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Get Data Smart

From KAOS to CONTROL

Article appeared in New Zealand Marketing Association Member Magazine, DLB, Issue 68, September/October 2007. Copy reproduced with permission of DLB.

Many organisations analysing the quality of their address data have been forced to examine how well their existing systems will cope with the upgrades to address formats required by recent changes within the postal system.

Over the past twelve months Acxiom has worked with many companies across New Zealand, assisting them with their customer data quality in preparation for obtaining a valid Statement of Accuracy (SOA) for compliance with New Zealand Post's SendRight programme by the July 1st 2008 deadline. In the course of these projects it has become evident that good customer data quality presents larger and more strategic considerations and opportunities for most organisations than simply obtaining bulk mail postal discounts.

Acxiom has witnessed a number of approaches to SendRight compliance and data maintenance, and a number of useful tips have been adopted by those customers who are now well advanced in their efforts to improve the overall quality of their customer data.

Develop clear project objectives.

Prior to embarking upon a major IT project, SendRight or otherwise, it is important to ensure that you have clearly defined your project's scope and business outcomes. Critically you need to determine:

- If the scope will be limited to address data, or if you will embark upon a more comprehensive review of your customer data
- Which IT systems, customer databases and business processes will be impacted by the project

A project such as SendRight creates the opportunity to undertake a broader review of your overall customer data management. It is estimated that between two and three percent of records in a customer database change each month; your customers have busy lives, and will consistently move house or jobs, marry, divorce, and change their phone numbers and other contact details. The many benefits of enhancing the quality of your customer data, beyond obtaining mailing discounts, include:

- Less waste of valuable business resources
- Improved campaign targeting and maximised opportunities
- Improved customer recognition, interaction and satisfaction

Assess your current data quality and system impact.

Gain real insight into the current quality of your data, and the capacities and limitations of your operational marketing systems and processes. This is vital to your determination of the scale, probable cost and likely timeframes of your project, as well as the potential benefits of broadening the scope of your project

beyond compliance. However, be wary of underestimating the business impact of something as seemingly straightforward as updating customer addresses.

For example:

- How will new address information be captured at point of entry, and will it be in the correct format?
- Will your existing database model accept the number of lines and characters required for new address formats?
- Where will you store the Delivery Point Identification (DPID) codes and associated error and change codes?
- How will you deal with unverified records?
- What procedures been put in place for any validation rules within your database and do they conform to the new standards?

Find the Right Partner.

The New Zealand market now has several established data management services companies, able to provide you with valuable advice, SendRight accredited software and services as you implement your customer data quality solutions. Many of these organisations can provide additional data and data management solutions to deliver higher data quality and the related business benefits to your organisation. Choosing the right business partner will largely depend on your specific business needs.

Graham Sergent is the Country Manger for Acxiom New Zealand. One of the first companies to be SendRight accredited, Acxiom is certified to provide companies with a Statement of Accuracy on their customer data.