
The Data Cleansing Dilemma

B2B marketing's ongoing chore.

Marketing Data Cleansing is Essential — But Complicated

House cleaning isn't fun. Worse, it's an ongoing chore. But it's something everyone must do on a regular basis to have a healthy and safe home environment. Cleansing your marketing database is a similar challenge. It's a burdensome task that never ends—and it's something you always need to plan for in your marketing operations budget and schedule.

In times of economic uncertainty, it's even more challenging to maintain a database of accurate and marketable contacts. With budget cuts rampant, you may not have the staff or resources to support the task of manual data cleansing.

Yet you can't afford not to keep your data clean. According to a recent Demand Metric study, **52% of B2B marketers said data quality has prevented completion of between one and more than five business initiatives.**

And marketers admit their own efforts to fix the problem are falling short:

- 91% of marketers said they're taking some actions to improve their data.
- Yet 95% still have issues with data that's missing or incomplete, duplicated, invalid, or expired.

Specialized problems require specialized tools to solve them. You wouldn't tackle mold on your bathroom tile with your dust cloth. The same goes for database cleansing. You may be reluctant to consider specialty data tools because they require an up-front investment — and because you don't relish the idea of adding another layer to your tech stack. But the right tool can provide an immediate return on investment: the added efficiency of the right data technology can make this the most practical, economical investment in the long run.

A large, bold, blue graphic of the number '70%' is positioned on the right side of the page. A thin blue line curves from the top right towards the percentage sign, and a thin green line curves from the bottom right towards the percentage sign.

of marketers report their biggest marketing automation challenge today is data quality.

Demand Gen Report

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of B2B marketers have high confidence in the accuracy of their data.

Forrester

Changes in B2B Buyer Behavior Intensify the Data Cleaning Issue

B2B marketing operations professionals are coping with significant changes in buying behavior that are creating larger data sets and increasing the data cleansing challenges. The way B2B purchases are made is shifting — instead of individuals, larger groups of buyers within organizations are making B2B purchases, and they're using more channels to conduct research before they decide. Consider these recent changes in buyer behavior:

- **Buying groups.** An increasing number of buyers are involved in B2B purchase decisions. Recent Gartner research shows that the average buying group consists of 12-18 individuals.
- **Touch points.** The number of buying interactions needed to complete a single buyer's journey has grown to an average of 27 interactions per member of a buying group.
- **Channels.** B2B buyers now regularly use ten or more channels to interact with suppliers. 60% of B2B buyers are now seeking purchase information from third-party sources.
- **Time with sales.** B2B sales reps have roughly 5% of a customer's time during a B2B buying journey. And 70% of B2B buyers have fully defined their purchase needs before engaging with sales.
- **Purchase cycles.** With the increase in buying participants – and economic concerns – the purchase decision process is taking longer. Forrester reports that 32% of purchases now take four months or longer to complete.

All this means that marketing teams are now responsible for a larger, more complex, and lengthier buying process with more channels, more touch points, and more buyers to engage. Which leads directly to a higher volume of increasingly complex data for marketing operations to manage.

80%

of buying decisions are made by a buying group of more than three people.

Forrester

27

the average number of buying interactions during the purchase process - up from 17 in 2019

Forrester

Why Clean Data Matters

Clean data is the lifeblood of all B2B marketing activity and the foundation for effective go-to-market segmentation, target account list development, messaging, tactic execution, and measurement. That's why it's essential to keep your data accurate, current, and complete. Having clean data yields many benefits:

- **Better precision.** With clean data, you'll gain a better understanding of personas and be able to create content that speaks directly to them on the channels they prefer.
- **Greater productivity.** When contact information is accurate and up to date, you'll be able to carry out marketing activities with greater efficiency.
- **Improved results tracking.** If you start with a clean database, you're in a much better position to gather accurate data about the success of your campaigns — driving more precise and productive future marketing efforts.

On the other side, what are the negative effects of “bad” (inaccurate, duplicated, or incorrect) data?

- **Wastes marketing resources.** Without good data, marketing campaigns lack direction and will have lower success rates.
- **Prevents buyer understanding.** Inaccurate data prevents you from recognizing buying signals and makes it difficult to identify buying group members.
- **Impedes cross-channel marketing and nurturing.** Successful cross-channel marketing requires accurate information about your buyers — what their role is, how to contact them, and where they like to do their research.
- **Hurts the marketing/sales relationship.** When you fail to supply sales teams with marketable leads, their success is hindered, and they become (understandably) frustrated.

As a best practice, a benchmark for defining clean data is an **80 percent marketable database**. This is a tangible goal to aim for in your data cleansing efforts.



92%

of B2B marketers are challenged by inaccurate or incomplete data on accounts.

Demand Gen Report



90%

of B2B marketers struggle with inaccurate or incomplete data on buyers.

Demand Gen Report

What are the Elements of Clean Data?

Clean data is marketing data that is current, relevant, and complete. You don't need to reach perfection in your data cleansing efforts (no one does), but strive to ensure your marketing data is:

- **Marketable.** Marketable leads are opted-in and organized in the correct account, persona, geographical region, and buying group.
- **Complete.** All required information (e.g., name, title, email, etc.) is available for each contact.
- **Valid.** All contact information is current and accurate.
- **Standardized.** Data is in a standard format that can easily be imported and exported and automatically transferred to other internal systems.
- **Compliant.** Data gathering and marketing practices comply with government regulations, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), if applicable.
- **Non-duplicative.** Data contains no duplicate records or contact information.

Maintaining a clean database gives you the power to identify key players in buying groups, recognize new buying signals, and respond promptly and with precision — resulting in more wins.

37%

of marketers can't track activity between specific buyer stages because their "data is a mess"

Demand Gen Report

95%

of marketers still have issues with data that is missing or incomplete, duplicated, invalid, or expired.

Demand Metric

What Approaches Exist for Data Cleansing?

B2B marketers have several options to consider as they tackle data cleansing. The most common of these include:

- **Manual clean-up before importing:** A common practice is combing through data spreadsheets before importing them into your marketing automation platform (MAP). But scanning the data manually for obvious errors, duplicate data, and formatting issues is slow and prone to human error.
- **Cleaning after importing:** Marketers often clean data after importing it into their system. This can be done manually or using specialty applications. But cleansing data after it's imported is hard as it's been shared across multiple systems (MAP, CRM, etc.), making it tough to correct errors. Some companies use data controls on forms, list upload rules, or application validations to address data cleansing at the upload stage.
- **Third-party data cleaning agencies:** While outsourcing might sound like an appealing option, it comes with its own drawbacks. Your agency might not understand the intricacies of your market segments and data collection efforts — and as your database grows, so does the agency's bill.
- **Not cleaning at all:** Some marketers ignore data cleansing altogether. While initially easy, this approach ultimately leads to failed marketing campaigns. Without clean data, it's impossible to reach the leads you need at the right time and in the right ways. Dirty data impacts sales, hampers future customer marketing efforts — and puts you at risk for compliance fines if you can't prove where your data came from, if it was correctly opted-in, and if it can't be deleted upon request.

30%

of B2B data becomes invalid and useless within a year.

Thomson Data

40%

Reactive strategies to data quality are not working. Only 40% of marketers clean data before importing it.

Demand Metric

Smarter Ways to Tackle Data Cleaning

Given the scope of the data cleansing issue – and the sub-optimal approaches currently available to address the challenge – there are many vendors offering data management solutions. These solutions cover a wide range of capabilities, including:

- **Data governance solutions.** These systems are complex software suites that create, manage, and assess company protocols for data acquisition and access. Capabilities include data definitions, policies, quality, stewardship, regulatory requirements, risk management, privacy and security, and data lifecycle management. These solutions are typically aimed at compliance or IT teams, not B2B marketing users.
- **Customer data platforms (CDPs).** CDPs centralize customer data from multiple sources and make it available to engagement and insight tools. CDPs typically consist of a database that functions as a prepackaged data lake, advanced data integration and management capabilities to build unified customer profiles, and analytics for segmentation and reporting. There are CDPs offered for both B2B and B2C businesses, but CDPs are more valuable for B2C marketing use. CDPs tend to struggle with both B2B buying group requirements and longer sales cycles. Additionally, CDPs grapple with the garbage-in, garbage out challenges of data gathering.
- **B2B marketing-specific data governance solutions.** There are specialty solutions available to address the data challenges for B2B marketing organizations. One of these is the Integrate Demand Acceleration Platform (DAP). The Integrate DAP differs from a CDP in that it is designed to connect marketing channels, processes, and tools into a single platform, where data is governed and standardized. A key DAP advantage is in compliant first-party data gathering. DAP is a clean port of entry for data that goes into sales and marketing systems.



Connecting all the information and filtering our lead data with Integrate has been eye opening. Marrying all data sources together is extremely influential. Integrate allows us to tie everything together and achieve our overall vision for consolidation.



Brandy Morton
Director, Demand Generation
Harland Clarke



How Harland Clarke Created 240% More Opportunities

Harland Clarke is an industry leader in checks, cards, contact center services, and direct marketing and account acquisition solutions. They were an early adopter of digital demand generation but ran into issues as they scaled. The demand marketing team spent hours manually processing lists and piecing together data from disparate demand providers and sources. The team needed a demand engine to connect data across channels and providers, to support high-quality lead delivery to sales and to drive revenue contribution.

“Integrate has become integral to our team’s ability to deliver on our mission and objectives. Applying a data-first strategy to our demand gen efforts has helped streamline processes, strengthen relationships with partners, and optimize our content strategy”



Meghan Ann McMullen
Segment Marketing Manager | Harland Clarke

240%

increase in opportunities

166%

increase in SQLs (Sales Qualified Leads)

Connect, Govern, and Measure with the Demand Acceleration Platform

The Integrate Demand Acceleration Platform is technology that builds meaningful experiences for buyers. By connecting your channels, processes, and tools, we create an efficient, effective demand engine that enables sales teams to turn data into revenue. Leverage the power of a platform that drives the activation, measurement, and governance capabilities you need to efficiently deliver touchpoints in a cross-channel environment to buying groups at the accounts that are active and in-market.

[SEE HOW](#)