

Data cleaning should be regularly performed on any database of customers or prospects. Data is an integral part of a communications strategy enabling a company to provide excellent customer service and effectively manage the customer or prospect relationship.

Follow CCR's top tips to ensure data cleaning success.

1/ Apply a Unique ID



Often called a unique reference number or URN this field enables accurate management of data including tracking and merging of changes. Importing changes such as data cleaning suppression flag can be done using a URN and the flag itself.

2/ Ensure accurate data capture and input

Create a guideline for data capture and input to improve basic data quality ensuring that all required fields are made mandatory i.e. postcode. Keep standards the same Rd or Road, Ltd or Limited, 01/01/2011 or 01.01.2011. This improves data cleaning accuracy and saves processing time.

3/ Field separation



Separate core fields, they can always be merged later on i.e. Address 1, 2, 3, Town, County, Postcode v Address Block. First Name, Initial, Surname v Full Name. Data cleaning suppression routines all work with data in separated fields.

4/ Check your supplier & give them time

Take your time to investigate data cleaning routines and choose the supplier who meets your needs. More matches to a suppression file aren't always a good thing. It's about using the right files in the right way to get you the right result. Talk to your supplier about a case study or testimonial, also sites like [MarketingFinder](#) might be able to help you make an informed decision. Once you have selected your supplier give them as much notice as possible so that time does not become a barrier. It's better to take 72 hours to get it right than 4 hours to get it wrong.

5/ Free Audit



Data cleaning is an important process to ensure data quality. Assess the live situation with your data by getting a [free data cleaning audit](#).

6/ Data security

This isn't a consideration it's a requirement. Your supplier should provide you with a [non-disclosure agreement \(NDA\)](#) and a secure method of [transferring your data](#). As an additional security measure make sure you encrypt your data.

7/ Supply required fields, format and layout



Only export and supply the fields needed and agreed with your supplier. This saves time on transmitting and processing of the data and saves space in terms of storage. If you have a suppression flag on your data, send it or exclude those records. Don't waste time and money suppressing them again. However if they are goneaways why not send that file separately to see if they can be identified as a mover and the new address supplied.

8/ Discuss return file layout and format

Consider the way you would like your data back after data cleaning has been completed. Suppressions flagged, separated or deleted and agree the file layout and format for return. Make your supplier work harder to make your job easier.

9/ Don't just mail the file



Once data cleaning has been completed make sure you import the changes into your CRM or database management system. This is where a URN comes into play to make the import easier

10/ Little & Often

Don't leave yourself with a large data cleaning bill yearly when you can separate into monthly or quarterly cleans. Cut mailing costs and reduce wastage by cleaning your data frequently. Don't forget your supplier should give you a [free data cleaning audit](#). This enables you to assess the requirement for data cleaning and plan future data cleaning activity.