



LEAN DM

Eliminating direct mail waste

What we'll cover

1

What Lean DM is

The idea, and where it comes from

2

Why it matters

The win for your client and the win for you

3

The component parts

Eight best-practice steps that remove waste

4

The business model

Higher margin for mail producers, lower cost for brands

5

Getting started

The complimentary data health check

MAIL PRODUCER BENEFITS



The language to explain Lean DM

talk about it in plain client terms



How to sell and price it

three pricing models you can quote



A free health-check opener

the low-risk way to start the conversation



Three of your own jobs, worked

leave with real pitches, not theory



THE CONCEPT

What is Lean DM?

Lean DM is a systematic way to strip waste out of a direct mail campaign — where **waste is anything that doesn't help the campaign hit its goal.**

Every record that is wrong, duplicated, gone-away or badly formatted is cost with no return. Lean DM finds and removes it **before a single envelope is printed.**

Direct mail grew 4.8% year on year in Q2 2025 — it's a growing channel. Lean DM helps to keep marketers choosing direct mail over other communication choices.

Source: [AA / WARC via IPIA](#)



BORROWED FROM TOYOTA

'Lean' began on the factory floor

Toyota built its name by hunting down seven types of waste. From excess stock to defects and designing them out of production.

Lean DM applies the same discipline to the data behind a mailing.

WHY IT MATTERS

Two winners

Warm direct mail returns about £9 for every £1 spent (JICMAIL, 2025) — Lean DM protects that return by spending it only on people who can receive the mail.



FOR MAIL USERS

The brand sending the mail

- ✓ **Keeps valued customers in contact** — ensures every mail piece reaches its intended recipient
- ✓ **Avoids GDPR & compliance grief** — opt-outs, duplicates and the deceased are screened out
- ✓ **Greener mailings** — only mailing people who can actually receive it cuts paper waste
- ✓ **Lower total cost** — less wasted print and postage, better response



FOR MAIL PRODUCERS AND PRINTERS

The mail producer

- ✓ **A new, high-margin revenue stream** — chargeable data services on work you're already doing
- ✓ **Something rivals can't copy on price** — you compete on results, not just cost-per-thousand
- ✓ **Stickier client relationships** — trusted data services and handling suppressions makes you hard to replace
- ✓ **More mail commissioned** — better results mean clients mail more and more often

THE COMPONENT PARTS

Where direct mail waste hides

Five sources of waste — and eight best-practice steps that remove them.

1



Pack design

2



Data formatting

3



Data quality

4



Postage options

5



The feedback loop



COMPONENT 1 OF 8 · PACK DESIGN

Pack design & postage

The cheapest record to mail is one packaged for the best rate — and accurate enough to hold its Mailmark discount. Advise on format and data before the job is quoted.

- Match pack size, weight and format to the cheapest qualifying service
- Keep address accuracy above the Mailmark threshold to protect discounts and avoid surcharges
- Show clients the cost differential between formats and Mailmark options
- Build postage thinking into the brief, not after artwork is signed off

Sources: [Citipost Mail](#)

90%

Minimum postcode & DPS address accuracy Royal Mail expects (10% tolerance; 95% on some Advertising Mail). Clean data keeps a file above the line.

WHY IT MATTERS



Format + data-accuracy advice that protects the client's Mailmark discount on every campaign.



Address formatting & Mailmark

Correctly structured, barcoded address data unlocks the best postage rates and keeps mail in the cheapest stream.

- Format and standardise address data to Royal Mail specification
- Generate compliant Mailmark barcodes and sortation data
- Keep data accurate to avoid Mailmark adjustment charges
- Validate and enhance every record on the way through

Sources: [Citipost Mail](#)

Mailmark

Badly formatted items lose Mailmark discounts and can attract Royal Mail correction charges.

WHY IT MATTERS



Address formatting + Mailmark barcoding, so every item achieves the cheapest possible postal rate.



COMPONENT 3 OF 8 · DATA QUALITY

PAF validation & address quality

Lists pulled from CRM and web forms are riddled with incomplete and inaccurate addresses. PAF fixes what it can and flags what it can't.

- PAF-validate and complete addresses for deliverability and discount
- Discard or quarantine incomplete and undeliverable records
- Remove overseas addresses when the offer is domestic

Source: Royal Mail Data Services

62,027

PAF doesn't stand still! Total number of changes (amends, deletions and additions) made to PAF in June 2026 alone.

LEAN DM IN ACTION

Worked example:

On 100,000 packs, average cleansing cost might be c. £1,800 yet removes about £4,400 of wasted mail. The brand sending the mail is still roughly £2,600 better off. The difference is the scope for the mail producer to sell data services.



COMPONENT 4 OF 8 · DATA QUALITY

Name & gender enhancement

The name is the most personal part of the pack. Get it right and the pack earns attention; get it wrong and you lose response.

- Remove records with no usable name
- Identify gender to sharpen personalisation and de-duplication
- Flag title / forename conflicts and run an obscenity screen
- Push name corrections back to the client's master data

Source: [JICMAIL via Marketreach](#)

+71%

More likely to prompt a purchase when mail gets talked about — and 96% of mail is engaged with.
Both depend on getting the name right.

WHY IT MATTERS



Accurate, personalised addressing — the difference between a pack that's opened and discussed and one that's binned.



Deduplication

Matching and merging removes the most visible waste of all: the same person mailed twice (or five times) in one drop. And because data decays constantly, it is never done just once.

- Agree the level and rules of dedupe with the client up front
- Use alternative anchors — DOB, telephone — to catch hard matches
- Tune results together and document the rules for next time

Source: Royal Mail Data Services

50%

Of a typical file is out of date within two years (Royal Mail) — so duplicates and stale records build up between every mailing.

HOW A MAIL PRODUCER SELLS IT



A bespoke dedupe run to the client's agreed level — priced per match or per thousand.



Movers & deceased suppression

About 1.8m households move home each year and 568,613 deaths were registered in England & Wales in 2024 (UK total above 600,000). Mailing the moved or deceased wastes spend and damages the brand at the worst possible moment.

- Screen against NCOA mover files and update or remove gone-aways
- Suppress the deceased with bereavement / gone-away files
- Hold and maintain the client's suppression file on their behalf

Sources: [ONS \(2024\)](#) · [The Bereavement Register](#) · [Decision Marketing](#)

64m

Mail pieces a year in the UK go to people who have died — about 110 to each person in the first year alone.

LEAN DM IN ACTION

Manchester City Council

Letters went to almost 100 bereaved families, including a school reminder two years after a child had died prompting a data-accuracy compensation claim.



COMPONENT 7 OF 8 · DATA QUALITY

Preferences, permission & GDPR

Honouring preference and consent isn't courtesy — it's compliance, deliverability and brand safety in one screen, with real regulatory teeth behind it.

- Screen cold data against the Mailing Preference Service
- Keep permission and preference settings aligned with the client's CRM
- Treat address accuracy as a GDPR obligation, not just good practice
- Hold and maintain returned-mail suppression files for the client

Sources: [GDPR — accuracy principle](#) · [GDPR — maximum fine](#)

£17.5m

Or 4% of worldwide turnover — the maximum UK GDPR fine for breaching core principles, including keeping personal data accurate (Article 5(1)(d)).

HOW IT FITS



MPS screening plus ongoing suppression-file management. Recurring revenue for the mail producer, peace of mind for the brand.



COMPONENT 8 OF 8 · FEEDBACK LOOP

Return handling & closing the loop

Don't lose touch with good customers because one mailing bounced. Close the loop and feed learning back in.

- Pool returns and re-screen regularly against mover data
- Maintain a suppression file on the client's behalf
- Use other channels to re-confirm and update contact data

Sources: [Royal Mail Data Services](#) · [The Bereavement Register](#)

Every cycle

Returns are free intelligence — if you capture them, the list only ever gets cleaner.

THE SERVICE TO OFFER



Managed returns handling. Mail producers capture, screen and feedback every update for a fee.

The win-win business model



Mail producers earn more per job

High-margin services on work you already produce.



Brands using mail spend less overall

Waste removed up front beats paying to mail it.



The prize for the mail producer is recurring revenue and sticky clients

Making data the differentiator. Expertly managing your clients marketing data, building and maintaining their suppression file and managing their returns switches your data team from a cost center to a profit generator. Clients also become more 'sticky' as the conversation is no longer purely price per 000 packs, they also tend to mail more when they are seeing better results.

REVENUE STREAMS



One-off hygiene

merge/purge dedupe, screening & tracing, PAF validation



Data audits

the paid (or free) health check that opens the door



Suppression management

hold & maintain client files — recurring



Returns & gone-away handling

ongoing, every campaign cycle

Three ways mail producers price data services

Pick the model that fits the job and the client.



Per 1,000 records

A flat rate for every thousand records processed.

- Simple to quote and explain
- Predictable for big, clean files
- Client pays for volume, not outcome

e.g. £X per 1,000



Per match (markup)

Charge only on the records actually actioned — each mover, dupe or suppression hit.

- Feels fair: pay for results
- Rewards your matching quality
- Great for screening & suppression

e.g. £X per match



Flat fee + match

A base processing fee plus a per-match charge on top.

- Covers your set-up cost
- Upside when the file is dirty
- Best of both models

e.g. £X + £X / match

The complimentary data health check

1

Get a file

Ask for a sample of data — last campaign's list is perfect.

2

Run it through Cygnus

Audit, PAF, dedupe and suppression screens — no charge, usually less than an hour's work.

3

Report back in ROI terms

Show the waste in their data and what it's costing them.

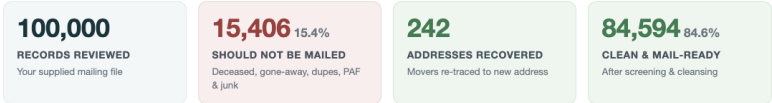
LeanDM Health Check

Data Health Check
Report date: June 2026
Reference: DHC-2026-0626

Complimentary Mailing Data Review

Before your campaign goes to print, we screened your file against national deceased, gone-away and address registers and standardised every record. Here's what it found — and what it means for your budget.

Prepared for [Customer Name] · File reviewed: 100,000 records



What we found in your file

CATEGORY	RECORDS	% OF FILE
Deceased — remove to avoid distress	1,989	2.0%
Gone away — moved on from address	2,410	2.4%
Duplicate records removed	7,634	7.6%
Overseas / no name / no address	32	0.0%
PAF fails & partial matches	3,341	3.3%
Total not mailed	15,406	15.4%
Movers re-traced to a new address	242	0.2%
Records processed & cleansed	100,000	100.0%

Data cleansing in action

NAME	MR / JOHN / SAMPLE	→	Mr John Sample
GREETING	—	→	Dear Mr Sample
ADDRESS	1 EXAMPLE STREET, ANYTOWN	→	1 Example Street, Anytown, AB1 2CD

Every record is parsed into clean name, salutation and Royal Mail-formatted address fields — so your mailing looks professional and is more likely to be delivered first time.

What this means for your budget

Mail everything as-is No health check · 100,000 packs, incl. 15,406 that can't arrive	£65,000
WITH A DATA HEALTH CHECK	
Data health check & cleanse 4,641 matches actioned (deceased, gone-away & traced)	£2,228
Mail the cleaned file 84,594 valid, deliverable packs	£54,986
Total with health check	£57,214

YOUR NET SAVING

£7,786 this campaign

A 12.0% lower mailing cost — after the health check.

- ✓ No mail sent to the deceased
- ✓ 11,007 duplicate & undeliverable records removed
- ✓ 242 contacts kept reachable
- ✓ Stronger deliverability & brand trust

Illustrative. Mailing assumed at £0.66 per pack (print + postage); data health check charged at £0.48 per match across 4,641 matches — editable to your actual rates.

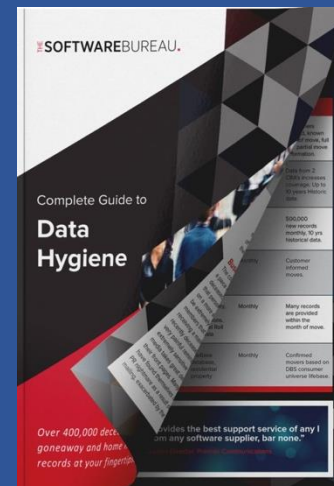
This complimentary health check is provided as a guide. Final suppression decisions remain with you.

Data services powered by Cygnus™

LEAN DM.

Thank you

Better response rates
Higher margin services
Happier mail users



Download the free Data Hygiene guide
thesoftwarebureau.com/data-hygiene

Get in touch today to start reducing waste in Direct Mail

Sources & evidence

Every figure in this deck is paraphrased and attributed. Click any link to check the source.

AA / WARC via IPIA — Direct mail channel growth, 4.8% YoY (Q2 2025)

<https://ipia.org.uk/direct-mail-and-direct-marketing-continue-to-build-on-growth-into-2025/>

JICMAIL Response Rate Tracker 2025 — Direct mail ROI — warm £9 per £1

<https://www.jicmail.org.uk/data/response-rate-tracker-2025/>

JICMAIL via Marketreach — Engagement: 96% engaged; +71% if discussed

<https://www.marketreach.co.uk/resources/JICMAIL-mail-super-touchpoint>

Citipost Mail — Mailmark surcharge & accuracy framework (90%)

<https://www.citipostmail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Mailmark-Surcharges-Adjustment-Framework-v1.pdf>

Royal Mail Data Services — NCOA mover file & data decay (50% out of date in two years)

<https://www.royalmail.com/business/marketing/data/cleansing>

Office for National Statistics — UK deaths 2024 — 568,613 in England & Wales

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregistrationsummarytables/2024>

The Bereavement Register — Deceased-mail scale (~64m/yr; 70% screened)

<https://www.thebereavementregister.org.uk/about>

Decision Marketing — Manchester City Council deceased-mailing case

<https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/news/legal-action-could-spark-pay-outs-for-deceased-mailings>

ICO — Accuracy principle (Art. 5(1)(d))

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-protection-principles/a-guide-to-the-data-protection-principles/accuracy/>

ICO — Maximum UK GDPR fine (£17.5m / 4%)

<https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/our-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection-fining-guidance/statutory-background/the-maximum-amount-of-a-fine-under-uk-gdpr-and-dpa-2018/>