The Value of an Address

Data address audits carried out in Romania have revealed consistently that approximately 50% of customer records are based on incomplete, inaccurate and out-dated addresses.

Over the past few years, many organisations have created databases of clients, prospects, suppliers, competitors and others. At one extreme are the banks, the utility suppliers, mobile phone companies, insurers, etc., who have many millions of customer addresses in their lists, and at the other end are doctors, notaries and small shops that may only have a few hundred addresses.

However, nothing is as personal as one's own name and address and if that is spelt incorrectly, badly formatted or simply wrong then this can lead – on the instant – to a dissatisfied customer. And, even worse, if it is based on an old street name or in the wrong postal locality, then the likelihood of a letter or parcel being delivered on time is remote indeed.

With the advent of the consumer society in Romania and rising concerns related to personal data, then it not only makes commercial sense to maintain clean and up-to-date databases of names and addresses, but it is also a legal requirement within the European Union. For example, Financial Services need to comprehensively understand their clients as part of their risk valuation. To take just one example, since early in 2009, Romanian Insurers have precise legal instructions to maintain accurate address information as part of their day-to-day operations.

Additionally, Romania may follow EU practices with increasingly sophisticated POS (Point of Sale) terminals which require the use of postcodes as a short-cut for the entry of address data.

Clean and up-to-date data: a competitive advantage

Clean data is equally vital for a retailer with 10,000 loyal customers, as for a bank with 5 million customers. Once they have a clean and reliable database it becomes a tool to help them focus their marketing resources on those opportunities which are likely to be the most profitable.

A database is clean when it is complete, in a consistent format and ready for use. These are the pre-requisites for a business to speak to their customers relevantly, to engage in long-term relationships with those worth keeping, and to improve customer service and, indeed for all aspects of customer management planning.

Smart businesses are always looking to their customer data for their future profitability, but databases are only as powerful as the data they hold. However, all too many organisations have built significant – even vast databases but, in reality, they have no real idea as to who their customers are. Often, this is hidden behind embarrassment and not wanting to face the truth – that their database hasn't been updated, cleaned or enhanced since the data was first collected.

As a pre-requisite to data analysis for target marketing, data mining, predictive analysis and similar, it is vital to have an accurate address. *Address audits carried out in Romania have revealed consistently that approximately 50% of customer records are based on incomplete, inaccurate and/or out-dated addresses.* This was less of a surprise in the

case of those organisations which maintain legacy databases (i.e. those that have been operating for more than 20 years). However, the sadness of this situation is that even the more recent operators across industries in Romania have been investing in huge CRM systems, many of which are populated with flawed data because they lack the fundamental 'brick' of accurate address data.

Help is at hand for businesses in Romania

Geo Strategies maintains **SMARTaddress**®, a proprietary rules-based database and tool developed continuously since the early '90s which consists of over 17,500 localities and place names, over 700,000 business locations, landmarks and Points of Interest for Romania, together with over 130,000 street names – all with the correct diacritics. More importantly, the tool also includes a secondary database of over 2.2 million variants – abbreviations, local names (unofficial names which are used in the local area), and old names. The old names are a particular problem for Romania as many localities and street names have been changed repeatedly since 1989 and not all lists of addresses have caught up with these multiple changes.

Postcodes can be assigned to all 130,000 individual streets and, in the case of long boulevards, to the individual street segments according to the building numbers along that street. Note: the Poşta Română database contains postcode definitions for just over 24,000 individual streets.

Additionally, geocodes (coordinates) can be assigned to individual premises' numbers along the main boulevards and to street centroids elsewhere. Villages (Sate) are usually geocoded to the village centroid.

The first step to adding value to address lists or CRM databases is to audit, cleanse and attribute those addresses with up-to-date postcodes and geocodes if required. Once that is complete, then organisations can proceed with assurance - whether it is for customer analysis, risk and fraud detection, segmentation, target marketing, the identification and prediction of churn, or the myriad of other uses for which addresses may be required.

People can - and often do - take offence at the incorrect use of their name or their address: conversely, a correctly addressed letter or other communication can bring a smile to their faces and make them favourably disposed towards their suppliers.

About Geo Strategies

Geo Strategies was founded in 1993 and has become the leading supplier of geo-spatial information and tools for Romania.

Their core expertise is built around geo-spatial data products, analytical and modelling tools, consumer segmentation, bespoke data services, consultancy, training, and project management.

This expertise has been developed according to internationally recognised best practices and methodologies, to which significant innovation / value is being added to make it relevant and actionable in the local context.

Geo Strategies partner with Pitney Bowes, Experian and Navteq (part of the Nokia group) to provide the best-in-class products for data quality management (data cleansing, manipulation and integration), socio-demographic profiling and targeting and world-standard mapping for GIS and other spatial applications.

From services in data cleaning and enhancement, data integration to Mosaic consumer segmentation, Micromarketer area analysis and profiling, to the application of customer driven insight and targeting- we can assist.

Contact us at info@geo-strategies.com or call us (+44 1223 205080 or +40 722 940) to discuss the steps for your data audit.

To find out more about what Geo Strategies could do for your business in Romania go to www.geo-address.com

SMARTaddress