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HL HealthLink
DIMENSIONS

"The Data Quality Suite allows us to clean and standardize this data so that we can create one of the most accurate Physician and Allied Professional databases in the industry."

– Chris Lloyd
Director of Database Services, HealthLink Dimensions

HealthLink Dimensions Combats Constantly Changing Data with Verification Tools

Company

HealthLink Dimensions

Industry

Healthcare

Challenge

Based in Atlanta, Ga., HealthLink Dimensions provides unique, accurate, and content rich healthcare database products that help the pharmacy, healthcare, medical device, and insurance industries efficiently target their primary markets.

As part of its offering, HealthLink has demographic files totaling over 2.3 million physicians and allied health professionals – complete with titles, specialties, and multiple identifiers including DEA number, UPIN number, State License number, NPI number, and Tax ID, with linkage to hospital and group practice affiliations.

With so much data to collect and manage, HealthLink recognized it was critical to implement a solution that would clean and standardize all of its multisourced, multidimensional data – a daunting task to say the least.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that data constantly changes and stagnates over time. Various factors contribute to this data degradation, including physicians moving their practices, working in multiple offices, or retiring. Trying to communicate with physicians via email can be difficult as physicians often change or use different email addresses.

The most common errors found in their records were inaccurate and incorrectly formatted phone and FAX numbers.

About HealthLink

Leveraging the largest multi-sourced database of active practicing physicians, HealthLink Dimensions offers flexible data solutions that facilitate multi-channel marketing and communications.

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"Healthcare data changes quite often. We see anywhere from a 2 to 3 percent change in demographic data every month," said Chris Lloyd, HealthLink's director of database services. "So we are constantly validating and updating our data."

The Melissa Data Solution

Data Quality Suite – a collection of multiplatform APIs for address verification (Address Object), phone verification (Phone Object), email validation (Email Object), name parsing (Name Object), plus GeoCoder Object.

Key Benefits

›› Fully automate contact data cleansing process

›› Catch data entry errors in real-time

›› Resolve data inconsistencies quickly

›› Append geographic information like latitude and longitude coordinates

In the past, HealthLink utilized separate, independent products for address verification, name parsing, geocoding, and phone verification. But the company really wanted to have a comprehensive collection of tools from a single source provider.

HealthLink was looking for developer tools they could customize to their needs. The company chose the Data Quality Suite from Melissa Data to update and validate millions of records each month.

"The Data Quality Suite allows us to clean and standardize this data so that we can create one of the most accurate Physician and Allied Professional databases in the industry," Lloyd said. "The suite enables us to format the multiple sources of incoming data so when we load our database, we have no duplication."

HealthLink liked the Data Quality Suite's flexibility and ease of integration. "The main strength is its ability to easily integrate with our custom .NET applications and SQL procedures," Lloyd said. "We have written several internal applications and services that use each of the objects of the Data Quality Suite. We haven't really encountered any major weaknesses yet, especially as compared to competing products."

Adding Location Intelligence into the Mix

Aside from verifying and standardizing its data – HealthLink wanted to add location intelligence to their data to help their clients gain better insight into critical decisions.

So HealthLink implemented Melissa Data's GeoCoder Object into their operations. The goal – to utilize geocoded data to ascertain proximity and distance to physicians' locations, service areas, etc.

"GeoCoder allows us to append longitude and latitude to every address and we use it in a couple different ways depending on the client. Our data aggregator clients that use our data for directory services can look for physicians within a certain mileage," Lloyd said. "Our list clients that come to us looking for certain specialties – say cardiologists or internal medicine – we can easily provide the results in and around statistical geographic areas."

But the most unique way HealthLink utilizes GeoCoder is in managing multiple addresses for the same physician.

"GeoCoder allows us to maintain multiple addresses for the same physician even when we are receiving and loading the data from more than one source," Lloyd said. "We use the mileage distance between addresses to write proprietary business rules to locate physicians that practice in multiple locations, and even across state borders."

The Derived End-Product

Working Smarter, Not Harder – Realizing Cost Efficiencies

"While some companies use a 'brute force' method of making thousands upon thousands phone calls a year to validate data, we leverage technology, great tools like the Data Quality Suite, and superior industry knowledge to keep our data accurate and clean," Lloyd said.

"It allows us to minimize labor costs. With the right technology and processes in place you just don't need to make that many calls – you only need to call a significant statistical sampling. Inaccurate data (both claims and demographic) – including fraud, waste, and abuse – is a billion-dollar industry, so any type of data improvement we can do truly does save our clients a lot of money."

About Melissa Data

Melissa Data is a leading provider of data quality, marketing and mailing solutions. 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.

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