How data profiling can help to keep your database fresh

By Louise Robinson

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Having an updated database that contains the names and contact details of both existing customers and prospective clients is one of the most vital marketing tools for a company of any size.

No matter what type of industry you're in, your clients and business partners are definitely one of the most important assets your company will ever have.

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Identify your target market

You can have the most amazing product or service, but if no one is buying it, your business will go under. Once you have a database consisting of contacts in your target market, you'll be able to get the message about your company out there and start making sales.

After you have identified your target market and built up a client database, it is crucial to maintain it. US-based business-to-business marketing research and analysis firm SiriusDecisions estimates that 2 to 3% of a marketing database goes bad every month. This can be due to any number of reasons - the person you had on there as a prospective or existing lead could have left their job, relocated, or may have been promoted or moved to a different division.

SiriusDecisions also estimates that it costs about $1 to clean a record before it enters the database, but if the incorrect information is entered into the database and remains there over the course of a year, it can cost as much as $100 to fix it.

Data profiling is a fast and efficient way to weed out any potential "bad", duplicate, incomplete, or outdated information on your database. Data profiling is, to simplify and summarise, a method in which database information and statistics are analysed in order to identify any discrepancies or problems, such as how complete the fields are, how many entries are null, how many are missing, duplicate, and so on.

Profiling

An article published by ITbusinessedge.com cited a real-life example to illustrate some of the problems in a database that can be identified by way of data profiling. An independent data quality consultant was performing data profiling for an insurance company and stumbled upon some strange trends on the date of birth field.

He noticed that the customers in the database tended to be born on January 1, February 2, March 3, April 4, May 5 and so on. Upon further investigation, it was found that the date of birth was a required field on an insurance application, but many applicants didn't feel the need to provide it. However, since the data entry clerks were being paid based on how many applications they could process per hour, they simply made up information whenever they found required fields that had been left blank.

When you have too much incorrect information cluttering up the space in your database, it equates to a lack of enough good data. Productivity also suffers, because it means that your telemarketers and sales team's time is wasted when they are faced with incorrect information on the database while trying to make their appointment setting calls.

To ensure that your database remains up to date, outsource the creation and maintenance of it to a reputable consultancy.

ABOUT LOUISE ROBINSON

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