



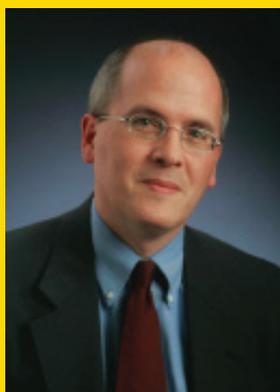
Decide with Confidence

April 2013

AN INTERVIEW

Data Quality

How quality data can drive quality business decisions



Paul Ballew, *D&B Chief Economist*



Most businesses endeavor to leverage their data to improve results and nurture their customer and prospect relationships. The challenge is rationalizing massive amounts of data while leveraging new data sources to create a competitive advantage – an advantage that turns data into insight and action. Doing this well requires getting certain things right, like committing to data governance and data quality. The data quality journey is built upon the four pillars of completeness, accuracy, depth of insight, and timeliness. When companies understand that the journey begins here, they can begin to outpace the competition.

**Paul, how do you define “data quality”?
Why is it important to businesses?**

Data quality is a multi-dimensional issue for today's organizations. It equates to having and leveraging insights that can move your business forward – the pace is defined by the quality of the insight. In order to achieve the goal it is essential to get the fundamentals right to provide the foundation to enable organizations to generate the actionable insights that will make a difference in the marketplace.

Dimensionally the fundamentals are just that – the fundamentals. The journey starts with completeness, where you can see all the data and information that you need. Importantly it is essential to make sure that this complete view is augmented by the ability to link data and insights to individual customers. It's also about accuracy. We have to make sure that data is accurate and useful. That means phone numbers, addresses, CEO names, and a host of other data points. The third dimension is depth of insight. Do I have depth of insight regarding a particular entity that I can take meaningful

action against? I have to be able to understand something about your needs as a business owner or manager, and through good data management the focus can be on organizing structured and unstructured data in a way where the analytic teams can be translated into action. The fourth dimension is around data latency. It's about making sure what I have is timely. Companies are looking for information that reflects change, and the most current data can help them achieve their goals. We hold ourselves accountable against all those dimensions. Decision-makers today need that level of completeness, accuracy, depth of insight, and timeliness to make good decisions.

What does quality data look like? What is the business impact of poor data quality?

Poor data quality and a lack of data management can literally cripple a business. It means you don't know how to talk with your customers to optimize sales results. There are missed opportunities with poor data quality. And with today's rapidly advancing technologies, the companies that are jumping in to leverage new sources of data faster are the companies that will leverage the insight that comes with powering your organization with quality data. New social media, sentiment data, and transactional data are all rich, valuable sources of insight your company can leverage for competitive advantage. Today's companies want to be fact-based organizations. Facts and logic improve and validate the decisions we make and enhance our go-to-market, investment, and operational strategies. The bar has really gone up. Twenty years ago, having any data was sufficient. Now we're looking for high-quality data across all these dimensions.



Data degenerates over time, which can be problematic to businesses. How do executives surmount the data timeliness obstacle?

This is where data governance and stewardship comes in. Any company on the cutting edge is really pushing forward on those dimensions. You have to have a comprehensive approach to data governance and data stewardship. Part of that involves asking yourself how you are using data to generate actionable insights, as well as what your use on the back end is.

What tools are companies leveraging to fully utilize their data? Are systems like CRM, supply chain management, and business intelligence critical?

All of those are necessary tools. At the end of the day, while people talk about master data management, what's perhaps more important is having a good data governance structure. It's not just about keeping yourself out of jail in terms of data compliance, it's about your overall management of data and leveraging your data investments that will be turned into action. That is an extremely important part of the journey.

How should businesses build a data quality program? What questions should they be asking? Who belongs on the team?

It's always important to start with what you're trying to do as a business. Then it's important to bring all your data and analytic assets into a combined unit where you have a structure that is responsible for those activities. Then have a data governance program surrounding it. Finally, it's important to go beyond your data and analytics team. You should have your users be involved in the process, and that includes folks from marketing, finance, and IT. Including stakeholders from across your organization is an excellent way to create a solid data quality foundation that leverages the unique insight of your team members.

About Dun & Bradstreet® (D&B)

Dun & Bradstreet (NYSE:DNB) is the world's leading source of commercial information and insight on businesses, enabling companies to Decide with Confidence® for 172 years. D&B's global commercial database contains more than 220 million business records. The database is enhanced by D&B's proprietary DUNSRight® Quality Process, which provides our customers with quality business information. This quality information is the foundation of our global solutions that customers rely on to make critical business decisions.

D&B provides two solution sets that meet a diverse set of customer needs globally. Customers use D&B Risk Management Solutions™ to mitigate credit and supplier risk, increase cash flow and drive increased profitability; and D&B Sales & Marketing Solutions™ to provide data management capabilities that provide effective and cost efficient marketing solutions and to convert prospects into clients by enabling business professionals to research companies, executives and industries.

For more information, please visit www.dnb.com.

© Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. (DB-3475 4/13)