans may not necessarily be in your target region, or even your industry. But that doesn't matter. What's important is **they like what you have to say, they're paying attention, and they're coming back for more.**

Why are they valuable?

Fans are contacts that have shown potential to be your brand's promoters, your ambassadors.

When someone visits your Facebook page, they won't care (or know) that half your likes come from outside your target market. They'll just want to know that your organization is noteworthy and active enough to have built up a decent following online.

When someone reads one of your blog posts, it won't register that many of the contacts commenting on your posts may never be qualified to buy from you. They'll just be intrigued you sparked a conversation with other people interested in the topic.

Fans help you sell. The web of human connection is complex, especially now, with the internet and social media bringing people together from far-flung regions and backgrounds. You never know when a retiree in Houston will connect you to an office manager in Chicago whose company is just right for your product.

We found this happened at HubSpot all the time:

"Even for those contacts in Hubspot's database who would never make good sales targets, Mike's team found a way to leverage their love for the brand. He would segment them specifically, sending messages that asked them to share new content to fuel social media buzz."

Bucket 2: Churned Contacts

Who goes in this bucket?

Churned contacts are duplicates. They're emails that have bounced or people who have unsubscribed. **They don't count against your HubSpot limits.**

But churned contacts are more important for what they're not: They're not people who you haven't emailed in a while, or people who haven't opened an email in a while. Unless they've unsubscribed, they haven't churned. **You still have a chance to re-engage them.**

Why are they valuable?

There are always going to be a handful of contacts in your database that genuinely don't belong there. It's important to clean out the duplicates and wrong email addresses so you can focus on the actual human beings.

Bucket 3: Leads

Who goes in this bucket?

"Leads" and "contacts" are not interchangeable terms. Leads are the people in your target market. They're the ones dealing with the problems you can solve. They're the people who could ultimately end up buying something from you.

This bucket might be smaller than the first two, because your sales and marketing team should constantly be pursuing these contacts and qualifying them to move forward in the sales process or into one of the other buckets.

Why are they valuable?

Need I say more? **If you have leads in your contact database and you don't have a plan for engaging with them, get cracking!** Leads are the contacts that can most directly lead to sales.

Bucket 4: Customers

Who goes in this bucket?

If someone has purchased from you before, they're a customer.

Why are they valuable?

The relationship between business and customer doesn't end at the point of sale. As HubSpot so often points out, when existing customers continue to be **delighted**, they become **opportunities to cross-sell and upsell.**

Not only that, but they're enthusiastic fans of yours, eager to refer you to their contacts, engage with others in your comments section, and write glowing online reviews.

Bucket 5: Primed for Engagement

Who goes in this bucket?

This is everybody else who doesn't fit into one of the buckets above. This will probably be your largest bucket. These are people who likely haven't engaged with your business in a very long time, if at all. But they are still hanging around. This means we need to show them that they're valued, and we need to qualify them through a thoughtful engagement strategy.

Why are they valuable?

Now that you've reached a higher tier of HubSpot user, it's time to start taking a dent out of your "primed for engagement" bucket — **not by deleting contacts, but by setting up inbound campaigns to engage with them.** Chances are, with the right campaign, you can move many of them into another bucket, if not as leads or customers, then at least as fans.

And if they do churn, you will have given them the opportunity to make that choice for themselves. As an inbound marketer, you owe them that much.

What Now?

By segmenting your contacts into buckets, you've turned your chaotic HubSpot database into a well-ordered growth opportunity. Now how do you actually engage these people?

Depending on the bucket, there are a few different approaches you could take. I would start with an audit of all your content, **making sure you have content that aligns with every stage in the buyer's journey for each bucket.**

HubSpot Academy also provides a **step-by-step email re-engagement project**, perfect for those in your "primed for engagement" bucket.

I'll be discussing more engagement strategies that work on an optimized database when I **speak at Inbound 2016** on Wednesday, Nov. 9. My talk is titled "Chaos Under Control: How to Organize a Messy Contacts Database to Market More Effectively."

I'm looking forward to it. I hope to see you there!

What do you think? Is there any good reason to delete contacts from your HubSpot database? How do you get a messy database under control? Share your tips in the comments section below.