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CRM Strategy: Keeping Your Contained Data Clean

Keeping Your Data Clean for Your CRM Strategy

The data your company collects is one of your organization's most valuable assets. It forms the backbone of your [customer relationship management \(CRM\) strategy](#). When properly leveraged, your data can provide actionable insights that can help improve every aspect of your business, helping it run more efficiently and effectively.

What you may not realize is that the data you've gathered isn't always accurate. In fact, data can become outdated over time. It's estimated that 20 to 30 percent of collected data goes bad every year. Additionally, up to 25 percent of all databases contain errors that result in inaccurate metrics. This means that over half of your data could be inaccurate!

Fortunately, there's an easy solution to this issue: regularly cleaning your data.

Why It's Important to Keep Your Data Clean

Before diving into the process of cleaning your data, it's important to understand why maintaining a clean database matters. Here are some key reasons to prioritize clean data:

- **Ensure Data Accuracy:** Over time, data naturally becomes less accurate. A lead's contact information, preferences, or status could change after a few years. Cleaning your data helps remove outdated, inaccurate, and duplicate records, keeping your CRM's information reliable and up-to-date.
- **Maintain Your Reputation:** If your data isn't accurate, it can become difficult to communicate with your leads. If your customer preferences and interaction histories are incorrect, it can lead to misdirected emails, duplicate messages, and irrelevant content reaching your customers, eroding trust and hurting your reputation.
- **Provide Accurate Analysis:** Analyzing inaccurate data results in misleading insights. Duplicate or outdated records can inflate your pipeline and make revenue forecasts appear stronger than they are. This may cause leadership to implement strategies based on overstated projections, leading to misallocated resources.
- **Accelerate Your Lead Conversion:** Accurate data helps your sales team improve conversions by identifying qualified leads and engaging them more effectively.
- **Improve Customer Satisfaction:** Reliable data allows your team to use accurate customer histories. As a result, they don't have to ask customers to repeat information

they've already provided. This enables more personalized and relevant engagement, creating a better experience.

- **Improve Forecasting Capabilities:** Accurate data helps your team identify trends and forecast the success of marketing and sales strategies more reliably. The clearer your data, the better your insights into potential opportunities will be.
- **Improve Email Marketing Deliverability:** When your data is accurate, you can segment your audience more effectively and create content that resonates with their needs, increasing the success of your email marketing campaigns.

Steps Toward Maintaining a Clean CRM

Now that you understand why cleaning your data is so important to your organization's success, the following are the steps you should take to begin the data cleaning process:

Use Your CRM's Built-In Deduplicator

Odds are your company uses more than one channel to generate leads and engage customers. As such, there's always going to be a chance that you're collecting duplicate information, meaning you may have more than one profile of the same customer in your database.

Most top-of-the-line CRMs, such as HubSpot CRM and Salesforce, include built-in deduplication tools that can scan your database for duplicate records, which can then be merged or removed.

Use Email Validation Tools

Some users submit fake email addresses, others have inactive accounts, and some may simply ignore your emails. These issues can cause deliverability problems and skew your analytics. By validating your email list and removing invalid addresses, you ensure your campaigns reach real, engaged recipients.

[Email validation tools](#) (also known as email verification tools) help keep your [email list current](#), providing accurate data that supports reliable marketing metrics and insights.

Follow a Set of Rules for Lists, Tags, and Fields

Be sure to establish consistent naming conventions for your lists, tags, and fields. Doing so will prevent duplicate or miscategorized data. When data from all of your sources is clearly labeled and organized, your CRM will remain accurate, searchable, and easy to manage.

Routinely Purge or Clear Out Inactive or Useless Contacts

[Removing outdated contacts from your CRM](#) is just as important as removing inactive email addresses from your email list. You may have leads who turned out to be dead ends, customers who have switched brands, or customers who no longer need your products or services.

Periodically purge contacts like these so your marketing and sales personnel don't waste time on them and your analytics aren't affected by their inactivity.

Run Frequent Re-Engagement Campaigns to Keep Lists Warm

The last thing you want to do is to accidentally remove contacts that still have value. [Running a re-engagement](#) campaign before you purge your contacts lets you see whether they're still engaged with your brand, keeping your database clean without losing potential opportunities.

Specify "Fallbacks" for Any Field Which May Be Used for Personalization

If you have multiple channels to engage leads, you'll eventually end up with multiple sources for the same data. For example, you may have the name of a contact from both a chat conversation and a form they filled out. Because of this, you should define a fallback strategy that determines which source to prioritize to ensure the most accurate, up-to-date information.

Fallbacks can be either time-based (using the most recent data) or source-based (prioritizing the most reliable sources). By setting fallbacks for each field, you maintain consistency and improve the effectiveness of your personalized communications.

Use Unique Identifier Fields to Avoid Duplications

While removing duplicates is crucial, preventing them from happening in the first place makes database management much easier. When multiple lead sources and users interact with your CRM, duplication can occur quickly. To avoid duplicates, [assign a "unique" field](#)—such as an email address—for each record. Doing so ensures the system recognizes it as a single entity, avoiding duplicate contacts.

For example, you could designate a lead's email address as the unique identifier. This ensures the CRM cannot create a second record with the same email.

Make Sure Data Entry Expectations Are Clear

Finally, everyone responsible for data entry in your organization should understand the importance of keeping your data clean. Train your team for entering data accurately and avoiding duplication. Individual data entry mistakes can be easily eliminated by simply communicating your expectations.

Clean and Accurate Data Is the Foundation for Growth

Your CRM data can be an incredibly valuable asset for nurturing leads and engaging customers, but its value depends on its accuracy. Inaccurate data is not only useless, it can also harm your marketing, sales, and customer service efforts.

Taking the extra effort to clean your data and prevent errors or duplications, also called [data hygiene](#), is critical. Accurate, up-to-date data helps you spot problems and opportunities across your business processes. It prevents poor decisions that waste time and resources, improves forecasting and planning, and strengthens your ability to engage with leads and customers.