MELISSA DATA®

PRODUCT	CASE STUDY
WebSmart Services	PCI — Driving Engagement and Contributions — publishingconcepts.com

"Melissa Data has proven itself as a top tier provider of address validation for high volume mail and call center environments."

— Rebecca Cap Mertens, PCI's vice president of operations

PCI Utilizes Web-Based Data Verification Solution to Streamline Operations

Company
PCI (Publishing Concepts)

Industry
Information Services

Challenge
PCI – based in Dallas, Texas – collects, manages and analyzes contact data for their clients, which are mostly alumni offices of universities, colleges and professional schools, including military, sports associations, and fraternities and sororities.

PCI uses the contact data – which includes alumnus addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses – to drive alumni engagement through outreach purposes. The company also uses the contact data to publish printed directories for its clients.

Manual Labor = Decreased Operational Efficiency

In the past, PCI's call center agents would contact those listed in their clients' databases to verify and update their information. Each updated record then goes to PCI's editing team to manually key in the updated data in their database.

This proved to be a very labor-intensive process, especially as PCI began experiencing significant growth. It became clear that the company needed to find more technological ways to help scale its business operations.

Solution
Melissa Data's WebSmart services provide online, real-time data quality and data enrichment across the enterprise for enhanced customer relations and operational efficiency.

About PCI
PCI has served the nation's leading colleges and universities for more than 80 years. The company's mission is to drive alumni engagement and accelerate contributions. With a rare combination of proven experience and pioneering expertise, PCI delivers seamless technology solutions combined with personalized marketing services. PCI offers an online community solution called ENGAGE from PCI™ that combines the latest online applications with strategic programs to drive alumni engagement.

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Benefits

Melissa Data's WebSmart allows users to:
- Validate, correct and standardize addresses, phone numbers and emails in real-time
- Integrate data verification routines to reduce costs and eliminate manual labor

Results

Rebecca Cap Mertens, PCI's vice president of operations, said the decision to select Melissa Data's WebSmart services was a natural choice for the company's web-based application. PCI uses a Microsoft SQL 2000 database and Microsoft operating system.

"We were looking for a tool that was CASS Certified™ and offered a Web service component to allow us to validate submissions in real-time," Mertens said. "Melissa Data has proven itself as a top-tier provider of address validation for high volume mail and call-center environments."

"One key decision was to improve through-put by using WebSmart as a real-time validation and correction layer between our call center and editing staff," Mertens added.

The Data Verification Process

To achieve the cleanest data right at the start, PCI sends its clients' contact database of mail, phone and email information to WebSmart in batch mode for verification and standardization.

After the contact information is initially cleansed by WebSmart, PCI's contacts all applicable constituents listed in the database to update their contact information.

Real-Time Data Verification

If the alumnus gives PCI a change of address or other information, the agent enters the data to WebSmart to verify and standardize the updated information in real-time.

"The reason we do so is that if the verification comes back [from WebSmart] showing a problem, our agent can get further clarification from the caller [or source] on the email or mail address. We'd rather have the update and verification done before the call is complete so that we are sure we captured the information correctly," Mertens noted.

Collecting up-to-date constituent contact information is a critical process for PCI – especially since PCI will use this verified data to publish their clients' alumni directory.

WebSmart Helps Increase PCI's ROI

By utilizing WebSmart, more than 67 percent of all address updates obtained by PCI's call agents were corrected and standardized in real-time at the point-of-entry – eliminating the need for manual correction by PCI's editors, Mertens noted.

There are at least 55,000 addresses per week that are validated, she added.

"We were able to double the number of address updates on a weekly basis and reduce staffing needs from 5.5 people down to three, and increase the number of records handled by 40 percent in the last six months," Mertens said.

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She added, "I have been extremely impressed by the level of support and courtesy from our account rep, Riff Solar. He is very prompt in his follow-up and ensures that our technical questions are answered in a thorough manner. I also appreciate how he notifies me about products that he feels would bring value to our suite of tools."

Mertens said she looks forward to using Melissa Data's MatchUp Object, which can be integrated into their applications to find and eliminate duplicate records through the use of advanced fuzzy matching algorithms.

"We look forward to using the [MatchUp] tool to help us identify duplicate records and same household addresses," she said. "We mail an average of 120,000 postcards a week, so we're always looking for ways to reduce postcard mailing costs."

About Melissa Data

Melissa Data is a leading provider of data quality, marketing and mailing solutions, celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year. Melissa Data helps companies acquire and retain customers, validate and enhance data, improve marketing ROI, and save money on postage and mail processing. Since 1985, Melissa Data has helped companies like Mercury Insurance, Xerox, Disney, AAA, and Nestle improve customer communications.