

Dataminr - Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Interview conducted on January 13, 2022

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief, a customer of Dataminr. The expert is a customer of Dataminr and Factual, is familiar with the decision making process and can speak to the criteria used.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief. The expert is responsible for data analysis, modeling and evaluation, disaster trends, situational analysis, the impact of various kinds of emergencies, digital mobility data for crisis response and public emergencies, Dataminr, Hootsuite, Geomessaging.

The expert is a customer of Dataminr.

Q: (Customers): Are you a customer of Dataminr, or any other similar solution?

A: Yes - Direct Relief has nonprofit agreements with both Dataminr and Factual, and to some degree also uses Esri Living Atlas as an alerting service.

Q: (Customers): Were you the final decision maker to work with Dataminr? If not, were you a part of the evaluation process? When was it you made this decision (year)?

A: Yes.

Q: (Customers): What is your ballpark annual spend on Dataminr?

A: Direct Relief spends no additional money on these services given that we use them through nonprofit agreements.

Tegus Client

Thanks for taking the time to speak. Just to hop right in, the purpose of this call is to kind of better understand the vendors that provide real-time updates on events that clients can use for crisis management or event risk management. So I want to understand those particular providers. I kind of also want to dig in particularly on one vendor named Dataminr, which, to my understanding, is that you're currently using.

I want to understand the value proposition of this product to you, how you use it, and then also kind of understand what other providers are out there that you may have used and then kind of compare and contrast the product versus some of the other providers.

I guess before we jump right into the questions, I would love to get a quick background on yourself. I know, from my notes, you are at Direct Relief. And I kind of want to understand your role there on how you use this particular product, how you came across that.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

So I'm the Vice President for Research and Analysis at Direct Relief. I guess one quick word on Direct Relief is it's a humanitarian, health-focused NGO, so principally humanitarian supply chain, works globally, also all through the United States. A lot of disaster relief, access to essential medicine is just kind of the principal kind of goal.

And my specialty in that is geographic information systems. So pretty much everything we do has a spatial dimension. We do a lot of risk analysis on impact of disaster events or things like the pandemic, other infectious diseases on vulnerable populations, how to kind of anticipate supply needs, where the shortfalls are going to be, things like that.

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So that's how I kind of engage alerting systems, with Dataminr being one of them. So we are supporting a pretty far-flung network of local health care programs, I think, in the United States, probably about 1,300 health care sites; globally, another couple of thousand. And that varies depending on the type of event that occurs.

So one of the kind of imperatives is to keep on top of what happens at these places and what is likely to happen at these places and how we can anticipate what needs are going to be. Since we have to build cases for supply, we work with health care providers and things like that. So that's the context in which I encountered applications like Dataminr.

Tegus Client

Understood. So you kind of have a local geographic network. Just to kind of understand, like is the product kind of used more as a planning tool, to kind of help with the distribution of supplies or whatnot, or like a risk management tool, where like, hey, you may have some of your colleagues in a remote part of the U.S. or the globe and let's just say, x disaster happens, and you kind of want to alert them and bring them back home?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I think it's more the latter than the former, in the sense that the kind of key ingredient for Dataminr is the ability to geolocate a pretty large amount of alerting information at fairly precise scales. So we can do things like buffer sites that we're interested in, that could be like a hospital or a primary health care center, and then understand what's happening in the area where that place is located.

So we can see where the community is and then not just baseline information, but change information about reports of disease occurrence or reports of evacuation from a wildfire, flooding, you kind of name it. So that kind of ability to localize very large flows of real-time information becomes kind of key for us to understand what's going on and then to move that information to people that we need to kind of collaborate with in order to accomplish humanitarian assistance.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. Can you just provide an overview of how you're like you're using this product? I just want to understand the profit flow.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes. I mean it's kind of interesting though. The most recent case where I used it most extensively and this varies slightly from our core activity, but I worked pretty extensively in the evacuations from Afghanistan. We have a lot of partners that we work with, actually in this particular case, was a group called the Asian University for Women, which actually had a couple of hundred students that were Afghans, that were based in Kabul at the moment when the city fell to the Taliban.

And then there's been a succession of folks that we are in the process of kind of getting out since then. And so we have kind of an operational messaging platform, coordination structure, to help get in touch with all of the folks there, trying to move them. But it's a very complex dynamic situation. There's checkpoints set up through the city. There's all kinds of potentially hazardous activity taking place, a very, very chaotic kind of situation.

So Dataminr integrates into that kind of operational mapping and messaging framework to provide insight into, well, what do we need to consider if we're trying to get people from one neighborhood to another so that we can move them safely to the airport or to get them out of the country, to move them to a place where they will be more safe than they are right now, things like that.

So for instance, even just basic things like during the evacuations in August, , at least from my point of view, there wasn't any other great source for understanding which airplanes are coming in and out of this airport. There's a heavy reliance on understanding, whether if you get people to where they need to go, are they actually going to be able to exit the country, or are they going to get stuck in the airport, things like this.

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So through Dataminr, and I didn't know this until we needed it, but they had integrated a source on monitoring the tail numbers and arrival and departure of all the aircraft that were coming through this airport, including actually military aircraft. And so we could actually have a really clear sense of what the flow of the aircraft was.

And then that fed into the decisions around, well, when do you need to have people there, what's the rate at which these flights are coming in and out, is this speeding up, is it slowing down, things like that. So that becomes kind of a key. It's sort of like information you didn't know you needed until you actually need it. And that, I think, carries over into almost all disaster relief kind of context.

So we used it during the wildfire responses in California, where you can monitor the Twitter feed for the sheriff for the fire department or CAL FIRE, or what have you. But there's a lot of information that gets posted to Twitter to local news sources, blogs, things like that. There's no chance that we can actually like read all of that or coordinate it. So being able to funnel that in and filter it by space and time, run keyword searches, you can monitor, like you set up basically like a regular search that you want to ping in an area over a certain period of time.

So then it kind of facilitates you taking a close look at certain keywords or issues in a particular place over a defined time period. That kind of thing just makes you more aware of what people are saying in the area, how they're reacting to the situation.

And we find all kinds of useful information. I mean over the last couple of years, shelters have been opened up, not just through the conventional shelter system, for instance, through the Red Cross, but because of COVID, people are put into hotels, there's unconventional shelter system kind of locations. That's actually quite hard to know about if you're not already in the management structure for the shelter system.

Things like this actually do get reported on Dataminr. We can understand kind of the landscape of where people are being moved into unconventional shelters. And then that often impacts where are those relative to primary health centers that we're supporting.

Can we kind of factor that into planning for how many people are likely to be in need of medical assistance, since once people are in the shelter situation, their medical needs tend to go up. So that can be part of how you ballpark how much stuff is likely to be required here.

Tegus Client

That's a helpful overview. A couple of questions that kind of jump on this is that, does it matter to you where the source data is kind of coming from for Dataminr? Like how integrated they were, yes. I would love to kind of understand that.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes. Well, I guess, first of all, I would like to think that was the special for Dataminr, in terms of why I thought it was interesting in the beginning, was that they ingest the entire Twitter feed. So there's a lot of garbage on Twitter, too. So how do you sort out what's worth paying attention to versus what's not? That's really hard, and it's really hard if you're just reading Twitter. They have a pretty good verification system actually.

So they're monitoring like the density of alerts coming in over a certain period of time and then flagging verification back to sources that would be able to confirm or deny whether or not a rumor is true or false. An example again from Afghanistan was that at one point, after the bombing which happened at the gate, there were munitions being exploded by the U.S. military inside the airport because it's part of the evacuation procedure to not leave munitions behind.

So this freaked everyone out because there's explosions going off, and there's just been an explosion that actually resulted in casualties. These explosions were reported on Twitter. And there was immediately a kind of rumor network flying around about, "Oh, my God, there's going to be multiple terrorist attacks on this area." And we had people that were like right in the area that are like we're very worried about.

So those got cross-referenced quickly on Dataminr with kind of other relevant sources, in some cases, through social media, actually, and it didn't take more than 20, 30 minutes actually on the platform to sift

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through whether or not like literally, what's the cause of these explosions and took the temperature of the rumor mill down.

So that kind of thing becomes actually quite important to be able to just sift through rumor versus solid information, which is a problem anytime you're dealing with social media kind of information. I mean one thing I have a hard time with, I guess, is that I don't understand kind of the total landscape of their information sources. So a big claim, I think at this point, to ingest over 200,000 different data sources.

To be quite honest with you, I don't know what all of the data sources are. There's no catalog somewhere. To some degree, I mean, every time I've talked with folks about this, the answer is that it's not entirely relevant, that they're running the same kind of like signal-to-noise algorithms on a lot of things.

And part of what's important here is just the ability to locate any given relevant source in space and time and provide the ability to search across a large number of things rather than kind of you thinking about it in terms of like a menu of sources, which, at 200,000 sources, it's overwhelming to even consider.

Like what does that even mean really? So nevertheless, I do think you want, regardless of the source, you want this verification process. And at least in terms of the social media-based stuff, as we've seen, I do think they do a quite good job of being able to filter it and provide that kind of validation.

Tegus Client

Yes. To your point about 200,000 sources, I've tried to understand what they are. I haven't been able to understand it myself. I do know Twitter is like a big, big provider of data, but other than that, I couldn't tell you who some of the other places are.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I mean there's a lot of things that are like, again, local news, blogs. Like the flight tracking was happening through flight tracking applications. They ingest WeChat, which is interesting actually because I would not myself read WeChat, and I don't really have any reason to under most circumstances.

But again, it's the kind of thing where it's data that you don't know you need until you need it. So things like that become interesting once you need them. I'm sure things like, yes, there's a lot of that's probably conventional sources like maybe USGS, federal data alerts, things like that. But I don't know what's the 200,000 there.

Tegus Client

So you obviously have a very global like use of this product. Let's just say you have humanitarian mission in Latin America, let's say, Paraguay. Like right before this trip is happening, do you kind of start doing a search? Or like do you kind of hand code, like, geospatial this particular area. How do you go about kind of making sure that you're always covering all of your team members versus like someone takes a trip and you don't know about it?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Well, I'm not sure that we're using it to cover team members per se.

Tegus Client

Or like ongoing projects or whatever it is?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes, I mean, we use Dataminr, two ways. So one is to ingest it into like other tools through the API function. So then we are looking at like search areas that are relevant based upon other information that we have. So

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if Paraguay was something which came up, it does like a program area that, whether that's a trip or whether that's an event that occurs there, we have to communicate with partners, et cetera.

Then, yes, we would basically start running searches and be able to compile kind of a relevant framework based on information from Dataminr plus a whole bunch of other information that becomes relevant to make sense of what's going on in Dataminr. And that's really like GIS analysis. It's like processing that into some kind of briefing that you could explain to people what is relevant to know and then kind of keep that periodically up-to-date so that they have a situational overview.

The other part of it would just be like people get alerts through their cellphones, that you just set up an alert system for them so that they get pinged when there's a certain kind of relevant event that should be known. The key to that is just configuration. So the problem, again, with having enormous flows of information is that you can get a whole bunch of stuff that isn't relevant.

And nobody wants like 6 million messages that are totally not relevant to you coming through on your notifications app on your phone. So I think assisting people with configuration of alerting and notifications is pretty important to make it something which is seen as useful as opposed to just like, "Oh, my God, I can't stand this because there's so much garbage coming through my notifications."

That really is controlled for based upon how you align, like what are you looking for, how do you organize the search function, how do you set the time and space parameters, we can locate it to particular areas around sites of interest rather than all of Paraguay, et cetera, et cetera.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. So it seemed like you were extensively using this product. Or it's like a great product in your system. But kind of digging into this, what I want understand is like what is like the value prop for you to use this or like another product?

And the second question is, the second question is, I'm not sure how long you've been with this organization, but ever since you've been with Direct Relief, have you guys always been using Dataminr? If not, how was this work that you're doing now was being done?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Right. Well, as background context, I've been with Direct Relief since 2008, in a version of the kind of position that I'm in now, although it's changed drastically since 2008. So the first question is about like value proposition relative to other services. I mean we probably use 3 principal services for things like alerting, with Dataminr being one of them.

The second is a service called Factual, which I don't know if you've ever heard of, but was founded by the former NBC News, they do kind of a similar thing to Dataminr. They are looking at social media feeds and a whole bunch of other sources, it's much more of a curated like alert feed. They have journalists and others that are kind of going through alert feeds on events, that are actually doing proactive research.

They have a kind of rumor flagging and verification system, which kind of works almost like messaging boards, people that are flagging things. I'm sure those people are like algorithm-assisted, but the key to Factual is that they have journalists that are going out and are doing the follow-up on a lot of these things. The advantage of that is that you often get really, really high-quality signal from Factual.

The disadvantage is that it's just not close to the same volume of information. Like again, it's curated. So it's just less stuff because there's kind of inherent scale limits based upon the curation. Reading between them is quite instructive often. So because you'll get slightly different views on the same event. And if something is showing up as really highlighted in Factual, but it's deemphasized in Dataminr, that's worth paying attention to as to why.

Sometimes, it's not clear, but it's at least a useful signal. And I guess, the third is we use geographic information systems a lot. It's my principal kind of role. Kind of prior to integrating Dataminr and Factual, we were using Esri Living Atlas. Esri makes ArcGIS. They have a data service that runs through ArcGIS online called Living Atlas. The purpose of Living Atlas is to kind of make spatial data services kind of prebuilt and

available for GIS users.

So like the earthquake feed from USGS, it's cleaned up, it's in kind of spatial data, like relevant spatial data formats. It works well in ArcGIS, et cetera. The same thing with hurricanes, et cetera, et cetera; so the COVID case feeds from Johns Hopkins, things like that. So the advantage of that is that it's built into ArcGIS already, kind of natively in their system. It's visualized, symbolized. There's kind of standard forms. You can query it.

You can build it into your own applications. We kind of build applications around this, run analytics of our own on a lot of those kind of incoming, changing feeds. I mean that's even, in some ways, that's an even more constrained view, I think, because it's kind of specific things like earthquake occurrence or flood occurrence, not like news or social media reporting, things like that. But it's continued to be quite important actually.

In some ways, it provides kind of an overall kind of base view of a lot of the key events that we're concerned about. And because it integrates already really well into our software, doesn't require kind of a separate API, then it's just faster. So that's kind of to the answer of what we were doing before. I mean yes, I was principally using things, like we would use Living Atlas. Before Living Atlas, you would go basically to a website.

You have to do your own web scraping. Or you would use an API from the federal government. Or you can sign up for access to Twitter. There's ways that you can kind of mine Twitter on your own. You could bring it into or you could run other kinds of analysis on it. That requires a lot of work, actually.

So you kind of have to define projects around that, or at least I do, and not treat it as systems that are like, "Oh, we just rely on that. Boom, this is like turning on the water." So things like that are kind of what you would do without having these well organized. And again, then you would get the data at that rate, but you just basically construct your own filters on it, which is somewhat challenging to do.

Tegus Client

No. So it seems like a lot of the manual work that was required has been kind of been severely reduced by a provider like a Dataminr, and it kind of even augmented your ability to get more precise data.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes. I think that's part of it. I mean I definitely think it's like there's a certain amount of work that a really skilled team of data scientists, analysts, et cetera, could build a portion of that themselves just off web scraping and other kinds of things. Of course, then it's a very bespoke solution, et cetera, et cetera.

It has all the problems of maintaining and sustaining bespoke solutions, things like that. I was saying this earlier about like the flight data in Dataminr, it's like the thing that's really interesting to me is the data that you didn't know you needed, until, oh, my God, you find yourself in a situation like, suddenly, I need to monitor flights out of the Kabul airport, and then it's just there.

And so I could have gone probably and done a research project at that point on like find me the flight tracker app and find me, whatever, maybe a message board where people are also tracking this, and like let's put this together. But especially when things are moving really fast, you don't want to do that. So this like discovery of, oh, wow, that's available, is kind of important.

Tegus Client

You're absolutely right. So you've used Factal. And then I forgot the other vendor that you used to use way before.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Esri.

Tegus Client

Esri, is that where you involved during the process in which you guys kind of selected Dataminr to be your provider?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Well, I mean, because we're a nonprofit, I mean, it's not quite the same process. Like it really wasn't a process like that I kind of went out and checked out a bunch of different vendors and weighed benefits and costs and in fact, actually, the way I knew about Dataminr was a recommendation from someone at Esri, who had put together some GIS integration tools, Python scripts basically, for Dataminr, which required a Dataminr API.

And so I went back to Dataminr. I was like, how do I get an API key, we're a nonprofit, I'm trying to help people that are subject to disaster and lack of access to medical care, this would be really useful. And there was a bit of a round and round on pricing models and things like that. So because they are fairly new to the nonprofit space, I knew folks at Mercy Corps that used them. I knew folks in the UN that used Dataminr.

So independently valuable, but we had never actually put it into place. And through, and I think a really, really helpful back and forth with them about just how this would work in a nonprofit context, we were able to kind of establish an access agreement.

Of course, the cost becomes the cost on our side to understand it, do things with it, like this labor cost on our side to manage it and be able to provide value from it. So that part, I think, has been a learning curve about just what are people going to pay attention to, which kind of relates to what we were talking about earlier, about search configuration, things like that.

So yes, that's kind of the vendor search, which and of course, I guess, the other part of that is just that I'm interested in like digital innovation in the space. Like so what are the tools that could help. And Factual is also available to us on a nonprofit agreement.

Esri, like the software works on the subscriber system, so the alert that gets built into the subscription model. Dataminr is a little different. So that just required this negotiation to be able to figure out how we would have access rights. So being interested in digital innovation and humanitarianism, that was just what made sense.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. One question related to integration, you're pretty integrated. It seems like this solution is kind of integrated with some of your other applications. But I kind of want to understand how integrated is it. And second, if you kind of want to rip this system out tomorrow, how difficult would that be?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

So it's integrated through an API. It integrates into ArcGIS, and it integrates into some other like messaging tools that have a map function. So there's a fairly standard API call that gets made to the alerts. The configuration of that API though has to happen like you have to configure that in Dataminr and then call an API that's specific to that configuration. You're not embedding the configuration in the API itself, if that makes sense.

So at least that's as I've understood it so far. So because the reason for that, as I understand, is that otherwise you get this flood. We don't want everything from Dataminr coming into ArcGIS. So you want to configure the focus, the search terms, the filters, the other kinds of parameters in Dataminr before you're initiating an API pull into some of their software because it's not useful just to have everything coming in.

So that does require just a little bit of like, okay, how do we do this. Not that hard, but it creates a certain friction. In terms of how easy it would be to pull out, I mean, I guess, not hard at all really. I mean we would just stop using it. I mean it's not what you would say is like indispensably integrated into like kind of core logistic systems or things like that.

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I mean it would be a loss, in the sense that there would be a window closing on a number of things that we would have to figure out some other means of knowing it. And it always feels like when you go from like a rich information environment, back into a less rich information environment, you do really feel the loss. Like how else would I do this, which I guess gets us into the point earlier about manual things as well.

But in terms of just the technical part, I mean, it's a web service. It's a Software as a Services architecture. You would just turn off the APIs. You would not run the subscription. You would no longer have access to their configuration portal. And it would just kind of go away.

Tegus Client

So that's good to know. I'm just trying to understand how sticky this particular product could be.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes, I don't know. I think it's really like a question, the stickiness meaning what keeps people on the platform or something. I really think it's the confidence, like that I don't think it's a technical issue.

It's not like, well, you start using, I don't know, like Microsoft Office, and all of a sudden, everything in your enterprise is organized around this, and therefore, you can't pull it out easily or the transition cost is higher than just continuing to run it. And so it's kind of like embedded in your workforce. Like we're probably at that point, where like we use Microsoft for all of these other things, and it would be really painful to extract like Excel from our side.

It would not be painful in the same way to extract Dataminr. It would be painful for the analysts, I guess. And we have like an analyst team that works with this. We have particular kind of needs for information. It would be hard to replace that information. I think that we probably have to find a workaround for where you get the content. But the software isn't integrated in the same way.

Tegus Client

That's helpful. Essentially, it seems like this product is a really great product. So there won't be a huge reason to like kind of rip it off and go to somebody else. But what would cause you to switch from Dataminr to Factal or whoever another provider is?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I guess my preference is to use all of them actually. I mean, right now, I like cross-referencing. Like I mentioned before, because they're produced in somewhat different ways, it's instructive to see the degree to which they align or diverge.

And for me, there's no like additional cost to that. I could suppose that if you were paying a lot of money for those services, that it would be a different question. And you might have to choose, like do I like Factal, do I like Dataminr, do I need something else, blah, blah. I can only pick one, which one do I do. That's not actually the position that I'm in.

So like you said, okay, all nonprofit agreements are off, now you're going to pay full freight, and which one would you use at that point, I mean, the one that we would indispensably keep is Esri Living Atlas just because it's like built into our software and the others are external sources.

I do think that Dataminr is more helpful than Factal in the sense of like the volume of information coming through, the ability to precisely filter at much more granular levels. I think some of the validation algorithms that they're running on that in terms of what we talked about earlier about flagging rumor misinformation, things like that, are really helpful, not that they don't exist in Factal, it's just that I think they're more robust in Dataminr.

I'm really confident I get fewer alerts from Factal, but I'm really confident when I get them that they're really interesting and useful. Whereas not everything that comes through Dataminr is interesting and useful.

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Tegus Client

Like what's your average annual spend?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

No, we have a nonprofit humanitarian agreement. One of the things that delayed my use of Dataminr was that they didn't have that at first, and they quoted a very high cost for annual subscription, based upon like a user model where you would be potentially hooking up hundreds of users with kind of regular access to their services. Like I believe it was like \$100,000 a year, actually, was the original quote. I mean at \$100,000 a year, no, I'm not willing to pay for Dataminr.

Tegus Client

This is a pretty pricey subscription. That's what I was trying to understand. I think it's common that many of these people are paying that amount of figures.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes. I think the way they've pivoted their approach to nonprofits and I think, again, it's early days. The value is that we have applications that are really challenging, that they can talk about, that can be publicized, that like they publicize the Afghanistan evacuation stuff.

I'm assuming that they don't publicize a lot of the other stuff that they were providing information for about Afghanistan. So that's a real value. And there's a lot of use cases that can start in the nonprofit world that then open up new ways of understanding what the product is. And so yes, some of that we've actually gone through with them, just at conceptualization and kind of beginning to map out what those would look like.

And that, to me, is one of the justifications for nonprofit programs, actually from a tech company side, since they have to get value from us in some way. Although, in theory, you could argue that they should just do it because it's a good thing to do, but not everyone does that.

Tegus Client

And is it pretty common?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Correct. Factal didn't even try to charge us for it though. I met them actually at the Esri User Conference. They were the last one that was held in person prior to COVID, back in 2019. And there's a huge like exhibitor space basically, and they were one of the exhibitors in like new small businesses that kind of can integrate into GIS.

And I thought it was really cool what they were doing. And I do think it was part of their growth model here to say, well, we're kind of an upstart company, something like Dataminr is actually quite a bit larger than Factal.

And they were like, well, if we could just get NGOs to start using this, well, then people will notice it. There will be all these use cases where we can again publicize it, and then that will actually be one of the ways to kind of grow visibility and the user base.

So they just initially, right off at the bat, were like here, take it, use it, tell us what you did, we want to know. Whereas Dataminr initially was the opposite. It was like pay us \$100,000, and it was like, no. And then it evolved to where, oh, actually, there is really a key value proposition here where we can work together.

Tegus Client

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That's helpful, if you were talking to the product team, what would you kind of say that they could do to make the product better?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

To Dataminr?

Tegus Client

Yes.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Well, I think one thing is it kind of goes back to the data sources question and to be responsive about like proposals of data sources or like integration of data sources that might be more customized. That could be like, I don't know, like something that isn't fully public, but where we want to be able to link a data source that comes in from like a survey that we're doing or even our own transaction data and because we run SAP and run kind of transaction management on SAP for humanitarian shipments.

There's a whole bunch of things that, as far as I know, are not completely integrated in, like figuring out like how do you customize that data landscape, or am I just locked into what you guys have. And it seems weird to complain about that given 200,000 data sources, but sometimes, it's not the volume that matters.

It's like it's that one that matters. So is there a way to do that more so that you could have like that 98% of it is Dataminr, and then 2% of it is stuff that other Dataminr users maybe don't use because it's yours.

Tegus Client

That's helpful, are you aware that Dataminr has like a large team of experts that can help them, not curate, but like, I mean, like verify data? It's almost like over 800 domain experts.

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes.

Tegus Client

Do you interact with them?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

No, I don't engage them at all. I don't actually know how they work. I mean I think that it's the kind of thing where there's a lot that goes into like algorithm design on Dataminr's side. And so like you don't want to build algorithms for filtering, prioritizing whatever information sources without knowing what you're talking about because you'll just end up with a garbage in, garbage out problem.

So I'm sure that that's one of the ways and that, that wouldn't make a whole lot of sense for me to interact with them. Although, like based on the model that I just said, about like, well, are there ways that we might work together for a portion that's more bespoke, then that would be an interesting way to engage their expertise. Infectious disease is actually one of the key areas that we're interested in.

So yes, I mean, I think it would be interesting and helpful to engage with infectious disease experts within Dataminr. They do have a kind of claim to fame around kind of early detection of outbreaks. And that's evolving for us. But so far, it hasn't really been at the level of like expert-to-expert. It's really been more like platform people, like just people that are working on Dataminr more generally and then us.

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Tegus Client

That's helpful. And anything you would share about your customer service experience with them?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I mean once we got past the money part, they've been amazing. I mean the people that are now working on the nonprofit team, I mean, they've pivoted towards a very collaborative approach, soliciting feedback and engagement about projects that we've done, things that we might do in the future. So I've mentioned the infectious disease stuff like that.

That becomes a conversation that we can have. I mean, to me, that's the sign of like a company that is starting to get how to work with nonprofits, is that they start to actually act like direct collaborators and not like vendors. So that's been great. But we had to get past the money part, which was a different kind of customer service experience.

Tegus Client

And I guess, the problem there is that you're probably one of their first nonprofit clients and they hadn't had like a strategy or like a policy around it. Is that true to say?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I think that's true. I think maybe even like a misunderstanding at some point of what is a nonprofit. Like so we would go in and talk to them and they would be like, "Oh, yes, we have nonprofit clients, so UN." We're like, "No, no. The UN is not a nonprofit. They're an intergovernmental agency. They're funded by the U.S. government and by, whatever, the European Union. That's not a nonprofit, even though we work on similar topics."

Tegus Client

Like yes. Dataminr like serves, you can say, any entity. Like I'm sure they have government clients. They have UN. So just kind of understanding the differentiation between like a true nonprofit like NFL is actually a nonprofit, right?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

Yes, totally. I also think one of the things that was the way that Direct Relief works too, and I think you were hinting at this earlier on in one of your questions about teams and stuff, Direct Relief is actually a pretty small organization in terms of staffing, even though it's a relatively large organization in terms of aid flow.

So like we only have 113 headcount inside the organization. And on that, we do about \$2 billion worth of assistance every year. But the network that we support is very large and far flung. And so those are the people that need to get information. So there was a bit of a debate actually. And to some degree, it's still ongoing, as to how that fits with the licensing model of Dataminr.

So it's like, well, Dataminr wants to ring-fence the information because they don't want like to sign a nonprofit agreement and then Direct Relief just starts giving away Dataminr information to everyone, and then like we undermine their business model in some way, which I have no interest in undermining people's business model.

But I mean, like the people that we're supporting are like a primary health clinic in Ghana. I mean, like they're not a client, they never will be. So like, how do we move information across institutional boundaries because we're supporting them and they need information without then that becoming something that completely blows the lid off their business model.

Tegus Client

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No. Anything that we kind of missed on Dataminr that you want to highlight?

Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

I think that was pretty comprehensive, actually. I mean I would say they also have pretty good visualization tools inside Dataminr. I mean like to the degree that we have to at times or that it's preferable to use like their map or something, I tend to want to get the information out of Dataminr and do something with it in a different platform.

But even when you have to kind of use their tools, the mapping, time line, things like that, there isn't so much of a statistical analysis approach, I would say, which maybe is really for most people. But like if you were trying to run like your own density calculation on something, you can't do it in Dataminr, you have to do it somewhere else.

So that kind of thing, like the visualization tools are good, they're running their own analytical tools on a lot of the filtering and algorithms, you can't use it as like the statistics piece is limited. And if that's important, that becomes like you got to get it out.

Tegus Client

Great. That's helpful. Thank you.

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