



Your guide to tackling data quality issues across a CRM system's lifecycle



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Introduction

Lots of businesses use customer relationship management platforms to help bring their sales, marketing, and customer service processes into one system. By following customer relationship management (CRM) best practices, your organisation can collect important data about business leads, customers, and vendor contacts.

The data contained in your business CRM systems is one of your organisation's most important assets. High-quality data lets you and your team easily manage prospects, leads, and customers in one convenient place. But what happens if your CRM data is outdated or outright incorrect? You'll struggle to make valuable insights based on the inaccurate data. And what can you do to fix any inaccuracies in your databases?

It can be difficult to know how to fix data quality issues within your CRM databases. In this white paper, we'll explore how data quality affects the health of your CRM data—and how it can affect your business. We'll also look at ways to identify data quality issues and offer CRM tips to resolve these issues and set your business up for CRM success.

What is CRM data quality?

What happens when you have unreliable records in your CRM? A wrong phone number or email address could mean you never connect with a customer—potentially losing out of a sale or damaging your existing relationships. This is where data quality comes in.

CRM data quality refers to the overall accuracy and usability of the data in your system. Accurate data is information that's reliable and up-to-date. If you have accurate data, you can trust the insights you produce when using it to make decisions. However, data quality for CRM systems also includes the usability or usefulness of the data you collect. Storing unnecessary data isn't just a waste of space—it could also potentially violate data regulations.

Whether you're using a CRM system for business or organisation, it's essential that the data you store is accurate, updated, and useful to your business or organisation.

Learn how Melbourne Cricket Club **achieved a 99% email on delivery rate**

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Causes of data quality issues in your CRM

Data quality is a major CRM success factor, so you may be surprised to learn that bad data can enter your database in many different ways. While CRM systems seem to be capable of doing almost anything, most can't help stop poor-quality data from entering your system on their own. Take a look at some of the ways bad data can get into your databases:



Employee errors

Entering prospect or customer information into your CRM system is where employees could go wrong. For example, your employee is on the phone with a potential customer and asks for their postal address and email address. The employee mishears a letter in the email address and enters it incorrectly. Your database now has an incorrect email address and that potential customer won't receive your marketing emails.



Data decay

Even accurate data can decay over time, and the aging of data is one of the biggest causes of data quality issues. As your data ages, it becomes less reliable. For example, several years ago you collected the postal address of a customer. You sent products and services information to their address and never had an issue. The customer moved and your communications started to come back as undeliverable. Your data became outdated over time and is now unusable.



Customer data entry errors

Employees aren't the only ones who can make data entry mistakes during collection. A customer who's filling out a web form or sign up sheet could easily make a typo. Just like an employee data entry, this leaves you with an inaccurate data record and a customer who may be disappointed they weren't contacted.



Irrelevant data

A lot of businesses end up gathering more data than is necessary. In the age of big data, many organisations are encouraged to find out as much about their customers and prospects as possible. Too much information isn't always a good thing, however. Each piece of irrelevant data you store takes up space in your database and makes the customer's record less organised.



Duplicate records

Multiple records for the same customer can lead to inaccuracies. Let's say you're doing a CRM data migration to move data from an old CRM to your current platform. You follow CRM data migration best practices, but forget that there are overlapping records between your old system and the new one. You end up with duplicate records for certain customers. This could lead to confusion if the records have different contact information. On the other hand, some employees may fill in information on one record while other employees use the second record. This splits the data on your customer between two entries instead of one unified record. Your data became outdated over time and is now unusable.



How to tackle data quality issues across the lifecycle of your CRM system

[Watch the webinar >](#)



Experian's data validation solutions were easy to connect the right information up front so we can communicate with members.

Dean Burton,
Operations and Analysis Manager, Melbourne Cricket Club

The cost of poor-quality CRM data

According to the survey in Experian's 2021 Data Management Research, organisations believe about a third of their customer and prospect data is inaccurate in some way. This could mean it's outdated and no longer valid or was incorrect at the time of collection. Additionally, only 51% of businesses think their current CRM data is clean and able to be used for insights. That leaves nearly half of businesses not getting the full use out of the data in their CRM systems.

What does an organisation have to lose by collecting and keeping low-quality data? Some examples include:



Poor customer experience

Today's customers expect more from the businesses and organisations they connect with. You have to have a great experience to build positive relationships with customers. In turn, these customers become loyal to your brand and start advocating for your business with family and friends. Poor-quality data could create a poor customer experience. For instance, your address data for a customer is incorrectly formatted. The customer's order comes back to your warehouse as undeliverable. You have to manually find the right address format and reship the package. Your customer has to wait longer for delivery, leaving them unhappy with the service.



Increased data management costs

When you're trying to figure out how to measure CRM success, start with cost savings. A unified customer management platform can help your business save a lot of money. Data integrity validation, or the process of verifying CRM data records, helps you get the most out of your CRM platform. Without a data quality firewall of validation and deduplication, you'll be dealing with increased costs from inaccurate data records. These data management costs include labour costs to have employees look for—and fix—inaccuracies as well as any costs that happened before the mistake was found, such as returned deliveries.



Burnt-out employees

The process of manually checking CRM data for accuracy can quickly take a toll on your employees. Each minute an employee spends focused on finding and fixing data quality issues by hand is less time they have to focus on their actual projects. Your employees are likely to feel overwhelmed, bored, and burnt out.



Compliance issues

Data regulations for the UK and EU are designed to protect consumers from unsafe or unethical data practices. If your business has validated and relevant data, data regulations shouldn't be much of a hassle. However, businesses that aren't following CRM best practices for data quality management could risk compliance violations. Depending on the regulation you violate, your organisation could face hefty fines.



Missed opportunities

Each customer record that's entered incorrectly or left to decay over time becomes the loss of a potential sale. If you have the wrong contact information or other data for a customer or prospect, you cut down on ways to stay in touch with them. They may forget about your business because it's not top-of-mind. With enough incorrect data records, you could be losing a lot of money to missed opportunities.



Inefficient business processes

Low CRM data integrity can slow down your business and cost your organisation money. An address that's incorrect and undeliverable, for example, means your employees will have to figure out what's wrong with the address, fix the mistakes, and resend the package. This could take a few minutes or hours, depending on the problem. Another way bad data slows down business processes is through duplicate records. Each time an employee finds a duplicate, they'll have to go through and make sure all of the information is in one record and then delete the duplicate entry.

How to improve data quality in your CRM system

Although there are plenty of ways for poor-quality data to reach your database—costing you more than money—there are also solutions to help improve your CRM data quality. Plan to start by using tools to help you clean CRM data already within your databases. You'll also want to implement a real-time verification system to stop poor-quality or inaccurate data from ever entering your system. The use of data quality validation technology can help you easily tackle data quality issue management without downtime. There are many pre-built CRM integrations that feel like native applications.

Follow this CRM checklist for success to validate existing records, capture high-quality data going forward, and get the most out of a data-driven CRM platform.



Collect relevant data

When big data first became popular for businesses, there was a lot of pressure to collect everything you could find on a customer. As data management tools and processes grow more advanced, data experts have found more data isn't necessarily better. The introduction of data regulations like the GDPR mean only collecting relevant data is even more important than ever. Your business should only collect the data that has a use in your CRM database. Not only does this help you stay in compliance, but you'll also declutter your databases and improve your overall data quality.



Use real-time CRM validation tools

The point of capture is one of the easiest places for poor-quality data to enter your CRM system. The best way to stop mistakes from getting into your system is to validate the data in real-time. Real-time validation tools and CRM integrations check customer data as it's being entered. Depending on your application, real-time validation can even require correct data to be entered before a customer can continue, such as during checkout.



Regularly cleanse contact data

CRM data cleanup involves validating your existing databases using trustworthy data sources. Regular data cleansing helps keep data decay at bay. Many CRM integrations let you set up periodic data cleaning schedules that run in the background, letting your team focus on the tasks at hand while your data is automatically checked for accuracy.



Remove duplicate records

Duplicate records can cause any insights you draw from your customer data to be off. For example, you create a marketing plan based on the concentration of customers in a certain area. Later you find out duplicate records made your data inaccurate, and that there are only half as many customers in the area as you thought.

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Article continues below

How to resolve data quality issues in important CRM stages

You can use CRM data verification to solve data quality issues throughout your sales and service processes. Check out how to use data validation for CRM to help fix common problems in your CRM lifecycle.



Marketing

Whether you've collected an inaccurate address or there was a fraudulent sign up on your email list, getting inaccurate data at the beginning of a customer relationship is irritating. These inaccuracies cost time and money to fix. Real-time CRM data validation catches issues before they enter your database—effectively getting rid of the problem before it starts.



Sales

It's important to maintain high-quality data for each of your leads so they can be moved through the sales pipeline. Poor-quality data can make it difficult to know when to contact a prospect or what steps you should take next to close a sale. You can use regular data cleansing to help avoid data quality issues with prospects throughout your CRM database. Resources like data enrichment and additional datasets can also help add to the information you already have and give you a more complete view of a customer.



Customer support

Your customer support team helps give customers the best experience possible, including proactively meeting customer needs. With inaccurate and unreliable data in your CRM database, however, your customer service team won't be able to anticipate the needs of your customers. This can lower the overall customer experience and create less brand loyalty. The solution to this issue is to use data cleaning to regularly validate your existing records. Regular validation keeps your customer database up-to-date if a customer moves, changes phone numbers, or passes away.

Finding and fixing data quality issues in your CRM system

The idea of identifying data quality issues in your CRM can feel daunting enough. It's even more overwhelming when you consider how you'll fix any potential problems you find. If this sounds like you, don't fret; modern data quality management rarely uses manual systems to find and fix issues.

As data quality becomes a higher priority for businesses in the UK and worldwide, the methods and tools to maintain data quality have expanded. Modern tools such as Experian's Data Validation for CRM use technology to examine data records. The solutions easily cross-check your records with reliable data sources to find the most up-to-date data on your customers. The autocomplete technology in-real time and predictive address matching reduces data entry time by up to 80% leading to better data quality for your contact data, and without disrupting your customer or employee experience.

Useful links

[Data validation for enterprise applications >](#)

[Contact data validation >](#)

[Data cleansing >](#)

[See a full list of our Data Quality solutions >](#)



Discover how to improve your CRM system's data quality

[Get in touch >](#)





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