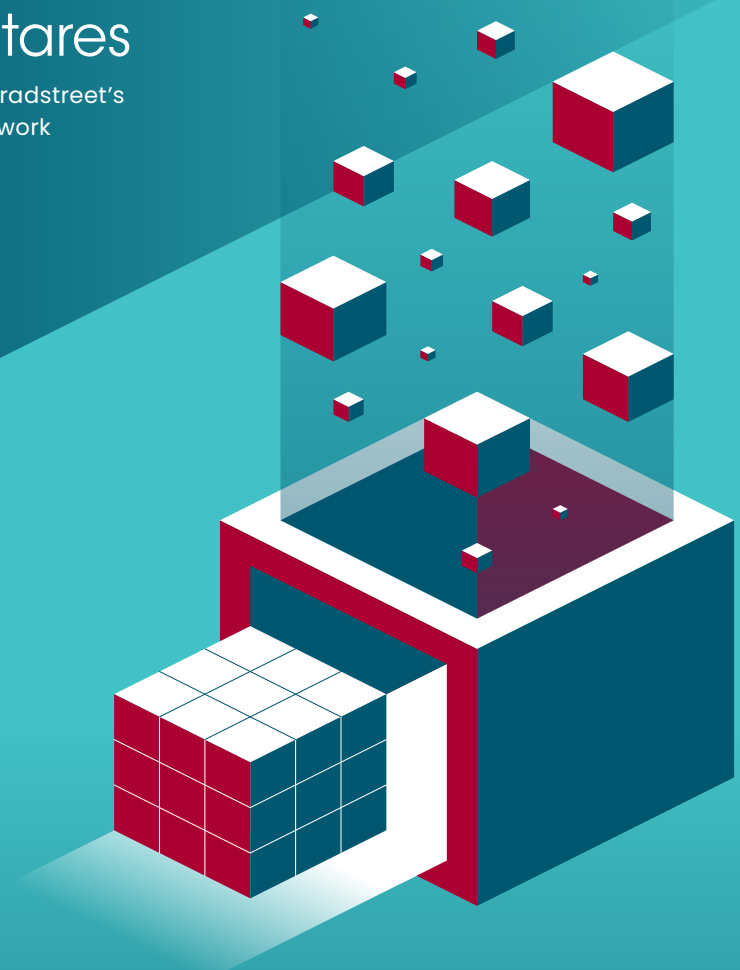




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WHITEPAPER

Use master data to turn your digital transformation into a success

Introduction

In today's ultra-competitive market, data-driven organisations have a clear advantage over their competitors. For example, data-driven companies are 23 times more likely to acquire new customers and 6 times more likely to retain them.

However, data management is complex. Data is used across the organisation and each department is often responsible for collecting and managing specific data. As a result, despite having a lot of data, as an organisation, you don't harness all of it. You are actually sitting on a mountain of gold, provided you safeguard it correctly and know how to use it.

As a company, you are always looking for a competitive advantage. Data, if used properly, can provide you with this distinctive edge. Data-driven decision-making, driven by accurate, relevant and timely information, is essential in this process. Companies that embrace this approach not only increase their capacity to engage and retain customers, but also find new ways to improve their operational efficiency.

With so many departments working with so many different items of data, organisations face quite a few challenges. These can include, for example, having to enter data manually with the risk of typos, or customers who move and forget to update their address. Chances are you will recognise yourself in one (or more) of the challenges below associated with data.

Master Data challenges

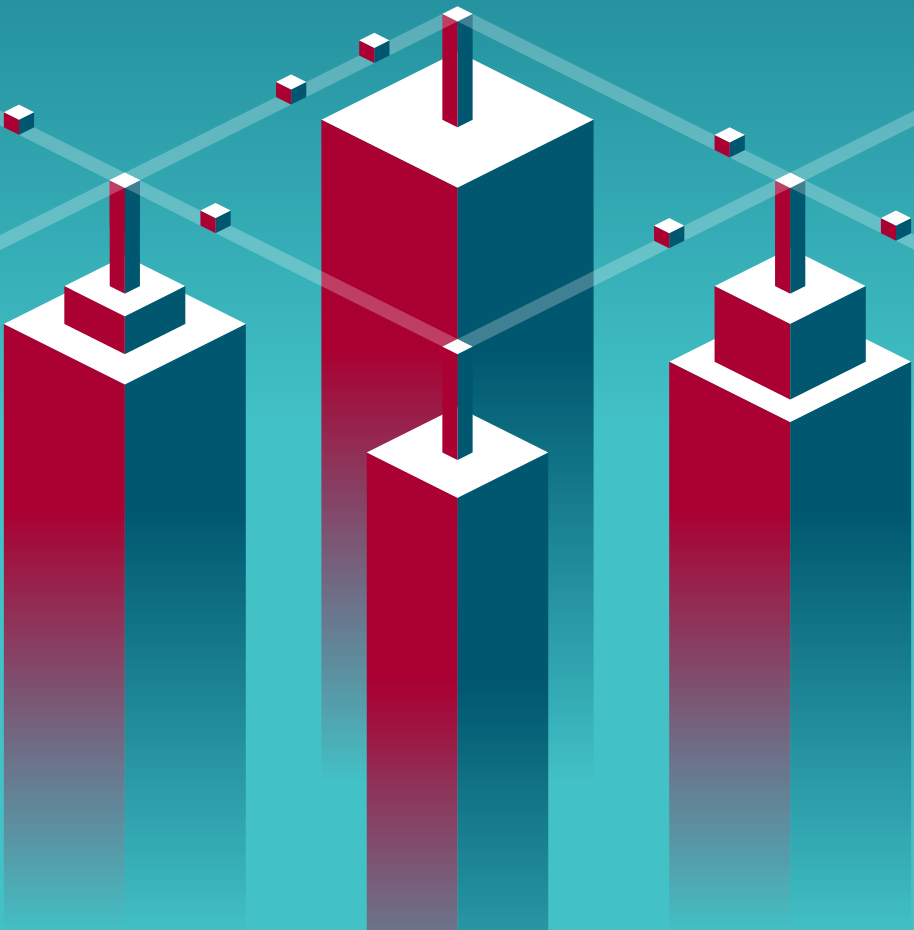
-
- 1 Entering data takes too long
-
- 2 Manual input is fault-sensitive
-
- 3 Applicants / other departments provide me with incomplete data
-
- 4 Master data department is seen as “guilty” of incomplete or bad data
-
- 5 Incorrect data causes problems
-
- 6 Data often needs to be corrected to improve reporting
-
- 7 I am not sure, working with different systems, if I’m looking at the same company
-
- 8 I can’t guarantee my data quality
-
- 9 I have duplicate records and OOB in my CRM/ERP
-
- 10 I don’t always receive reliable information
-
- 11 I am not informed of changes in master data
-
- 12 Unboarding a customer is processed by too many different departments
-
- 13 My data needs to be updated regularly but it is time consuming
-

If you want to harness the full value of data, knowing how to resolve these challenges and even prevent them altogether is crucial.

These challenges often leave a wealth of valuable insights undiscovered in the so-called “data silos”. Untapped data can be an invaluable source of competitive advantage, provided it is properly unlocked and integrated into an organisation’s decision-making processes.

In this white paper, we explore the role of data in the business market, the challenges and opportunities associated with data management, and an innovative solution that can help you get the most out of your precious data.

The role of data in the business market



Data as a strategic tool for customer acquisition and retention

In the B2B landscape, competition to build and maintain valuable business relationships is fiercer than ever. In this battle, data has become an indispensable strategic tool in exploring new business opportunities and building sustainable customer relationships. After all, retaining a customer is cheaper and easier than acquiring a new one.

Organisations which successfully leverage business data are able to gain deep insight into the needs, challenges and goals of their potential and existing customers. By accurately segmenting and analysing, you as a company can develop targeted marketing efforts in response to the specific demands of different target groups. This creates an advanced approach to customer acquisition, allowing you to better respond to customer needs.

Data-driven decision-making

Collecting information accurately at the right times, analysing it and using it correctly puts you on the right track to success. This data enables you to make data-driven decisions that can give you an edge over competitors. Forrester research has shown that companies that rely on data and use it for strategic decisions are also growing faster.

By using B2B data to gain insight into market trends, customer behaviour and competition, you as a company are in a better position to make strategic decisions. For example, by understanding which market segments have the most growth potential, companies can focus their resources on the most promising businesses.

In addition, the data-driven approach enables organisations to respond in real time to changing market conditions and customer needs. B2B data can be used to adjust offerings, optimise pricing

and develop new products or services that closely match what the market needs at that point in time. In short, it makes you a lot more resilient as a company.

Data as protection against risks

If you have accurate business data, you can also use it to assess risks. If you do not have this data, there are a number of risks worth taking into account.



Inaccurate decision-making: Bad or incomplete data can lead to erroneous decisions. If they don't have accurate information, companies can make strategic mistakes such as incorrect pricing, selecting the wrong target market or inadequate inventory planning.



Impaired customer relationships: In the B2B market, success often revolves around building and maintaining long-term relationships. As we mentioned earlier, poor insight into customer needs and behaviour can lead to flawed customer interactions and possibly the loss of valuable customers.



Increased costs: The lack of good business data can cause inefficiencies in operational processes such as marketing, sales, customer service and finance. Think of incorrect invoicing, inaccurate campaign results, etc.



Competitive disadvantage: Competitors who do have access to quality business data can gain a significant competitive advantage. They can customise their offers with greater accuracy, run more effective marketing campaigns and respond faster to changing market conditions.



Reputational damage: Incorrect or outdated information can lead to inaccurate communication with customers, partners or suppliers. This may cause confusion, dissatisfaction and ultimately damage to your company's reputation.

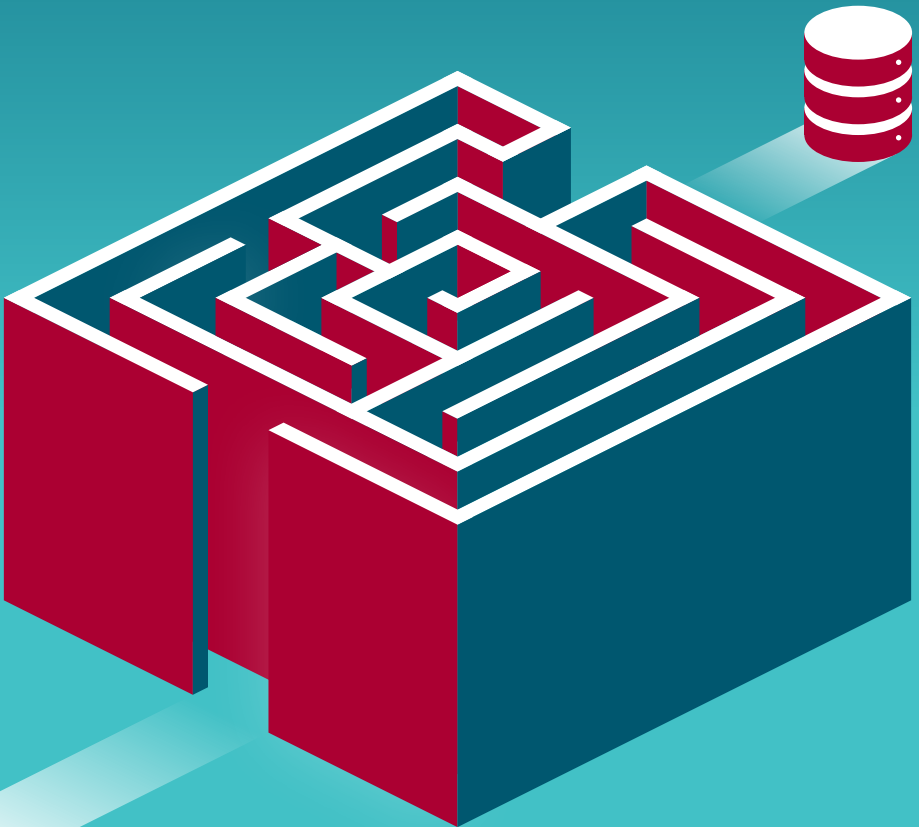


Legal and regulatory risks: As a company, you are required to comply with certain regulations regarding data collection, storage and use. The lack of good data quality may give rise to legal issues and fines.



Innovation lag: Business data can provide valuable insights that can lead to innovation and product development. A lack of such data can hinder a company's ability to develop and market new products or services.

The challenges inherent to working with data



As mentioned in the introduction, working with data comes with a lot of challenges. We already described the most common ones in a blog.

For example, the data within organisations is often very fragmented, the quality and integrity of data is often not properly guaranteed, and you have to deal with privacy laws and the matter of compliance when collecting and monitoring your data. Many organisations are faced with the question of determining who is actually responsible for the data.

Fragmentation of data across organisations

Many organisations work with a CRM system. While, in theory, this system should be the heart of your data-driven organisation, what usually happens is that each department handles the data in its own way. CRMs are regularly emptied to create an overview in an Excel spreadsheet, or not everyone inputs the data in the CRM system, but it is saved in Excel, PowerPoint or other file formats. Since a company has multiple departments, and each department only needs one item of data, the data splits up and fragmentation occurs. The result: no one looks at the same data and the data is often inaccurate. This leads to discussions about numbers, dashboards that are incorrect and conclusions drawn on the basis of incorrect data.

Data quality

If your data is spread across your organisation, can you still guarantee its quality? Not really. In order to have good quality data, you must:

- Have a reliable source of information
- Update the data regularly to check if changes have occurred
- Keep the data in one location, so that everyone looks at the same data regardless of department

You'd think that the answer to point number one is easy: since my customers enter their own data, it is reliable. Unfortunately, customers sometimes make a typo, enter the wrong address or forget to update their address after they move. And those are just some examples based on your customer's good faith. A customer who is looking for free products or free services will of course not share reliable information with you. External data sources are therefore essential.

Privacy

Do you handle data carelessly and is your data stored in Excel files, separate documents and numerous tools? If that's the case, your risk of a data breach is high. In a world where the GDPR is strictly enforced and where *trial by media* is the rule rather than the exception for large companies, you want to prevent this at all times. By protecting your data properly, and especially by storing it in one place, you significantly reduce the chance of a leak. This enables you to monitor more effectively who has access to the data, to minimise or block access and to make data items invisible to other departments, so that not everyone can see sensitive information.

Trial by media: The media and therefore the public condemn you severely for something you or your company have (possibly) done.

6 advantages of master data management

Clean, complete, and up-to-date data: master data management offers many advantages.



Brings order

Link your customer data in different databases with one global identifier for companies, like our D-U-N-S number. This creates order in your existing data, but also all the data you add will be properly organized.



Pair with confidence

If your customer data is always correct and up to date, you can confidently link it to other systems. Like an accounting program for automatically loading addresses and VAT numbers for the invoice.



Up-to-date and complete

With master data management, you make sure that the customer data in your systems is current and complete. That's what makes it so pleasant to work with.



One data truth

Master data management helps you to create what is known as a 'single source of truth', where every employee works with the same source of information within their own systems.



Data management

Every day there are moves and acquisitions, only no one takes ownership to update this data. Thanks to master data management, this and other data is updated automatically and daily.



Generates money

Clean customer data prevents hassles such as duplicate records in your CRM. This improves the results of marketing campaigns, for example, and makes clean data more money

Data governance and integration



The importance of a robust data governance strategy

We've said it again and again: if data belongs to everyone, then it belongs to no one. Which means data governance is a must. Someone has to ensure that the data is correct. After all, as a company you often depend on getting the right data at the right time. A robust data governance strategy is a critical factor in effectively managing and leveraging this valuable information. This strategy not only lays the foundation for the optimal use of data; it also has a profound influence on the operational processes of your organisation.

A well-designed data governance strategy first and foremost guarantees the effective availability of data. This means that data is easily accessible to relevant stakeholders when needed. It allows decision-makers at every level of the organisation to rely on the right information when making strategic and operational decisions. Not only does this contribute to more efficient business operations; it also reduces the risk of wrong decision-making due to inaccessible data.

In addition, data governance plays a crucial role in facilitating collaboration within the organisation. When given clear guidelines and responsibilities for data usage and management, employees can collaborate more effectively. This avoids duplication of effort, minimises confusion and improves operational efficiency. Furthermore, data governance encourages streamlined information exchange, leading to better decision-making and improved strategic planning.

There is yet another aspect of data governance: it promotes consistency and standardisation in the use of data. This ensures that the same data is interpreted and used in the same way, regardless of department or function within the organisation, which minimises confusion and misunderstandings and creates an *SSOT (Single Source of Truth)*: everyone looks at the same data.

SSOT: A unique and clear source of truth

Data governance and your CRM system

More often than not, data does not come from a single source. Just think of forms that customers fill in, invoices that are in your accounting system, order information and other data that you have at your disposal. This data is often stored in all kinds of places. We call these data silos. To make the most of your data, you need to consolidate and integrate all this data in one location. The best place is a CRM system like MD Dynamics or Salesforce.

The data silos need to be merged into your CRM. We already wrote about this in our white paper entitled: Battle for data quality. Before doing this, you should start by cleaning up your database. This means de-duplication, standardisation, removing incorrect information and so on. While this can be a time-consuming process, remember: garbage in, garbage out. After all, you are reading this white paper to save money, and duplicate data costs a lot of money.

A D-U-N-S number can speed up your clean-up process in this case. These numbers are linked to one entity worldwide. This allows you to see which companies have duplicate records. But you can also outsource this long process. The clean-up process will then look like this:

-
- 1 A company provides a dataset. This can be done through a file, but usually a live connection (API) is established between data from the CRM or ERP system and the D&B Data Cloud.
 - 2 The company records supplied are matched with the D&B reference database and are assigned their corresponding D-U-N-S numbers.
-

-
- 3 Company records are verified. Duplicate records, companies that are out of business and companies that belong to the same group are identified. Whenever data is inconsistent, replacement suggestions are made based on the correct data in the D&B database.
-
- 4 The company receives the end results directly in the CRM or ERP system. The total overview shows, among other things, the number of records from companies that are out of business, the percentage of duplicates and inconsistent information.
-

The D&B database now consists of more than 500 million companies and uses more than 30,000 data sources to properly match the data for you. And with more than 175 years of data experience, we can safely say that we are good at it.

Now that your business data is clean, you need to keep it clean. How do you protect a database against contamination? By ensuring that new data is entered correctly from the outset. In 9 out of 10 cases, data contamination is caused by errors made during manual entry. These can include spelling mistakes or missing information.

The solution? Connect your CRM or ERP systems via an API database. Both newly entered and existing data are then immediately checked, corrected and supplemented. Such a link saves time, because there is less manual data input. Not to mention the fact that your data is always up to date, correct and consistent across different applications.

Using business data properly



Having clean data is all good and well, but all your good intentions fall flat if the organisation does not use the data as prescribed by your data strategy. That's why you need to promote data culture.

Data culture

Who doesn't know him? The sales guru who knows how to sell ice cream to Eskimos, but forgets all his receipts. They are the terror of every CRM admin and the bane of every company's data engine. While the importance of established processes is easy to implement, things are a lot more complicated when it comes to culture. This is because it concerns the unspoken habits within a company.

Habits are often invisible and unnoticeable, but they do cause data management to go awry at many companies. Even if you have great tools, collect the most valuable data from external parties and set up the best processes, it is of no use to you if people are unwilling or unable to get involved.

Changing a culture is not easy. People are creatures of habit. Once they get used to working in a certain way, they don't like to deviate from it. The best way to enable the change is to show them that it actually makes their work easier, more effective or more fun. And that you take their wishes into account at the same time.

Data across all departments

Data is important for every department. Marketing likes to create campaigns with the data it collects, sales wants to know who to talk to, finance needs data for invoicing and so on. This data is essential for good decision-making. Every team has different priorities, but how do you provide each department with exactly the item of data they need in a single system?

De voordelen van data management voor verschillende afdelingen



Marketing

Operational

- Better define new leads and accelerate conversions
- Increase the reliability of communication campaigns (avoid duplicates, ensure addresses are correct, etc.)
- Consolidate all information about subsidiaries, branches and contacts from the same group to optimise client loyalty programs and cross-selling campaign

Strategic

- Make creation of client profiles more accurate thanks to reliable data
- Assess client dependency by sector or geographical area



Sales

Operational

- Increase sales teams' productivity by reducing administrative work (manually entering CRM data, etc.)
- Increase their client knowledge thanks to value-added D&B information that is updated daily
- Facilitate key account prospection through corporate family trees

Strategic

- Improve sales organisation with segmentation and corporate structure data
- Set international objectives for relevant key accounts based on family trees
- Reassign the productivity gain to client loyalty or prospecting



Finance

Operational

- Reduce costs and delays related to misdirected invoices (wrong address, wrong contact details, etc.)
- Accelerate your credit decisions thanks to risk data
- Consolidate outstanding payments from clients that are part of the same group

Strategic

- Implement an effective “lead to cash” strategy
- “lead to cash” strategie.
- Increase team productivity by reducing administrative tasks and information collection time



IT

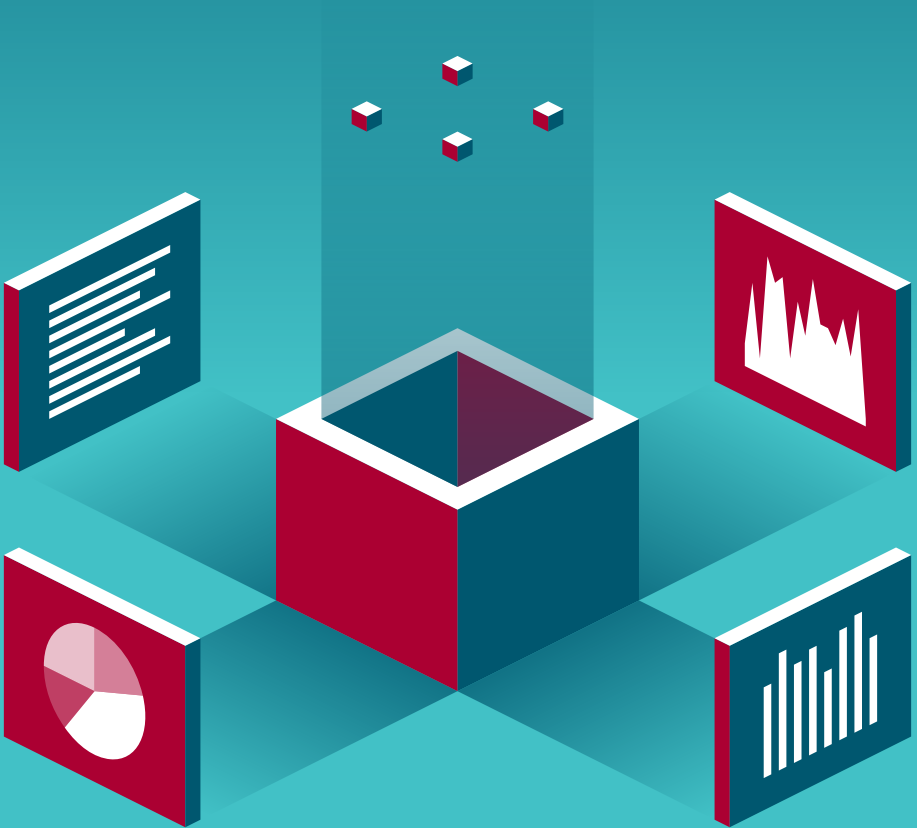
Operational

- Enrich your systems with relevant, homogeneous data that can easily be combined (D-U-N-S)
- Facilitate data exchanges between your different databases and business applications

Strategic

- Accelerate compliance procedures: meet your legal requirements for third party identification, segmentation, data monitoring and transparency (e.g. KYC, SOX, MiFID, Basel II, Small Business Act, etc.)















To every department its data with Direct+ Data Blocks



Earlier, we talked about the “Single Source of Truth” (SSOT) that you want to create in your company, and also that your CRM is the best place for this. Your data has been cleaned up, and now it’s time to feed your CRM with real-time data so that every department gets exactly the piece of information they need.

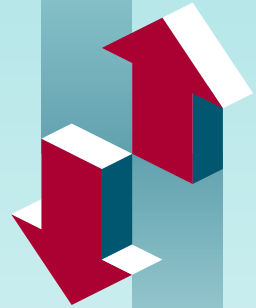
Direct+ Data Blocks is a direct integration into your CRM system and, as the name suggests, consists of “data blocks”. Since you can decide which blocks your organisation needs, you only purchase the data you really need. Each data block also has several levels of depth that you can choose from.



	Data block Recommended	Data element
	Company Entity Resolution	Match grades, confidence code, D-U-N-S Number and 20+ more
	Company Information	Business names and addresses, industry codes, registry and VAT numbers and 300+ more
	Principal & Contacts	Principal name & title, birth date and 150+ more
	Hierarchies & Connections	headquarters, domestic & global ultimates, subsidiaries and 100+ more
	Sales & Marketing Insights	Buying power, Decision HQ indicator, and 30+ more
	Company News	News article, description and 10+ more
	Industry Profile	Industry market analysis, industry codes, and 30+ more
	Third-Party Risk Insights	D&B Supplier Stability Index, Supplier Evaluation Risk Score
	Diversity Insights	Woman-owned, veteran, green certified companies, and 150+ more
	Ownership Insights	Shareholder contact information, percentage of ownership and 120+ more
	Financial Strength Insights	D&B Failure Score, D&B Rating, Credit Limit and 100+ more
	Company Financials	Current & previous financial statements, ratios, stock information and 430+ more
	Filings & Events	Judgement filings, bankruptcy indicator, and 410+ more
	Payment Insights	Payment behavior, PAYDEX Score, bad debt experiences and 250+ more

Real-time data in practice

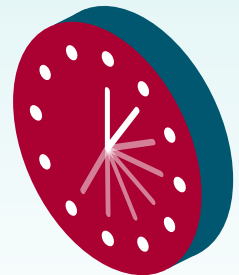
You've just learnt how to implement the necessary measures to get the most out of your data. You will now find a practical example below: having embraced the digital transformation, Vlerick Business School in Flanders explains how customer data has been leveraged in a new way in their Salesforce environment.



Vlerick Business School underwent a digital transformation some time ago. They were working on a new CRM system (Salesforce), but wanted to improve data quality immediately. Tom Van Steendam, Project Portfolio Manager at Vlerick: “We noticed that employees, from account managers to finance, had to deal with customer-related data at different times and in different processes. Whether it was to create customers in the system, request history or implement changes. There was no clear way of checking and entering data, which meant there was a chance that duplicates or errors would occur. We wanted to prevent people from continuing to work with Excel lists, just as we were making a fresh start with Salesforce CRM.”

“We thought it would be good to start with a clean slate, in this case clean data,” Tom Van Steendam explains. “In collaboration with Altares Dun & Bradstreet, we linked the unique D-U-N-S numbers to the correct business entities in our data sources. In this way, we cleaned up and completed the database. The duplicates have been removed, as have the inactive accounts, and all fields – from VAT numbers to addresses – have been corrected where necessary. We were pleased to see that we actually had our database very well organised; the number of mutations was less than expected. Still, after this clean-up action, it was good to be able to enrich our data with that of Altares Dun & Bradstreet and thus help our employees with valuable customer insights.”

In addition to the fact that relationship management has improved with this method, Vlerick Business School has also increased efficiency. Troyka Vervaeke: “Employees spend much less time on the administrative process. New accounts are created according to a controlled workflow, which involves the input of correct data from the outset. This saves a lot of time in the billing process, for example.”



Conclusion

As you have read, data-driven decision-making is crucial for modern businesses. Data-driven organisations are more likely to retain and acquire customers, but maximising business data comes with challenges.

Data plays a key role in B2B customer relationships, in which accurate segmentation and data-driven decisions contribute to strategic choices. Data quality, privacy and governance are challenges, while data governance ensures reliable and standardised data. Creating a data-driven culture and integrating real-time data, such as through Direct+ Data Blocks, improves business processes. The practical example of Vlerick Business School shows successful results. In short, this white paper underlines the importance of effective data collection, management and use for business success.

**Would you like to know what we can do
for your organisation?**

Contact us

OUR VISION

Smart insights to shape your future

WE believe data
is only valuable
when it has a
purpose



WE guide you
through this
ever-expanding
data universe



YOU create a
company culture
where data is
empowered to be
a strategic growth
change-driver

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