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CREATING A SINGLE CUSTOMER VIEW:
THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA QUALITY FOR CRM

Effective CRM demands the creation of a single, complete, accurate view of customer information that ideally captures all interactions and transactions associated with the customer. Competitive companies leverage single, trusted views of customers to drive improvements in product positioning, customer service and support, and customer retention and lifetime value. In today's connected world, customer information degrades rapidly. Enterprises require a data quality solution to rapidly profile and discover data anomalies and issues, correct and standardize all types of data, and maintain data accuracy and consistency in real time.

Customer Data Challenges

Many large enterprises have spent significant time and money implementing CRM systems, yet struggle to achieve the elusive "single customer view" they expected. The complexities of handling customer data from multiple sources prove much harder to resolve than many companies anticipate. This is due to the difficulties of pulling data from multiple source systems, defining and coordinating complex workflows, and managing roles and responsibilities across sales, marketing, and service organizations.

To further complicate matters, as business needs evolve over time, all these activities must be coordinated with back-end systems to maintain information consistency and relevance. It is this need for coordination of information across lines of business, systems, and functional areas that can represent barriers that impede the creation of an accurate, consolidated customer view.

Some examples:

Understanding the Current State of Your Data:
Source systems are often riddled with inaccurate and duplicate data. These problems become exponentially more difficult to resolve when data from multiple sources is consolidated and/or synchronized.

Identifying Customer Relationships:
Determining how different consumers or corporate customers might be related requires insight into which customers belong to the same household or to the same subsidiary or parent company.

Managing Transient Data:
Business today is online, instantaneous, and connected. Customer, product, and supplier information can change in a single transaction. Data that changes frequently can degrade information accuracy, impact integration, and present hurdles to defining up-to-date views across systems.

Obtaining a 360-Degree Perspective:
Creating a multidimensional, unified customer view requires the integration of more than customer profile data. It necessitates the inclusion of product purchases, call history, credit history, and more from multiple lines of business within the organization.

Multi-Department Consistency:
Companies want consistent business processes that connect departments and span applications in an effort to resolve disparate, uncoordinated activities and improve the customer experience. This requires disciplined governance at the enterprise level.

Collaboration Between Business and IT:
Many CRM initiatives fail because IT and business users find it challenging to communicate and work as a team. Poor communication can be exacerbated by different data priorities, such as usage vs. governance, or the lack of a common set of semantics.

Managing Multi-Domain Global Data:
Large businesses have customers that span the globe. To provide high-quality service and support, their technology solutions must apply correct language and local standards to data. This demands context-sensitive tools that recognize the origin of data automatically and process mixed-country data dynamically.

CRM: Delivering a Single Customer View

A robust data quality solution plays a key role in building and maintaining up-to-date, integrated views of customers. It not only corrects and standardizes data as it is extracted from multiple sources, but it also consolidates multiple records pertaining to a single person and identifies consumer households and corporate relationships across records. Successful organizations have discovered that for CRM to work, data quality is fundamental.

Competitive companies leverage single, trusted views of customers to drive improvements in product positioning, customer service and support, and customer retention and lifetime value. These companies target process improvements with precision using consistent, accurate, complete, and up-to-date views of core customer data and present this view to all business-critical applications and systems that rely on correct customer data.

In any enterprise, every business-critical application and core operational system must be populated with quality data. Success depends on it. Every decision, every strategy, every key business process relies on high-quality customer, product, financial, and sales data. Better data in your operational systems means that better data drives your business. Data flows throughout the enterprise and impacts every process.

High-quality data lets you be nimble and competitive. But how can organizations improve data quality consistently and efficiently for so many types of data? Building single views of customers, suppliers, and products demands a data quality solution that can profile, cleanse, parse, and standardize information across disparate data sources, applications, systems, and platforms and across boundaries, regions, languages, and currencies. And users demand repeatable business processes and business rules that they can create once and deploy across the enterprise.

Getting Ahead of the Curve with Technology

The companies that are able to quickly and cost-effectively make the biggest leaps forward are the ones that place importance on the quality of the data, its value, and its relevance. Data is inherently volatile. Frequently, when information enters systems it is already in a state of ill repair, with inconsistencies and missing and misfielded data. Even data that enters systems as accurate and consistent information is predisposed to degradation, becoming out of date and unreliable. Data updates, database modifications, new transactions, and process changes must all ensure that customer data remains accurate and consistent in order to maintain the unified view that required so much effort to create in the first place.

The answer to improved customer data management is found in an enterprise-strength data quality solution that can handle and overcome these tough challenges. To ensure that data is accurate, complete, current, and consistent, organizations need the benefits of automated discovery and profiling, data quality correction and improvement, and governance of any type of data in real-time and batch environments.

Enterprise data quality solutions should provide integration with key business applications to deliver a data quality service that profiles and discovers data issues and anomalies, cleanses and monitors data quality operationally, and enhances the design and delivery of these enterprise solutions. Data quality delivered the right way helps you realize the value of your core business technology investments by improving the quality of the data upon which those investments depend.

Luxury Car Manufacturer

Challenge
Migrate CRM processes to SAP, resolving varied data formats and data quality across disparate source systems, as well as appending customer records with correct name and address information in the right language for every country.

Results
Dealerships and subsidiaries can conduct global searches to view accurate and up-to-date customer information and modify matching parameters for global data on the fly. The manufacturer can validate and update customer data in batch and real time, despite having millions of records.

The Devil - and the Differentiation - Is in the Details
When considering a data quality solution, consider the following elements as important factors:

Consider Time to Value
Lengthy, cumbersome implementations allow problems with data to persist. Look for solutions that can quickly show their merit in improved CRM operations. This accelerates delivery of ROI and enhances adoption with proven value.

Understand Your Audience
In many circumstances, it is business users (those who depend on the data) who possess the expertise to make decisions about what data means within their business context, whether it is valid, and what is likely to be an anomaly. An effective data quality solution must therefore provide appropriate tools for business users to view and interact with the data.

Consider the Source
Cleansing data in real time, at the source, is the best strategy to prevent bad data from ever entering your CRM system, particularly given the fairly questionably quality of data received from external providers.

Enrich
Consider the adoption of services that can look outside your own data to deliver enhanced understanding of the customer with information such as physical address changes, email addresses and phone numbers, preferred method of contact, demographic and lifestyle information, company profiles and background information, mail and suppression preferences.

Look for Architechtural Flexibility
Adding a data quality solution to an already lengthy queue of IT projects may hinder the chances of success. Look for flexibility in deployment and administrative options (including cloud models) as a way to facilitate adoption.

Automate Where Possible
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Consolidate
Integrate data from disparate systems, identifying duplicates and redundancies. Link corporate records from various business units, subsidiaries, and related companies (B2B) or all the consumers within defined households (B2C).

Be Vigilant
Monitor your data's compliance with company standards. Define alerts for specific events/changes in source systems and track data quality trends over time. Schedule regular data audits and implement preventive data quality processes at the source to avoid errors and data decay.

Telecommunications Provider

Challenge
Needed a process to take tens of millions of customer records from multiple disparate sources, cleanse and standardize address formats, and then accurately identify, group, and link multiple records common to one customer account, household, or business. The company wanted to maintain customer data quality over time, encompassing both existing data offline and new data entered by call center operatives and others in real time.

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Exercise the Full Value of CRM with Data Quality

Data quality can prove fundamental to successful CRM. It benefits many areas, from initial implementation to advanced analytics, enterprise-wide standards enforcement, and data governance.

Decreased Integration Risks:

Statistics show that four out of five integration projects fail. The underestimation of data problems undermines project timelines and creates budget overruns. Powerful data quality software reduces these risks by enabling up-front, automated data profiling, discovery, and analysis and by automatically correcting and standardizing data during the integration process.

Faster User Adoption:

Business and technical users alike trust high-quality data and are far more likely to adopt new systems and business processes rapidly when they know that the technology is proven and the data is trustworthy.

Increased Revenue Per Customer:

Improved information quality drives better knowledge of purchasing habits, preferences, history, and household relationships, increasing opportunities to upsell and cross-sell complementary products.

Precise Customer Identity Management:

Compliance and privacy regulations demand more precise and reliable identification of customers. Apply the power of relationship management to ensure that parent/child associations are identified and preserved.

Improved Customer Service:

Having accurate customer information, transaction history data, and links to related information enables your organization to improve service and support and ultimately retain your customers.

Fewer Errors in Operational Systems:

Reusable data quality processes can reduce the errors that pollute operational systems, where 30% error rates are often the norm.

Enterprise-wide Enforcement of Customer Data Standards:

Organizations must establish standards for data governance in order for business processes that span multiple applications in a service-oriented architecture to work.

Rapid Information Integration:

Reusable rules and business standards for customer data streamline the integration of new information from acquisitions, mergers, and third-party sources with existing data stores.

Financial Services Provider

Challenge
Create a trusted, single customer view from multiple systems that could provide an unparalleled customer experience.

Results
Trillium enabled the rapid deployment of a single customer view that presented all of the customer's chosen products, thus enabling customer service associates to identify complementary products to cross-sell. Within its commercial account business, in a 12-month period the bank increased the conversion rate from 1% to 5% among customers who held competitor cards.

Conclusion

Data quality solutions can help companies build a solid foundation for their customer acquisition and management efforts. When developed with enterprise requirements in mind, reusable business rules and processes can help customers design, develop, deploy, and maintain data standards for their business-critical CRM applications. There are many challenges to assurance of data quality, but a proactive approach can help ensure that your customer relationship efforts are not sabotaged by incomplete or inaccurate data.