

Case study: PDSA

Experian Data Quality helps PDSA to cut costs and keep in touch with supporters

Background

Leading veterinary charity PDSA cares for the pets of people in need by providing free veterinary services to their sick and injured pets and promoting responsible pet ownership. This year, the charity will look after more than 300,000 pet patients via its UK-wide network of PetAid hospitals, branches and practices.

One of PDSA's fundamental priorities is to raise public awareness of its work in order to improve pet health and to encourage donations. The charity receives no funding from the Government or the National Lottery for its PetAid services which this year will cost in excess of £42 million. It is, therefore, entirely dependent on public support to raise these vital funds.

Situation

PDSA benefits from, and communicates with, supporters in many ways. There is a network of more than 4,800 volunteers who donate their time, mainly to activities such as fundraising or working in one of PDSA's 182 charity shops. There is also a young supporters club called 'Pet Protectors' which has nearly 2,000 members. Nearly 100,000 supporters prefer to make regular donations and yet more make a one off gift, for example recognising PDSA in their will.

The contact details for each supporter are stored on a central database and PDSA's data quality team ensures that this information is accurate and properly maintained. The correct address is essential to ensure that PDSA can stay in touch with these vital contacts. During 2006, the IT team processed more than 46 million records and PDSA mailed over 15 million items. Mailings range from individual letters and direct mail pieces tailored to the supporters' preferences, to the magazine 'Companions', which is sent out on a quarterly basis to regular givers. Stuart Morrison, the database manager, reveals PDSA's data quality challenges: "We need our data to be

clean and up to date. We had found sending data offsite sometimes led to a 'black hole'. In addition, our supporters often have customer preferred addresses that we have a duty to respect. We therefore need full control over any changes that are made to our contact data. We needed a solution that would allow us to clean data from the desktop."

Solution

PDSA now uses address cleaning to clean all the records it processes. This is a critical step in keeping in touch with supporters further down the line. Integrated within an Oracle database, the solution cleans and verifies address records against Experian Data Quality's enhanced version of the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File (PAF). After each clean, the address cleaning tool provides a clear breakdown of the addresses that have been flagged as inaccurate and what amends have been made. A Royal Mail delivery point suffix is then appended, which can be used with Mailsort to secure postage discounts.

Once the data processing and data quality teams have run all the records through address cleaning, PDSA uses the correct contact information to perform further in-house data



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enhancements and profiling, which helps to target supporters more effectively. This can even include highlighting what kind of pet the supporter owns.

Results

Experian Data Quality software helps PDSA create a good supporter experience by meeting expectations around the mailings supporters wish to receive, and by personalising the mail according to each supporter's preferences. The charity has a clear view of how many supporters it has on its database, which means it can make more effective management decisions. When PDSA buys lists from external brokers, it can also now check the quality of the data and number of duplicates by running the data against the address cleaning tool. If there are a large number of duplicates or inaccurate records, it can negotiate the cost down with the supplier. Importantly for PDSA staff, the Experian Data Quality products are fully integrated with Oracle so there is no extra training involved.

"Experian's address cleaning software is a fast and high performance product. It can be set to run anytime and, as the information never leaves the database, there is no need for us to import and export the data. The software has proved extremely reliable", says Morrison.

Using Mailsort, PDSA has made enormous savings. Having accurate supporter addresses means that PDSA can claim valuable mailing discounts from the Royal Mail.

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