The Mezzanine Group

IS BAD CUSTOMER DATA DRAGGING YOU DOWN?

Keep Your Data Clean to Optimize Marketing ROI and Drive More Revenue

It's no secret that companies today are absolutely inundated with data. And that's a good thing. When managed properly, data has the power to optimize marketing, cultivate better leads, increase customer loyalty and drive more revenue to the bottom line.

When it comes to B2B (Business-to-Business) marketing, most often there are multiple decision makers in a single sale. Along the way, they are following their own individual path to purchase. B2B Marketers must use the data they collect to deliver the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and through the right channel – no simple task. To do this properly, your data must be clean, segmented, personalized and follow your contacts' buying lifecycle.

Consider the following stats[1]:

Only **49%** of firms believe that the data they collect is trustworthy, complete and accurate.

As many as **80%** of firms struggle to manage the volume, variety and velocity of their data.
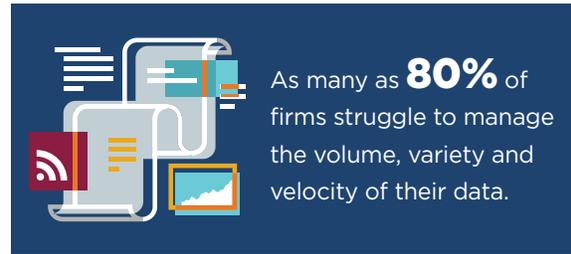
What these numbers show is that your contacts database needs to be regularly cleaned and properly maintained. It isn't a job most people relish – even data scientists say data cleaning and organizing is their least enjoyable task.[2] But it's necessary. Data management challenges create issues throughout sales and marketing, so it's important to keep the data clean in your CRM and marketing automation portals. Start with the basics – your email lists.

Cleaning email lists

When was the last time you updated your email lists? First perform a simple read through to correct typos like bob@gmail.con. At the same time, remove any generic addresses like sales@companyname.com and clean out any duplicate contacts.

From there, you want to manage your bounce rates. You don't have to decipher all those cryptic bounce codes you receive, just manage them at the hard and soft bounce level. A soft bounce means there's a temporary problem with delivery such as a full mailbox. Whereas a hard bounce indicates a permanent delivery problem. A good rule of thumb is to keep the soft bounces on your list in the hopes that any delivery issues resolve themselves and remove the hard bounces.

In fact, removing hard bounces is critical, because ISPs track your hard bounce numbers and may block your messages as spam. Also, monitor customer requests for removal and unsubscribe them immediately. ISPs track that as well. And finally, remove your inactive subscribers. This will improve your email ROI and ensure you only reach out to subscribers who are actively engaged. It's important to note here that you should first try a re-engagement campaign – using an incentive or simply asking if contacts wish to remain subscribed – before removing inactive contacts.

Segmenting contact lists
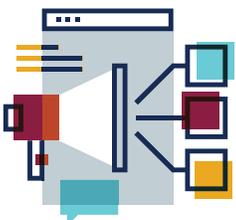
Only 46% of firms believe that they are effective at using customer data.[1] If you're like most companies, you likely have one big, bloated list of old and new customers and prospects. It's great to have a big list, but you likely aren't getting much out of it if you haven't segmented it.

A recent survey shows that list quality, segmentation and personalization are top priorities for email marketers.[3] And buyer personas are an important part of all three. Buyer or customer personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal customers. Every marketing strategy should include them. Assign personas to your contacts to ensure your prospective buyers and customers receive only the content that they need and want.

With the understanding that no single marketing message or campaign will resonate with everyone, further segment your list with the help of the following:

Calls to action

One of the best ways to collect data and also build out your database is through CTAs (Calls to Action). CTAs should be on your web pages, in online brochures and content, in emails and newsletters and in social media posts. It's appropriate, and recommended, that you include a CTA in pretty much all of your digital marketing. Before you write a CTA, consider the medium and the information you want to collect. Your CTA can do many things. It can spur people to contact one of your sales people (who can then gather intel); it can take contacts to an open email where they can type in their query; it can lead to a form fill to order free online content; or it can lead to a registration form for an event or webinar. In all cases a CTA should enable you to learn more about the people who are engaging with your company to help you segment your list.

Previous purchases

This may seem obvious, but remember to segment your client list based on which products or services have been purchased in the past. Use that information to introduce new or add-on products or services, including upgrades, maintenance packages and/or extended warranties.

Drip campaigns

Drip marketing campaigns are usually automated, and they send out relevant messages or content at the right time in the purchasing process to move a lead further down the sales funnel. At the same time, they collect information that will assist with your list segmentation, including the products that the lead is interested in, what price point level they are engaging at, what knowledge gaps they feel they need to fill and more. Consider the length of a customer's or prospect's engagement with your company and market accordingly. For example, a newcomer to your website should be getting emails and content that will help build awareness of your brand and your credibility. Whereas you wouldn't want to send the basics about your company to someone who has been receiving your monthly newsletter for a year.

Buyer lifecycle

Use what you've learned in your drip campaigns to ensure that your database is also segmented according to where each contact is in the buyer lifecycle. For example, don't begin by sending highly technical specs to a 'green' prospect before they even understand the basic benefits to be derived from your product. You need to start slowly and dole out information as needed and wanted. If you're using marketing automation, the software will do the segmentation work for you. Without such segmentation it's impossible to create targeted, personalized marketing and engagement strategies.

Personalizing marketing

By keeping your lists clean and updated, you'll be able to accurately personalize your marketing to individual recipients. Remember to use the person's name in the subject line of emails, if appropriate. And don't forget to also personalize the sender. Make sure the recipient knows exactly who and where an email has come from, by including a contact name, title and email address. This will help build trust and credibility.

Keeping your data marketing-ready

If you're like most companies, you'll be tempted to move on to other pressing projects once you've cleaned up your data and properly segmented your lists for targeting and personalization. But keeping data clean and marketing-ready must be treated as an ongoing task, or your list will end up just as bloated, unwieldy and ineffectual as before.

Here are some strategies to keep your data clean on an ongoing basis:

Running campaigns consistently

As mentioned above, we truly believe in the power of drip campaigns for data collection and segmentation. These consistent, targeted campaigns not only allow you to deliver the most relevant content to the right buyer at the right time, they also help keep your data squeaky clean. By consistently gathering information about your contacts, you'll be able to catch changes in a timely fashion – including changes in title (and therefore purchasing influence), as well as relevant staff changeovers – so you're always addressing the correct person.

Setting up processes

As with any task that needs regular attention, processes need to be put in place to follow up on hard bounce emails and opt-outs so that you can remove these contacts from your list within a reasonable amount of time.

Asking questions

Consider adding an annual content survey to your marketing calendar. This can serve to confirm each subscriber's contact details, while at the same time polling them on the content they're receiving. Include a list of the types of content they've opted to receive and other content to which they might wish to subscribe. Also, give them an opportunity to opt out of any subscriptions to ensure you're not marketing to unengaged subscribers. Remember to keep your survey short, but also build in questions that will help you further segment your list.

Hiring help

You might want to consider hiring a sales or marketing operations person to ensure that the leads coming in are cleaned on a weekly or even a daily basis, depending on your campaign frequency. This person could also be responsible for ensuring compliance with privacy and anti-spam laws in the jurisdictions in which you do business.
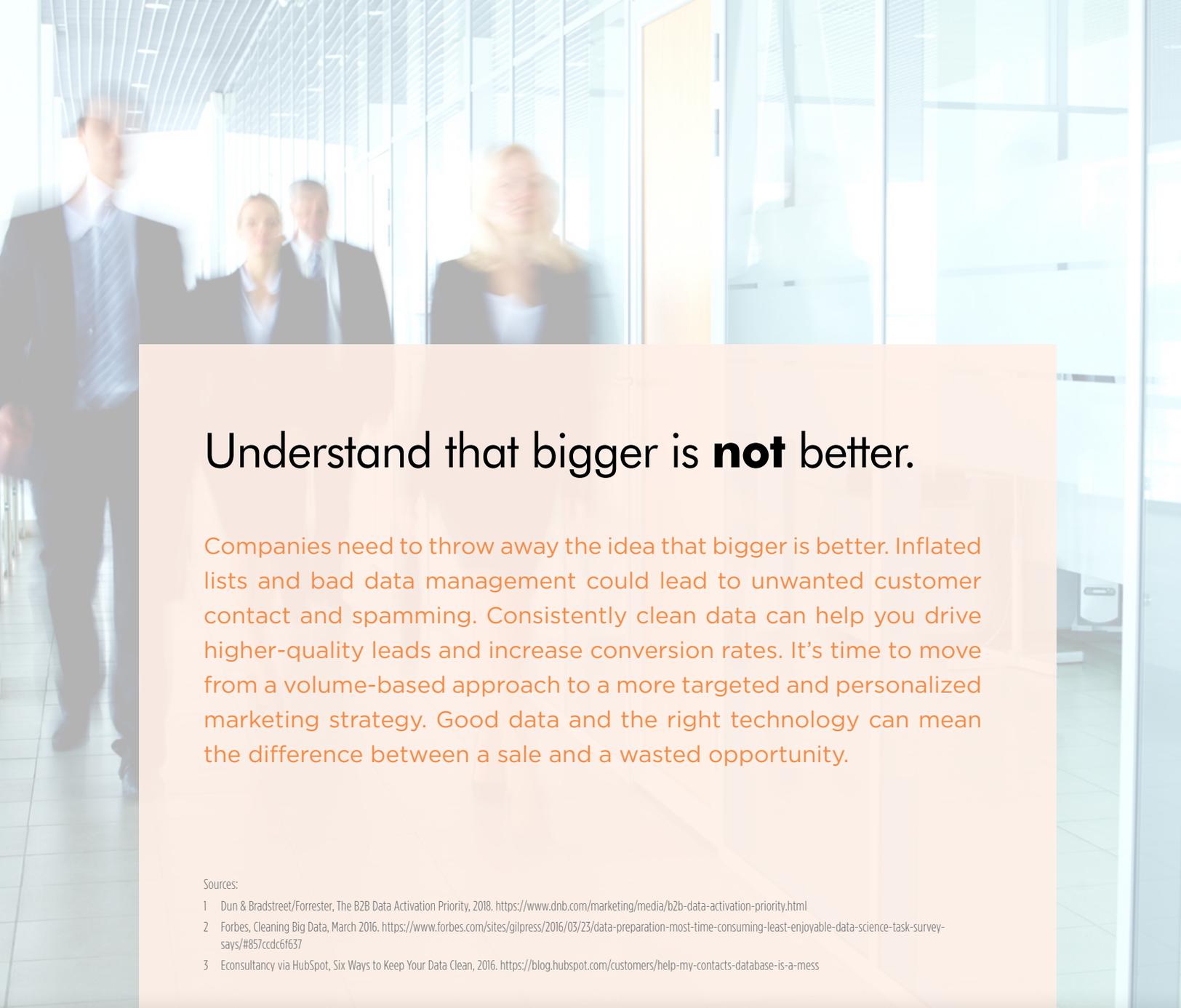
Understand that bigger is **not** better.

Companies need to throw away the idea that bigger is better. Inflated lists and bad data management could lead to unwanted customer contact and spamming. Consistently clean data can help you drive higher-quality leads and increase conversion rates. It's time to move from a volume-based approach to a more targeted and personalized marketing strategy. Good data and the right technology can mean the difference between a sale and a wasted opportunity.

Sources:

1 Dun & Bradstreet/Forrester, The B2B Data Activation Priority, 2018. https://www.dnb.com/marketing/media/b2b-data-activation-priority.html

2 Forbes, Cleaning Big Data, March 2016. https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2016/03/23/data-preparation-most-time-consuming-least-enjoyable-data-science-task-survey-says/#857ccdc6f637

3 Econsultancy via HubSpot, Six Ways to Keep Your Data Clean, 2016. https://blog.hubspot.com/customers/help-my-contacts-database-is-a-mess

At Mezzanine, we specialize in developing results-oriented strategies — and we're usually called upon to implement them as well. If you want to drive more revenue and see measurable results from your marketing...

LET'S TALK

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B2B MARKETING EXPERTS

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