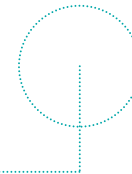


Press Cutting:

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Data is the backbone of all brands

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Data is the backbone of all brands. This is why I find it so hard to stomach when its upkeep is dismissed as a luxury, rather than a necessity. Considering the current unstable economic climate and the increasing challenge of acquiring and retaining consumers, on top of the negative press coverage that direct mail has received recently, you would think that brands had cottoned onto the importance of reliable and accurate data management. David Murray, sales director at The Software Bureau.

The facts speak for themselves. Around 10-15% of all consumer data decays each year. The inevitable brand damage and irritation that poor data produces, either through incorrect, badly targeted, duplicated or untimely mailings should be enough to force brands to sit up and take notice.



So what options are there available? Go to a traditional bureau. Go online to an online data cleaning bureaux. Or do it in house, using data management software. But which delivers accurate data most effectively within time constraints and, more importantly, within budget?

When looking at the options, cost is too often overlooked. Companies that choose to outsource their data management requirements are probably paying well over the odds for the privilege. While bureaux produce accurate results and effectively take responsibility for the process, they simply cannot keep up in terms of competitive costs and timings.

Online data cleaning, arguably the cheapest method allows speed and convenience for the user but has been criticised for being a 'blunt tool', with the general rule being that one size fits all.

So with the pressure on to find a method which is cost effective and produces quality data, taking data processing in-house has also become a serious option. The benefit of bringing data processing in-house is that it allows a company to have complete control over their data whilst saving on time and costs.

Anyway – I digress. However you do it clean data needs to be the foundation of any marketing activity. It is such a valuable asset as it can directly affect how a brand is viewed by existing and potential customers. For example, brands that employ the highly tactful 'carpet-bombing' approach will soon experience consumer fatigue. Excessive or incorrect mailings portray a brand as sloppy and wasteful – a cardinal sin in these environmentally aware times. Mailing goneaways or worse, deceased, demonstrate a complete lack of competence or even sensitivity on the brands part.

Direct marketing is an intrinsic part of the marketing mix. It is measureable and effective in generating response. If used correctly it can communicate a strong message to the right demographic. But it is also in danger of becoming over used and ill targeted.

As the global recession bites brands will have to fight for consumer attention; mass mailing with poor quality data just doesn't cut it anymore. Today's savvy consumer wants relevant, targeted communication of value if they are to part with their pound. And guess what? Effective use of data makes this happen."

