



"Addresses are Subject to an Ageing Process"

Uniserv CEO: Information must be regularly brought up-to-date

The issue of the quality of address data is still ignored in many companies, reports Roland Pfeiffer, CEO of Uniserv. Central address databases are the exception.

What is the ideal process for the administration and update of address data?

We suggest five steps for the management of address data. First of all, companies should make a detailed analysis of their data and processes in which addresses are used: What is the situation of the quality and how can it be improved? The second step concerns the implementation of measures for improvement. In addition to a tool-supported initial cleanup, tools for the subsequent steps in the address management process are usually integrated here. Organizational measures often come in addition.

Can you give an example of an organizational measure?

This could be the training of employees who enter addresses. If a company works a great deal with international addresses, these people have to know e.g. what a French address usually looks like and how it differs from a German one. The organizational sphere also includes activities which serve to sensitize the employees to the issue of data quality.

Why are the tools implemented in the second step needed in the process sequence?

After the address information database has been thoroughly cleansed in the third step, it is important to ensure that in future the data quality is secured during data entry. For this, maintenance tools must be integrated in the operative systems in which address data is processed. These ensure that no new addresses can enter the system and that existing ones cannot be changed without specified checks or verifications.

So databases are cleaned up and only correct addresses enter the system. Is that enough?

Many companies think so - and are acting under an erroneous belief, because address data is subject to an ageing process: People move house, post-codes change, and much more besides. Customers do not necessarily provide this information. A fifth step is therefore required to keep the data up-to-date. In this respect, we talk jokingly about anti-ageing techniques. The fourth and fifth steps should therefore form a closed circuit.



Roland Pfeiffer has been CEO of Uniserv, a supplier of software for address management and data quality, since 1996. He started his career at the company as a developer. Although Uniserv also offers outsourcing, Pfeiffer recommends this only for sub-processes. According to him, it is not good policy to outsource active data maintenance. This includes direct online checks during the address acquisition.

You have described the ideal process. What does it look like in practice?

It is an exception to the rule if it is seamlessly implemented. This also applies to central address databases. Companies often have several systems in which addresses are administered. And the position is not the same everywhere. While all the steps have been excellently implemented at some locations, nothing has been done at others.

What errors have you noticed?

Many companies think that they can get the issue of address data quality under control either with batch processes or with online processes. This is a mistake. Both are needed if everything is to run smoothly. ■

Additional Information