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# STEPS TO CLEANING YOUR DATA

FOR BETTER, DATA DRIVEN, DECISION-MAKING

With corporate data growing at an exponential rate each year, ensuring that your business data is clean and reliable is essential for the continued growth and success of your business.

Clean and accurate data is important for business performance and regulatory compliance. Poor quality data can affect decision-making and your ability to be agile and proactive, lead to inaccurate customer profiling, hinder successful lead generation, and damage your brand reputation.

**Here is our 5 step guide to cleaning your data.**

**66%**

OF COMPANIES ADMIT THAT BAD DATA AFFECTS THEIR BUSINESS

**40%**

of company data is found to be inaccurate

**25%**

OF COMPANY DATA IS FOUND TO BE DUPLICATED

# 1

## Is your data telling you the truth?

When it comes to dealing with your data, do you have **data paranoia** and question everything your data is telling you? Or do you **blindly assume** that your data is telling you the truth?

**The very first step is to admit that your data might not be correct.**

Is it current? Are there any errors or omissions? Has it been manipulated by a colleague or department? Is the data used by more than one department? Does your sales data match your accounting data? If possible, it's a good idea to check your data against another source.

William Edward Deming famously said, *'Without data, you're just another person with an opinion.'* We prefer the updated version of this quote by Iain Dougal of Pets Corner. ***'Without data you're just another person with an opinion, taking a risk.'*** Even a small amount of your data is incorrect and you're using it to inform decision-making and business strategy, then you're taking unnecessary risks with everything you do.

**In short, is your data ready to support business analytics and the future plans for your business ?**

A 2017 SURVEY BY HARVARD  
BUSINESS REVIEW FOUND THAT

# 45%

OF NEWLY-CREATED DATA RECORDS  
HAVE AT LEAST ONE CRITICAL ERROR.

# 65%

OF BUSINESSES ADMIT THEY  
RISK BECOMING IRRELEVANT  
AND UNCOMPETITIVE IF THEY  
DO NOT LEVERAGE DATA.

# 2 Data Review

Start by exploring the current state of your data.

- What systems/software are used?
- Where does your data originate from?
- When and where is your data stored? What format is it in?
- Who uses it? What is being measured and why?
- Is it easily accessible?

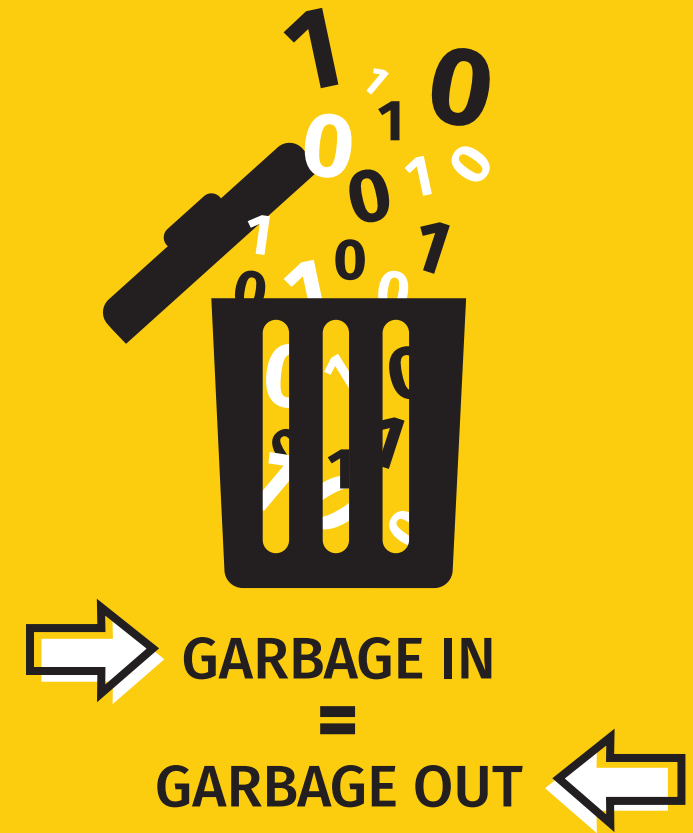
This will help you to understand the types of data are being gathered, what it's used for, and how it flows in and out of your organisation.

Next, you need to identify if it's accurate, current, clean and complete?

- Is your data correct? Are there gaps, errors or duplications?
- Is the data current and relevant?
- Does your data 'match up' across multiple systems/silos? For example, do you have different product codes for the same item or service in different systems?

It's important to spend the time getting things right at this stage, so that you can correct your data **ONCE**. Time is often wasted unknowingly in organisations when individuals working with 'bad' data correct the data themselves, multiple times, without understanding why or how the data is incorrect in the first place.

It could be a good idea to utilise Data Cleansing software to help with this process. Talk to a Data Management specialist for advice on which software will be a good fit for your business.



# 3 5x Why

5x Why is a simple but powerful tool. By asking “Why...?” five times, you can reveal the real problem you’re facing so that you can find the right solution.

You should use this technique if you are producing or being asked to produce reports and analytical dashboards.

You should always question:

- **Why is this needed?** - *Understand who has asked for this report, ,what information needs to be included, and where that information is stored.*
- **Why will this be beneficial?** - *Understand why they need the information and how it will help them to do their job.*
- **Why is this important?** - *Understand what the report will be used to inform.*
- **Why does this get produced?** - *Understand how will they use the information in it. Will it be shared with more than one person/department?*
- **Why is it needed?! (repeated)** - *So, what do you really need to know???*

If you can justify the answers to these questions, then you can be confident that you’re producing reports and analytical dashboards that really benefit your business.



# 4

## Data Control

Data Control should be a continuous process that controls, maintains and enhances the value of your data, and protects its integrity.

Without a commitment to ongoing data control and monitoring, your data can quickly become incorrect or invalid.

You need to be sure that:

- Data has been entered correctly
- Data has been categorised correctly
- Data records are complete and consistent
- Data isn't duplicated
- Data is collected within agreed time frames

Using the right technology, you can implement an Intelligent Data Control Process, which can alert you to any problems with your data, such as missing mandatory information, and allow them to 'fixed' straight away.

# 5

**CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH  
QUALITY INFORMATION ARE:**

- ACCURACY ✓**
- COMPLETENESS ✓**
- CONSISTENCY ✓**
- UNIQUENESS ✓**
- TIMELINESS ✓**

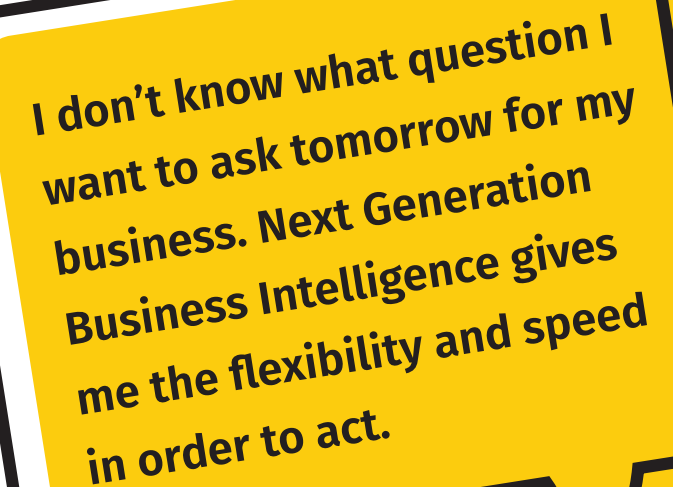
# 5 Implementation

Carrying out steps 1-4 are important to put you in the best possible position to make the right decisions for your business. Greater data reliability leads to better, data driven, decision-making. With more accurate analytics and reporting, the whole business can become more agile, efficient and proactive.

You can continue to analyse and report on your data manually, although this is time consuming and there is still a risk of user error.

To enjoy easier, faster access to your data, implementing a Business Intelligence (BI) solution will combine the complex growing data from multiple sources throughout your business, allowing you to analyse and interrogate it in real-time via interactive analytical dashboards. A BI solution gives you the answers and insights you need instantly, regardless of your technical ability.

**When you have clean data, a Data Control process in place, and are utilising the right technology, you're ready to fully use your data AND be confident that it's telling you the truth!**



**I don't know what question I want to ask tomorrow for my business. Next Generation Business Intelligence gives me the flexibility and speed in order to act.**

Iain Dougal | Financial Director | Pets Corner

Let's talk...

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