



CRM, DATA QUALITY & THE SINGLE CUSTOMER VIEW

Whitepaper



Many businesses are hoping to move towards the utopian vision of the single customer view - the point where each customer is represented by a single instance in a database. The single customer view should, in theory, place the customer at the core of the business. Every other activity the business undertakes should radiate from the central hub of trusted customer data

Put simply, the single customer view literally and figuratively places the customer at the heart of everything. It makes the customer the number one priority and aligns all operations to operate at optimal profitability.

When well organized and implemented, the single customer view helps to retain existing customers and attract new ones. The database props up the entire marketing, sales and support lifecycle. It also makes employees' lives easier as the customer develops their relationship with the brand. Marketing teams have access to high quality mailing lists, and customer service teams can confidently use the data in their dealings with existing customers. Everything hinges on the data, and the data steers the business as it grows.

How Does a CRM Fit In?

Automating bad practice can even exacerbate the problem, and the facts that 42 per cent of CRM installations fail due to poor data quality, and the number one reason for lack of user adoption is a lack of trust in the data. Any CRM system could eventually become more of a hindrance than a useful tool.

The success of a CRM system is not dependent on its size, cost or complexity, whilst they are important success factors, the quality of data poured into and managed in your CRM is the one thing that could bring the project to its knees.

Put simply, the success of a CRM system is, more than any other success factor, contingent on the quality of the data it holds.

Following that logic, a very simple CRM can be phenomenally effective if it's maintained to a high standard, simply because the data within the CRM will be more useful. Conversely, a large, expensive and complex CRM can crumble when the data is allowed to go out of date.

We've alluded to the concept of data quality, but what do we mean by data quality in the CRM? Let's break it down and look at some of the obvious problems that can cause data to decay:

- In order to accept the CRM as the virtual 'brain' behind the business, staff must accept and invest effort in maintaining and improving the CRM data,
- All staff must use it consistently and diligently leading to- through their shared efforts - greater trust in the data
- By placing a CRM system at the heart of the business, the business needs to be ready to accept that some refocusing will be required. If the customer is at the centre of everything, some adjustment may be required.
- CRM software can only support a process if the process already exists. Simply installing the software will not automatically fix any broken workflows that staff are already using, and there may be a need for additional training or a change to established ways of working.

But in addition to these obvious problems, the quality of data simply diminishes over time. Any business retaining information about organizations or people must understand that things change and the data held about them must be nurtured if it is to reflect a single version of the truth.

In some cases, the customer requests changes the business must process. In other cases, the changes are not so obvious, people: marry, separate, move and die whilst businesses: move, change names, merge, go out of business and employees: join, leave, change roles and levels. All of these require proactive intervention which is where data quality tools can help.

How to Resolve Data Quality Problems in CRMs

Most businesses won't have the time or money to continually monitor all data to ensure it's 100 per cent accurate. Monitoring data quality is rarely the most important demand on resources, and that's perfectly understandable. But responsible businesses invest a reasonable amount of time and money in obtaining higher quality data.

- Once key employees admit that they have a data quality problem, they've taken the most significant step towards solving it. However, the staff most affected by poor data - such as marketing teams, or technical support staff often don't have the power to effect change.
- In order to take the matter forward, management must be engaged and finances must be secured, however modest those resources may be. Identifying quick wins will ensure the greatest impact.

The best way to quickly resolve problems in a CRM is to use a software tool for the job, such as a data deduplication, a matching solution or a data quality plugin for the CRM system. These tools can:

- Find and correct duplicate records across the entire CRM
- Correct addresses that have changed or have been misspelled, using postal authority reference data from around the world.
- Scan the CRM and identify records which have been marked as 'gone away'
- Identify records associated with people who have passed away
- Identify records where individuals have opted out of receiving marketing communications
- Introduce logic that prevents duplicate records from being entered in the future

The Data Quality Prize

Businesses that invest in improving the quality of their data are rewarded through the entire business lifecycle.

They are better shielded from penalties under the Data Protection Act. Waste is reduced, mailing costs lowered, staff morale raised and greater trust is developed between customers and the business.

When high quality data is valued, businesses take the opportunity to continuously improve their data management processes so a virtuous cycle feeds ever better data back into the CRM, thus making poor data quality less of a problem. And for the customer, the benefits are clear: fewer duplicate mailings, no unwanted marketing contact, and an established relationship with a business or brand that they feel they can trust with their data. As a result, the business gains a better reputation on social media and among the valued - and valuable - customers it wants to retain.

Can we help you?

We have been working with customer data and developing our data quality software for over 25 years now. Whether you are working with 1,000 records or many millions of records, we understand the challenges companies face when importing, deduping, cross matching and merging data. We will work with you to understand your data quality challenges and together we will improve the quality of your data allowing you to make better informed business decisions.

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