



Data Care – A Necessity, Not an Option!

Times are changing: demand markets are replacing supplier markets, and customers are becoming increasingly important and want to be treated like individuals. Successful companies are therefore putting the customer center stage.

These efforts aim at establishing and/or expanding long-term, profitable business relationships between the company and the customer. Because it often takes several years to make a profit after acquiring new customers, it only makes sense to invest more in the existing customer base. What is needed is a coherent management of customer data in all levels of communication. This is the only means of recognizing and analyzing customer potential and of developing positive measures and strategies that allow an integrated view of the customer and enable individual customer treatment.

Customer data, the measure of all things

With increased customer orientation, customer data develops into a decisive link for all relationship structures in a company with regard to its customers. No question about it – customer data quality and the continual monitoring to achieve and ensure it are an important success factor. The database must be correct, redundant-free, complete and up-to-date! Sounds easy, but this is far more complex than often imagined.

What's all this about?

Customer data records are filed in various systems. Everyday they reach the company via the most diverse channels, and they are used in a variety of ways. How good these records are is another story. This fact was often neglected or not recognized in the past, or worse still, was even swept under the carpet. The negative consequences: countless CRM projects were either a failure or did not achieve the expected success.

Spinning straw into gold?

If marketing databases, data warehousing, business intelligence, CRM projects or data mining initiatives deliver unsatisfactory data quality, the results cannot be trusted either for analytical conclusions or in operative use. Not to mention getting a satisfactory return on investment (ROI). No one can spin straw into gold like in the fairy tale. But to get maximum data quality from poor customer data and to continually monitor and ensure this quality – that is possible.

Since data is a strategic commodity in today's information society, data quality may not be understood as 'optional'. Every information system is only as good as the data it contains.

Effort that pays off

The management of customer data should be understood as a multistage process covering the following functionalities:

- Data standardization
- Data verification
- Data matching
- Data consolidation
- Data enhancement
- Data integration

Addresses consist of a multitude of individual elements. Therefore they often pose special problems. Sometimes the capitalization is incorrect. Sometimes a name, title or nobility title is written out, sometimes not; in the next case it is abbreviated incorrectly. Sometimes address components are entered into the wrong fields or legal regulations are not complied with. That is why creating a uniform standard for customer data is a first priority and the first step. ►

Additional Information



Old, incorrect or simply not there

To achieve the best data quality, all relevant databases and all new address information have to undergo postal validation. Unclean postal addresses have an intrinsic negative potential that directly affects all communication processes and enterprise-wide actions in which address data is retrieved or used. In large customer and prospect databases, defects in data are caused to a high percentage by false, missing or outdated postal information. These are among the most frequent direct or indirect causes of problems – with momentous consequences.

Doubled up side by side

Often several data sources exist alongside each other within one and the same company. They contain information which is not seldom redundant and which, in addition, differs in data record layout and structure and in the address quality. Unnoticed, a great many duplicate records are created, and the data duplicates have an extremely negative effect. Aside from the entirely unnecessary cost factor, the redundant addresses cause the customer/prospect to be confronted with the same request or query more than one time. The company loses credibility in direct dialog with the customer and as a consequence, the relationship with the customer/prospect loses stability.

Consolidation is the trump card

However, customers and prospects must be able to be reliably identified even in real time: first, in order to recognize and assess an existing relationship during the actual contact and second, to prevent duplicates from arising through the repeated entry of records for the same customer.

An important prerequisite for obtaining a single view of the customer is to import the data content from different systems into a common database and to make the content available enterprise-wide in a common data source. This must then be maintained consistently. Consolidating the data in this manner is an important prerequisite for integrated business processes.

Good is often not good enough.

To design your CRM to fit your individual needs you require additional and more profound, differentiated and comprehensive information to supplement existing data. Examples for this are geo-based and socio-demographic data or market and risk information to increase the value of existing data. Enterprise-wide integration of all customer information is what makes a single view of the customer possible. It enables full exploitation of the data, creates maximum transparency of all business activities and provides a uniform platform to support all decision-making and operative processes.

Continual process

Data quality should be understood not as a one-time measure but rather as a continual process. That is why processes which meet the requirement for sustainability and continuity should be established.

After the existing data records have been cleaned in a batch process, it is vital to maintain the quality that has been achieved. For this reason, the data quality should be continually ensured in real time in all areas of the company and in all applications in which address and customer data records are entered and processed. With the integration of data quality solutions from Uniserv, this goal can consequently be reached. The results are available when needed: The customer moves further into the spotlight and the way is open for value creation. ■

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