



Data is at the heart of every marketing activity. Effective segmentation relies on a clean database. A lead nurturing campaign using bad data is pointless. And you might as well forget about accurate campaign reporting unless your data is in order.

While the issue of data hygiene has come to the forefront as of late, there is clearly still some work to be done in terms of database health. According to [The State Of Marketing Data](#), NetProspex's second annual data benchmark report, 84% of marketing databases are "barely functional." An overwhelming majority (88%) of more than 61 million records analyzed were lacking basic firmographic data such as industry, company revenue and number of employees.

"As someone in charge of demand generation, the health of my database impacts so much more than things like segmentation and deliverability," said Lauren Brubaker, Senior Manager of Demand Generation for [NetProspex](#). "Marketing data is my ticket to becoming a strategic employee for the company. My analytics can drive real business change, but if my data is bad I am never going to get there. The knowledge I'm delivering to sales and the executive team about our target audience is crucial to everyday business, and I can't afford for that information to be inaccurate or incomplete."

Poor data health will hamper some of the most basic marketing efforts, but it will also make it difficult to excel at more advanced activities such as complex lead scoring, account-based marketing and predictive lead modeling.

Some marketers are focusing more on leading-edge technologies and not paying proper attention to data hygiene, according to Jon Russo, Founder and CEO of [B2B Fusion Group](#). "Some marketers look at the shiny new penny, like predictive lead scoring, and take their eyes off the ball of data hygiene. My sense is that it is not well understood that in order to do things like predictive lead scoring well, you've got to have clean data."

Brubaker added: "When you are trying to implement an effective lead scoring model, data such as industry becomes so much more valuable. You need that data to be able to score accurately and implement strategies such as dynamic web content or account-based marketing, which are huge initiatives for many companies right now."

Without the proper data, marketing strategy suffers, as well, Brubaker noted. "If I can't analyze information on the back end after a deal closes, I don't know who to target for future business. If I know that certain titles or industries have a higher than average deal size or an improved renewal rate, I can be more effective with my marketing dollars going forward. But I only know that if my database is in good shape."

Bad data impacts every department, not just marketing. "The rest of your organization simply can't do their job if you don't have a good database," noted Justin Gray, CEO of [LeadMD](#). "How often have you pulled up CRM on your phone trying to find a contact's name, or looked to determine if someone you just met is a client — only to find that the data is a jumble of uncertainty."

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**-Lauren Brubaker,  
NetProspex**

# MAP YOUR DATA WATERFALL

Gray recommends that businesses cleanse their databases by mapping a data waterfall. “Look at what data you will bring in, what data you will keep in check and what data is absolutely untouchable,” Gray said. “In today’s integrated world, making a change on one side of the house affects every other part of the business.”

Begin by taking a snapshot of your database to gain a sense of the areas where you need to focus, noted Cari Baldwin, President of [BlueBird Strategies](#). “You’ll be surprised at the number of contacts that are unmailable or have incorrect, duplicate or missing fields. You can run reports to get a ‘snapshot’ in Salesforce, Marketo and other tools such as NetProspex’s Data HealthScan [see sidebar, page 6] to help you understand the current state of your data.”

It also is important to determine how bad data is getting into your database. “Data hygiene is a business process challenge that has a number of tentacles,” Russo said. “It can be managed, but you have to look at how and why the data is bad.”

The root cause of bad data can vary widely, Russo explained. “Sometimes, it is user entry. Or perhaps data in other systems are causing duplicate contacts and accounts.”

Purchased lists are another source of bad data, Baldwin noted. “The days of purchasing lists are coming to an end. If you use a list that has been created organically — through efforts such as blogging, hosting webinars, attending events, working with partners and hosting contests/promotions — your deliverability will increase and your chances of being blacklisted will decrease.”

Baldwin emphasized that there is a cost involved in keep recording in a marketing automation system. “Don’t let dirty data be a factor in having to jump to the next price level,” she said.

If a prospect isn’t engaging with your content, Baldwin recommends suppressing them. “I recommend giving a contact three to four times to engage and then pulling them out or adding to a suppression list. If you choose to keep these contacts in your database, you can always run a re-engagement campaign in the future.”

“You’ll be surprised at the number of contacts that are unmailable or have incorrect, duplicate or missing fields” when you take a snapshot of your database.

**-Cari Baldwin, BlueBird Strategies**



# WHO OWNS THE DATA?

Determining database governance is essential. “You have to determine who owns the data, who will be keeping it clean and who can modify records,” said Sal Abramo, Director of Marketing Operations for Thomson Reuters.

Abramo explained that the company has been working to centralize its database management to provide tighter controls on data accuracy and completeness. This improves the ability to run segmented campaigns to specific roles and industries, as customer records are more complete. “This helps us get closer to the individual customer, address their real pain points and be more successful.”

And once the database has been cleansed, keep it maintained. While it is dependent upon the industry, many experts recommend removing contacts that have not engaged with the company at any level in a year.

Time is by far the biggest obstacle to database maintenance, according to Gray. “Data these days degrades the minute after it is cleansed. Executives change jobs, contact information changes, personal information and business information has become inseparably intertwined. It’s a mess.”

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-Justin Gray, LeadMD



# HOW NETPROSPEX PREPARED ITS OWN DATABASE FOR A MARKETING AUTOMATION TRANSITION

NetProspex recently transitioned to Marketo's marketing automation platform, so the time was right to assess the health of its own database.

One of the initial tasks, according to Lauren Brubaker, Demand Generation Manager for **NetProspex**, was to perform a simple audit to determine the actual size of the company's database. "One of the first things we did was an assessment of the exact numbers within my CRM and marketing database. Once you know the numbers, you can establish a benchmark for your progress."

Then the company took a closer look at the records in each database. "In Salesforce, I looked at all leads, contacts and accounts in the system," Brubaker explained. "Within the marketing automation system, we looked at how many active, engaged contacts we had versus how many inactive records, which we define as having had no engagement in 12 months."

Those records went into an archive where they will go through a nurture program to attempt to re-engage them. The active records from both systems moved on to the next round of data management.

The next step was to assess the state of duplicate records. In the case of records with the same email address, for example, they kept the record that was more populated or the one that had been more recently updated and filled in any gaps with the duplicate record they were discarding.

Then the remaining records went through the NetProspex Data HealthScan, Brubaker noted. What did they find? "Like any company, we had emails that were undeliverable or no longer active and a certain percentage of phone numbers that we no longer in service. We removed those records from our marketing automation system, but kept the contacts in our CRM so we wouldn't lose the sales activity. Those inaccurate fields were flagged so we knew to remove them from our email database or delete the inaccurate phone number."

Then it was time to enrich the records that they determined were good. "We ran the clean list through the NetProspex process to enhance the records as much as possible with data such as industry, number of employees, revenue range and state. It was very exciting as we ended up appending the records with more than a million data points."

# PERFORM A DATA HEALTHSCAN TO DETOX YOUR DATABASE

NetProspex's **Data HealthScan**, a focal point of the NetProspex Workbench solution, assesses the state of B2B data to identify what issues need to be addressed on the road to a highly functional marketing database.

The Data HealthScan evaluates the health of the database using four factors: Phone connectability, email deliverability, record completeness and record duplication.

The evaluation helps determine if the database needs to be cleansed or if missing information needs to be filled in. Patterns in targeting and segmentation can also be found as the report provides:

- Prevalent titles, industries, company sizes and locations;
- Technologies employed throughout the database; and
- The most common profile of contacts in the database.

This information allows marketers to detect if their contact database correlates to their target profile. Analyzing data quality, data completeness and data profiles can lead to new opportunities, improved marketing efforts and increased sales.

Workbench provides marketers with rich, interactive experiences as they analyze the results of their scans. Marketers are empowered to take a closer look into the cleanliness and completeness of their data as well as their market coverage.



# TAKE A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO DATA TO IMPROVE YOUR MARKETING RESULTS

In case you haven't noticed, Big Data is getting bigger. Reports indicate that more than 90% of worldwide data has been generated in the past two years, according to the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#). And as technology advances, there's no question that the volume of available information will continue to escalate.

The good news: B2B marketers have more access than ever to information about their customers and prospects. With data coming in from every angle — contact forms, social media, website analytics, etc. — marketers have insight into existing and potential customer contact information, preferred method of outreach, interests and needs, as well as buying habits. The bad news: All of this data can be difficult to interpret and to manage. As a result, more often than not, we are unable to properly utilize this wealth of information.

My company, NetProspex, processes and analyzes a lot of data on an annual basis. According to our [2014 State of B2B Marketing Data Report](#), which analyzed more than 61 million records from hundreds of companies, 84% of marketing databases are barely functional. Eighty-eight percent of records evaluated were missing basic firmographic data (industry, company revenue and number of employees), and 64% were lacking a phone number.

While alarming, these stats are understandable. We know marketing data arrives through multiple channels and often in bits and pieces. It also has a shelf life. Some attributes, such as behavioral data, become marginalized in a matter of days. Others are less time sensitive. But records become less and less useful — and more and more dangerous due to inaccuracies — over time if they are not actively managed.

There are many implied costs to taking a hands-off approach to data management. Inaccurate data makes segmentation efforts either impossible or misguided. I'm not sure which is worse. Lead scoring and any kind of predictive analytics have similar challenges. And lead generation and nurturing efforts will consistently underperform due to an inability to get to the inbox of your target customers.



**Derek Slayton,**  
**NetProspex**



To harness the power of data, and ensure that the right targets are being reached in the right ways, B2B marketers must regularly assess, cleanse, and enrich their data. Taking a step back and regularly assessing your data enables your team to better understand how well your data profiles support your company strategy. Are you targeting the right audience? Do you have enough coverage to hit your new revenue goals? Are you missing critical attributes that will unlock the potential of that great content you are developing?

And, as data-driven B2B marketers, we have to consistently cleanse and maintain our contact and company database. It is fast becoming the center of gravity for all of our other marketing data attributes and it fuels the marketing automation platform that mechanizes our demand generation programs. By identifying and tossing out inaccurate records, you will be back on track to conduct effective outreach.

Case in point, according to [TechTarget](#) research, many website visitors misrepresent their information when filling out web forms. These inaccuracies become more prevalent as the length of web forms increase and too much information is required.

We need to spend less time asking for information we can get directly (such as company firmographics) and complete our data profiling with back-end enrichment services, while weeding out data that is bad before it enters the system. In fact, this practice applies to data we collect across the entirety of our marketing-mix.

By abiding by these tried and true best practices, B2B marketers will be at the ready to deliver the right content to the best targets. As a result, they'll see their email campaigns, lead nurturing programs, whitepapers and sales follow-ups finally reach their full potential — driving sales and helping to reach company goals.

*NetProspex CMO Derek Slayton is a B2B marketer with more than 20 years of experience in technology sales and marketing. As CMO of NetProspex, Slayton aligns the company's product roadmap with its go-to-market engine and creates relationships with other B2B marketers that want to improve their revenue streams through more targeted and continuously managed marketing data. Before joining NetProspex, Slayton was VP of marketing at VMTurbo, and also held leadership roles at Citrix Systems, Reflectent Software, and Enterasys Networks.*





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## ABOUT NETPROSPEX

NetProspex is the smarter B2B data partner. We help marketing and sales organizations optimize their revenue impact by increasing the quality and effectiveness of their marketing database. Thousands of B2B organizations rely on NetProspex to manage their marketing data in order to fuel high-performing marketing campaigns and accelerate the creation of sales pipeline. To make marketing databases accurate, targeted and actionable, the company offers a suite of data services backed by its proprietary CleneStep™ verification technology and the industry's largest and most accurate reference database of B2B contacts and companies. For more information visit [www.netprospex.com](http://www.netprospex.com) or on Twitter @NetProspex.



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## ABOUT DEMAND GEN REPORT

*Demand Gen Report* is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multichannel demand generation efforts.

