Q & A with Eric T Grubaugh (Actual NetSuite Developer)

Question 1: What is the difference between a Lead and a Prospect?  
Awnser: The typical flow in most businesses (and thus in NetSuite) is Lead > Prospect > Customer (edited)  
 A Lead is someone who potentially might be interested in your services/products/whatever. Once they have been qualified further (for instance, once they ask for and you send them an Estimate/Quote), they will become a Prospect. A Customer is someone who has paid you for something; so once they buy something from you (either a Sales Order or Cash Sale is created for that Lead/Prospect). Then they become a Customer. Lead > Prospect > Customer. In NetSuite, these are actually all "Customer" record the same record; "Lead", "Prospect", or "Customer" is set by the "Stage" field on the Customer record. "Leads", "Prospects", and "Customers" are ALL instances of a Customer record. Now the Stage usually isn't displayed on the forms; you don't edit it directly, but instead you create related transactions to transition between stages; you can also build workflows or scripts that promote/demote the Stage accordingly. So you can have Leads that are "Dead", "New", or "Qualified", and Prospects that are "Closed - Lost", "In Negotiation", or "Opportunity Identified", and finally Customers that are "Closed - Won", "Lost", or "Renewal" - and all those statuses are fully customizable.

What are Stages?  
  
Stages just represent where a particular Customer is along your Sales pipeline/workflow

Question: How should we approach the segregation of information?

Awnser: Why model an un-screened Lead and a screened Lead with two different records? Why not use one record with a Status field that indicates whether or not they have been screened and categorized? I am not seeing anything so far that couldn't be accomplished with the native Lead record, so I would caution you against building a completely custom system. I would model your incoming potential clients as Leads, using Customer Categories to model which type of Customer they are, and using Customer Statuses to model where they are in the screening process. Your Case Managers should just be Employee records, with a checkbox on the Employee record like "Is Case Manager?" Or you could even forego that and use the Sales Rep as the Case Manager. Either way, from there it would be pretty simple to use a custom sublist that shows the list of Leads on the Case Manager's Employee record

Question 2: What do you think about transferring data over to another record?

You don't need or want to copy the data to new records just to get a new view of the data. then you're just duplicating data everywhere, and your data would grow disconnected and unreliable very very quickly. You Should create Searches on that Record!

When will you use a customized Record?

When you have a data model that isn't represented by the existing records. There's no record or group of records that would accurately represent a Contract. so you could make a Contract record that shows the payment terms of the contract, the length, the customer(s) involved, maybe has a link to the actual documentation, etc