



# 4 PROJECTS THAT NEEDED HELP

Not all data endeavors can be done by your in-house team

BY JACLYN DEJOHN

**M**ost companies today have an ever-growing hoard of data. It can be a great resource if you have the pieces in place to use it, but many companies don't have those pieces. Whether you're missing essential data, skills on the team or just the time it would take to put it all together, that gap can really hold you back. That's when it makes sense to get some help.

Melissa's Professional Services department handles all custom data projects, developing and executing processes tailored to each of their client's needs and goals. Data cleansing and verification is a common endeavor within the department, which is completed in mass quantities within quick time frames thanks to Melissa's own Personator database.

"We at the Professional Services team have experience gathered from working with our customers and we can leverage them when consulting," says Kevin Ubay-Ubay, professional services manager at Melissa. "We can suggest ideas and make recommendations. We can tell customers what works and what doesn't work, because we work on a ton of these projects."

A common problem this team deals with is that data gets old and needs to be cleansed.

But data cleansing is far from the limits of what Melissa offers its clients. Here are four cases where the Melissa Professional Services Group helped companies like yours get into a position to succeed.



### CLEANING 100,000 RECORDS A DAY

A company in the marketing analytics and research industry came to Melissa for an ongoing project. To improve the cost-effectiveness of their marketing campaigns, it needed clean, deliverable mailing addresses.

The company had millions of data points, but there was no way to confirm the validity of these persons and addresses over time. So Melissa developed a custom automated process to clean the client's data, preventing losses on undeliverable mail.

The first part of the project consisted of batch runs, in which names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses were checked – and corrected – against several sources, including Melissa's Personator database, USPS®, NCOA, prison, and deceased records. The data sets were too cumbersome for the client to handle on its own. Some lists, recalled Ubay-Ubay, contained 40 million records.

This task would have been insurmountable without Melissa's help.

"With this type of volume, it's very difficult for them to process it themselves," says Ubay-Ubay. "But because we have the hardware and servers, we were able to process that amount of records – half a billion records."

So far, over 39 million prospect records have been verified, while 33 million more have had their addresses appended to their record, reinstating their value to the client. The project continues with 100,000 records processed daily. Summary reports detail the results and modifications, and are coded in an easy-to-read categorical hierarchy so that the client can consider the report from multiple perspectives.



### FILLING IN YOUR MISSING DATA

Incomplete, piecemeal data prevented a direct mail marketing company from reaching its full mailing potential. Much of its contact data had missing or incomplete values, making it relatively worthless – even costly – for direct mailing purposes. But the company didn't know where to start on their own.

As Ubay-Ubay explains, the process would be difficult, "unless they had another source where they could correlate the address- name, city, state, and ZIP Code™ – but we already have that data."

So, after running data provided by the client through the Personator system, addresses were found and appended to records with as little as a name and date of birth. The direct mail company went from having a useless list to a plethora of new prospects to contact.

This method of prospecting is far cheaper than new customer acquisition, and can work with a variety of source material.

"We're pretty flexible," says Ubay-Ubay. "The more data the customer has, the more accurately we can append the data. But, if we have some combination of name, city, state, person's email address, or phone number ... we can find the person and address based on that."

Out of 110,000 records Melissa received, they were able to append full addresses to an impressive 68,000 contacts, salvaging nearly 62 percent of the client's prospects.



### WATCHING WHAT YOUR COMPETITORS ARE UP TO

Data services are not just for cleansing and verification: A real estate investing and research company recently employed Melissa on a market intelligence project. Data mining for market intelligence enables a company to stay ahead of the industry, and look for opportunities to innovate and distinguish themselves from competition.

Ubay-Ubay's team received a list of regions that they were to collect market information on. The company, "wanted to learn more about their competitors – what properties they're investing in, buying, and holding on to. If they see their competitors investing in a certain market, they want to know why."

So, on a monthly basis, Melissa gathers relevant market data from both supply side and demand side sources, building a 360-degree view of the market. County assessors, county recorders, and lending entities contribute information, including when the property was sold, who the owner is, what the owner's address is, property and building metrics, and property values.

"Since we have experience working with property data, we can make recommendations and suggestions based on how the process is going to go," says Ubay-Ubay. "We generate multiple types of property reports."

Though the company approached Melissa for this project, Melissa developed the project specifically for that client's needs and tailored the process and reports specifically for the client's interests.

If there's a type of data you'd love to have access to, a data partner may be exactly the kind of help you need.

### CLEANING UP THE EMAIL MESS

An environmental services company had another type of problem for which Melissa constructed a solution. Its email lists were messy and off-target, often resulting in bounced emails, spam and unreachable targets.

Melissa cross-checked the client's lists against its database of real, deliverable email addresses, and implemented processes to detect those that have not yet entered their database, starting at the domain level.

"Say the email address is something like somebody@hotmail.com – we check first if hotmail.com has a mailing server on that domain," Ubay-Ubay explains. If it does, Melissa investigates further.

"We want to check if that mailbox actually does exist, so what we do is send a ping out to the SMTP mailing server."

The algorithms can also detect and correct typographical errors within the domain name, such as correcting "johndoe@yao.com" to johndoe@yahoo.com – restoring value to useless data.

Overall, 26 percent of the client's email list was bad. But bad data can be made into good data with the right tools. Nearly 77 percent of the problem email addresses were corrected, while fewer than 23 percent of the bad email addresses could not be fixed.

Disposable accounts, spam traps, and fake email addresses were removed from the client's contact lists, and corrected addresses were appended.