

Using dirty data to fuel your business is like putting the wrong kind of fuel in your car: the engine might start, but you could be doing serious damage. If you want a well-oiled revenue engine, you've got to fuel it with clean data.

In this post, we tackle some foundational dirty data questions:

- What is dirty data?
- What are examples of dirty data?
- What are the consequences of dirty data?
- How do you clean and prevent dirty data?

Time to get messy.

What is Dirty Data?

Dirty data represents faulty bits of information that can present [problems in a business's database](#).

For B2B businesses using data to fuel successful sales and marketing efforts, having access to clean data is paramount. Data impacts critical [go-to-market](#) functions such as developing your [ideal customer profile \(ICP\)](#), [territory planning](#), [segmentation](#), lead routing, and [sales prospecting](#).

What are the Types of Dirty Data and How do you Clean Them?

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Digital consent, opt-ins, and privacy notifications are the new norm in an increasingly consumer-centric business landscape. For that reason, non-compliance with privacy regulations like [GDPR](#) or [CCPA](#) end up costing organizations more in the long run if ignored.

Industry giants know the real costs of ignoring privacy regulations. Amazon announced an [\\$888 million EU fine](#) in its 2021 earnings report due to data violations. WhatsApp, an application owned by Meta, also received a [\\$271 million fine](#) for alleged GDPR infringements.

The consequences go beyond a price tag, as non-compliance negatively impacts company productivity, brand reputation, and disrupts business operations.

How to remain within data privacy regulations:

Disorderly databases are the most likely candidates to house insecure data. There are several [data hygiene practices](#) you can implement to combat insecure data.

- Delete outdated and unusable records
- Merge duplicates to prevent fragmented profiles
- Automate lead-to-account linking
- Consolidate your stack as much as possible

With a clean, organized and updated database, complying with data privacy regulations becomes far more straightforward.

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2. Inconsistent Data

Inconsistent or non-standardized data looks different, but represents the same thing. Just like duplicate records exist in various places within your database, multiple versions of the same data elements can exist across different records in your system.

How to standardize your data:

First, create standard naming conventions and ensure your organization follows them closely. As for existing inconsistent records, tools like ZoomInfo can normalize records in batches for more unified field names and more accurate segmentation.

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Yes, data hoarding is a thing. And even though you won't find yourself in a reality show for data hoarding, this often overlooked issue is a big problem in many organizations.

Maintaining a sleek (but not small) database is a big part of [data hygiene](#). It drives alignment between departments and improves accessibility throughout your organization.

How to reduce database size:

While it might seem like "too much data" can never be a bad thing, more often than not, a good portion of the data simply isn't usable. This means that your team is spending excess time digging through the bad so they can get to the good.

Data hoarding and outdated data go hand in hand, so you'll find these two types of dirty data can be solved at the same time: ZoomInfo's deletion features allows users to delete thousands of records at once.

4. Duplicate Data

In your CRM, duplicates are the doubling of information — for example, a single employee showing up twice under different companies, or with different job titles. They can show up in your prospect lists, contact data, and sales accounts.

How do duplicates happen? Generally, you'll muddy your data with copies during data migrations and manual inputs.

Duplicates have no place in the system of any data-driven organization. Ridding your database of duplicates should be a top priority in any data hygiene campaign.

How to clean and prevent duplicates:

Before the age of mass data accumulation, manpower alone was enough to merge duplicates and

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Purging your database of records created before a certain date can help expedite the process of cleaning outdated records. ZoomInfo's deletion features let you bypass system restrictions, allowing you to delete thousands of records that have no business use.

5. Incomplete Data

Do you have data gaps? Any incomplete data will certainly poke holes in your outreach efforts.

Without attributes like industry type, job title, or last name, you risk excluding valuable leads in your campaigns. Additionally, incomplete data hurts your sales team's call-to-connection rate.

How to fix incomplete data:

The first option to combat incomplete records is to manually conduct research to append the missing fields. But you will soon find that this strategy is neither realistic nor scalable.

[Enriching your data](#) with a service like ZoomInfo before the lead gets handed to sales is the best way to automate the filling of empty fields and gain a more complete profile of targets and customers.

6. Inaccurate Data

If your data is plain wrong, you run into all sorts of problems — from missteps on [cold calls](#) to inaccurate reporting and decision-making:

- [43% of sales and marketing teams](#) say inaccurate data remains a challenge for them.
- [54% of B2B businesses](#) say poor data quality is their biggest challenge.

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