



B-to-B Response Databases: A Comparative Analysis

By Ruth P. Stevens and Bernice Grossman • April 2011

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Executive Summary

As part of ongoing research on B-to-B data sources available to marketers, this white paper evaluates the volume and accuracy of B-to-B marketing data provided by three response database suppliers. Like the results from our analysis of compiled data sources, data coverage and accuracy varied widely among vendors. In fact, we were surprised at how similarly the response databases behaved compared to the compiled databases studied in the recent years. We continue to urge marketers who order response data to ask very carefully about the nature of the data sources involved. We also strongly recommend that marketers conduct a pre-test of the data to assess its applicability to their particular marketing need.

As a result of general enthusiasm about our past two studies on the accuracy and completeness of the compiled data available on B-to-B markets, we were asked to conduct similar research on the data found in the response databases that have come on the scene in recent years.

The timing of this suggestion was excellent, because response databases are maturing as a prospecting resource, and marketers are getting accustomed to sourcing names from these pre-deduplicated amalgamations of response lists, often called “master files,” versus renting from a batch of individual lists, as was the predominant list rental method in the past.

So, we invited as many managers of response databases as we could find to participate in the study. Invited to participate were:

- Direct Media’s Data Warehouse
- Edith Roman’s BRAD and BEN databases
- IDG
- Mardev-DM2’s Decisionmaker database
- MeritDirect and Experian’s b2bBase
- MeritDirect’s MeritBase
- Statlistics
- Worldata

We think it’s fair to say that all were intrigued by the opportunity and generally inclined to join. However, by the time our deadline rolled around, only three vendors were included. Why? For one thing, Infogroup decided to make a single submission combining the records of the various response databases living under the Infogroup umbrella (Direct Media’s Data Warehouse, and the Edith Roman databases). For another, several response database managers determined that only their list-owner clients could make the decision to participate, and the complexity managing all those permissions was too great. Concerns were also expressed about competing on accuracy at the contact level. One database manager explained to us, for example, that any given contact in his file could come from scores of list sources, each with its own degree of accuracy, and all of which were maintained in the coop database.

As a result, our study includes the following:

- Infogroup
- Mardev-DM2
- Worldata

Our sincere thanks to them, and to everyone else who considered participating.

The growth of response databases

Business marketers have been the happy beneficiaries of the rise of cooperative databases in the last decade. Some of these have been built by independent list management companies, who persuade their management clients to allow their lists to be added to the database, and rented that way. Some cooperative databases have been built by owners of multiple lists, such as large B-to-B trade publishers.

These databases offer many appealing features:

- Names from multiple list owners are collected, de-duplicated, and in some cases appended with additional firmographic or behavioral data.
- Marketers may select names based on useful variables like company size, title, and geography, across all the lists, without worrying about individual minimum list order quantities.
- List owners are paid by usage on a name-by-name basis. Since list purchase is easier for marketers, in theory, owners’ list revenues are higher than they could get by limiting rentals to the traditional list-by-list basis.
- Since records come from multiple sources, they may tend to be more accurate than single-sourced data.

A note about private cooperative databases

While the MeritBase and the Mardev-DM2 Decisionmaker are prominent examples of coop databases, another type of cooperative database is also available today, this one private and available only to members. A leading example is Abacus’s B2B Alliance. Only list owners who join the Abacus coop and put their names in may take names out of the database. The identity of member companies is kept confidential. Because of the inaccessibility to non-member marketers, we did not ask Abacus or other similar private database cooperatives to participate in the study.

The scope and intent of the study

We followed the same approach as our recent research on compiled databases, to get answers to the concerns of business marketers about data volume, completeness and accuracy. By using a similar research methodology, we also hoped to provide some apples-to-apples comparison between the contents of response databases and compiled databases.

As with our compiled data studies, we asked the vendors to provide company counts in a selection of critical industry sectors, plus contact counts for specific companies, and complete records on individual business people.

We specified the same ten industries as in the compiled studies, and asked the vendors to tell us how many companies they had in each of the ten, as indicated by SIC. For the contact data, we used the same set of well-known firms in each of the ten industries as were used in the 2010 compiled data study.

Individual contacts in the study

Industry	Name	Company	Title
Retail	Susan Sachatello	Lands’ End	Chief Marketing Officer
Technology	Theresa Kushner	Cisco Systems	Director, Customer Intelligence
Not-for-profit	Jim Siegel	HealthCare Chaplaincy	Director, Marketing and Communications
Optical equipment	Stan Oskiera	Edmund Optics, Inc.	Vice President, Operations
Publishing	Michael S. Hyatt	Thomas Nelson	President and Chief Executive Officer
Legal services	John E. Tobin, Jr.	New Hampshire Legal Assistance	Executive Director
Healthcare	Brian A. Nester	Lehigh Valley Health Network	Senior Vice President, Physician Hospital Network Development
Education	Russell Winer	New York University Stern School of Business	William Joyce Professor of Marketing; Chair, Department of Marketing
Tech services	Dale Mesnick	Smart Solutions, Inc.	Treasurer
Industrial	Bill Bullock	Turbosteam	General Manager

We also recruited ten new business people in a variety of industries and in various job categories to agree to serve as this year’s guinea pigs. We are grateful to these brave souls for their generous support of this study.

We asked only one qualitative question, inviting the vendors to explain their competitive positioning in the marketplace.

The positioning statements

Here is how the vendors described themselves in response to the following question:

Provide a statement of no more than 150 words that describes your online B-to-B data product/service, including how you are positioned, meaning your competitive differentiation. In short, this question is, “Who are you and how are you different?”

Infogroup

Infogroup is the leading provider of data and interactive resources that enable targeted sales, effective marketing and insightful research solutions. Among Infogroup’s assets are powerful B-to-B response driven databases. These assets allow access to over 100 million key decision-makers

penetrating virtually every business site in the US and Canada. They contain over 25 million executive email addresses, and enable users to choose from over 48 buying influence selectors including multi-buyers, job function, industry, products purchased, and more. Infogroup's assets have over 1,500 "list specific" response-generated data sources and are enhanced with firmographic and transactional data elements for targeted campaigns based on our expert strategic guidance. With over 100 million buyers and 32 million buying sites, our solutions are designed to maximize ROI for our customers. They are sourced from responder lists of mail order catalogers, publishers, book buyers, seminar and conference attendees and association memberships.

Mardev-DM2

For B2B marketers who need to expand their domestic or worldwide market footprint or accelerate their sales, Mardev-DM2 delivers a targeted audience of buyers and the global marketing services that most effectively reaches them. Unlike companies who provide compiled or standard company data, Mardev-DM2 delivers a level of detail within our data that enables better targeting at the individual level and far surpasses the quality of most data providers. In addition, Mardev-DM2 takes a consultative, creative and objective-based approach to each new client project, whether for B2B postal, email or telemarketing data, lead generation and nurturing programs, or fully integrated strategic marketing services. We meet each client where they are and work with them to develop a complete marketing program – from planning to execution to measurement – to ensure the best ROMI and overall success. A few of our core industries include: IT/Computers, Building/Construction, Manufacturing, Insurance/Finance, Engineering, Electronics, Legal, HR/Training, Foodservice/Hospitality.

Worldata

Worldata is the leading data agency and list brokerage/management firm in the U.S. Our ability to source, negotiate and utilize the latest technologies gives us a competitive advantage over the general list rental buying marketplace. Our primary focus is with the Email, Direct Mail and Telemarketing categories. We help marketers to execute prospect marketing programs, data hygiene initiatives and overall direct marketing strategies. More than 800 customers worldwide from all types of businesses and organizations—from enterprise technology, publishing, and online education to business services, nonprofits, and associations—use Worldata to leverage data assets, procure key datasets and find overall solutions to customer and prospect data initiatives.

The company counts reported

Here are the company counts in each of the ten industries reported by the vendors in response to the question:

State the number of U.S. firms you have on your file within each of these 10 SICs.

	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
32 Stone, clay and glass products	43,318	82,416	20,571
56 Apparel and accessory stores	297,473	15,319	18,137
28 Chemical and allied products	54,807	224,308	62,210
64 Insurance agents, brokers & services	365,758	1,082,065	72,267
73 Business services	3,190,830	894,257	84,703
81 Legal service	546,267	892,825	123,712
80 Health services	2,059,979	329,153	1,315,999
82 Educational service	524,256	450,560	657,129
35 Machinery, except electrical	152,375	405,674	206,547
48 Communications	203,792	173,422	192,266
Do you code firms with NAICS? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y

The contact counts reported

Here are the counts for contacts at each of ten well-known companies, in response to the question: **Provide the total number of contacts you have at each firm, U.S. only, including headquarters and all branch locations.**

	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
Andersen Windows	330	107	0
Nordstroms	349	5	531
Monsanto	6,527	1,679	1,288
MetLife	12,073	11,625	1,722
Accenture	34,355	6,803	472
Baker & McKenzie	2,128	1,082	320
Methodist Hospital System	1,010	767	201
ETS (Educational Testing Service)	2,333	515	89
Dell	7,060	8,872	1,446
Verizon	30,684	18,353	2,938

Here are the figures on complete counts for each industry, in response to the question: **The number of "complete" contact records you have at each firm. Complete means including full name, address, title, phone, fax and email.**

	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
Andersen Windows	158	41	0
Nordstroms	284	2	331
Monsanto	340	880	988
MetLife	1,468	1,965	1,472
Accenture	5,660	1,048	302
Baker & McKenzie	1,779	430	237
Methodist Hospital System	321	224	176
ETS (Educational Testing Service)	318	213	66
Dell	852	2,991	1,099
Verizon	1,937	3,881	2,019

The contact records reported

Here are the records for our ten individual business people, in response to the following directions.

Please pull the record of each of these persons as it currently appears on your file. Submit the record in its entirety.

Note: Please do not use any other data sources (e.g., tele-verification, or Internet search) to research these names.

We have secured permission from these 10 people to include their data in this research, and we have told them they will not be contacted or researched in any way by the participating suppliers.

Contact: Susan Sachatello

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Susan	Susan	SUSAN	
Last name	Sachatello	Sachatello	SACHATELLO	
Title	Chief Marketing Officer	Senior Vice President Marketing	SR VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING	
Company	Lands' End	Lands' End, Inc.	LANDS' END, INC.	
Address 1	5 Lands' End Lane	1 Lands End Ln	LANDS END LN	
Address 2				
City	Dodgeville	Dodgeville	DODGEVILLE	
State	WI	WI	WI	
Zip	53595	53595	53595-0001	
Office phone	608-935-4169	608-935-9341	608 935 9341	
Email	susan.sachatello@andsend.com	susan.sachatello@landsend.com	SUSAN.SACHATELLO@LANDSEND.COM	

Contact: Theresa Kushner

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Theresa	Theresa	THERESA	Theresa
Last name	Kushner	Kushner	KUSHNER	Kushner
Title	Director, Customer Intelligence	Director of Customer Intelligence	DIRECTOR	DIRECTOR, CUSTOMER INTELLIGENCE
Company	Cisco Systems	Cisco Systems, Inc.	CISCO SYSTEMS INC	Cisco Systems, Inc.
Address 1	170 West Tasman Drive	170 W Tasman Dr BLDG 8	170 W TASMAN DR	170 W Tasman Dr
Address 2		SJ08-3	SJ08-3	
City	San Jose	San Jose	SAN JOSE	San Jose
State	CA	CA	CA	CA
Zip	95134-1706	95134	95134-1700	95134-1706
Office phone	408-526-8774	408-526-8774	(408) 526-8774	408-526-8774
Email	thkushne@cisco.com	thkushne@cisco.com	THKUSHNE@CISCO.COM	thkushne@cisco.com

Contact: Jim Siegel

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Jim	Jim		JIM
Last name	Siegel	Siegel		SIEGEL
Title	Director, Marketing and Communications	Director Marketing & Communication		DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
Company	Healthcare Chaplaincy	The Healthcare Chaplaincy Inc.		THE HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY INC
Address 1	315 East 62nd Street	315 E 62nd St FL 4		307 EAST 60TH STREET
Address 2	4th Floor			
City	New York	New York		NEW YORK
State	NY	NY		NY
Zip	10065-7767	10065		10022-1505
Office Phone	212-644-1111 x141	212-644-1111		212-644-1111 ext. 141
Email	jsiegel@healthcarechaplaincy.org	jsiegel@healthcarechaplaincy.org		jsiegel@healthcarechaplaincy.org

Contact: Michael S. Hyatt

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Michael S.	Michael S	MICHAEL	MICHAEL
Last name	Hyatt	Hyatt	HYATT	HYATT
Title	President and Chief Executive Officer	President, Chief Executive Officer	CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER	PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Company	Thomas Nelson	Thomas Nelson Inc	THOMAS NELSON, INC.	THOMAS NELSON INC.
Address 1	P.O. Box 141000	501 Nelson Pl	141000 PO BOX	501 NELSON PL
Address 2		PO Box 141000	501 NELSON PL	NASHVILLE
City	Nashville	Nashville	NASHVILLE	NASHVILLE
State	TN	TN	TN	TN
Zip	37214	37214	37214-3600	37214-3600
Office Phone	615.902.1100	615-889-9000	615 889 9000	615-902-1100
Email	mhyatt@thomasnelson.com	mhyatt@thomasnelson.com		MHYATT@THOMASNELSON.COM

Contact: Stan Oskiera

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Stan	Stan	STAN	Stanley
Last name	Oskiera	Oskiera	OSKIERA	Oskiera
Title	Vice President, Operations	Vice President of Operations	VP OPERATIONS	VICE PRESIDENT OPERATIONS
Company	Edmund Optics, Inc.	Edmund Optics, Inc.	EDMUND OPTICS INC	Edmund Optics
Address 1	101 E. Gloucester Pike	101 East Gloucester Pike	101 E GLOUCESTER PIKE	101 E. Gloucester Pike
Address 2				
City	Barrington	Barrington	BARRINGTON	Barrington
State	NJ	NJ	NJ	NJ
Zip	08007	08007	08007-1331	08007
Office Phone	856-547-3488 ext. 6887	856-547-3488	8565473488	856-547-3488
Email	soskiera@edmundoptics.com	soskiera@edmundoptics.com		soskiera@edmundoptics.com

Contact: John E. Tobin, Jr.

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	John E.	John	JOHN	JOHN
Last name	Tobin, Jr.	Tobin	TOBIN	TOBIN
Title	Executive Director	Executive Director	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Company	New Hampshire Legal Assistance	New Hampshire Legal Assistance	NEW HAMPSHIRE LEGAL ASSISTANCE	NEW HAMPSHIRE LEGAL ASSISTANCE
Address 1	117 North State St.,	117 N State St	3117 N STATE	117 North State St.
Address 2				
City	Concord	Concord	CONCORD	Concord
State	NH	NH	NH	NH
Zip	03301	03301	03301	03301
Office Phone	603-224-4107 x 2816	603-223-9750	603 668 2900	603-224-4107 ext.2816
Email	jtobin@nhla.org	jtobin@nhla.org	JTOBIN@NHLA.ORG	JTOBIN@NHLA.ORG

Contact: Brian A. Nester

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Brian A.	Brian		BRIAN
Last name	Nester	Nester		NESTER
Title	Senior Vice President	Doctor of Osteopathy		SVP PHYSICIAN PRACTICE
Company	Lehigh Valley Health Network	Lehigh Valley Health Network		LEHIGH VALLEY HOSPITAL EMERGENCY
Address 1	Cedar Crest and I-78,	PO Box 689		240 S CEDAR CREST BLVD & I-78
Address 2	P. O. Box 689			EMERGENCY MEDICINE
City	Allentown	Allentown		ALLENTOWN
State	PA	PA		PA
Zip	18105	18105		18105
Office Phone	610-402-7544	610-402-8111		610-402-8111
Email	Brian.Nester@lvhn.org	brian.nester@healthnetworklabs.com		Brain.Nester@LVH.COM

Contact: Russell Winer

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Russell	Russell		Russell
Last name	Winer	Winer		Winer
Title	William Joyce Professor of Marketing; Chair, Department of Marketing	Professor; Chair Marketing		Chair, Marketing Department
Company	Stern School of Business	NYU-Stern School Of Business		NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
Address 1	40 West 4th Street	40 W 4th St		44 West Fourth Street
Address 2	Tisch Hall 806	Tisch Hall Marketing Dept		Stern School of Business
City	New York	New York		New York
State	NY	NY		NY
Zip	10012-11	10012		10012
Office Phone	212.998.0540	212-998-0100		212-998-0540
Email	rwiner@stern.nyu.edu			rwiner@stern.nyu.edu

Contact: Dale Mesnick

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Dale	Dale	DALE	DALE
Last name	Mesnick	Mesnick	MESNICK	MESNICK
Title	Treasurer	Senior Manager; Finance Executive	VICE PRESIDENT	TREASURER
Company	Smart Solutions, Inc.	Smart Solutions, Inc.	SMART SOLUTIONS INC	SMART SOLUTIONS INC
Address1	23900 Mercantile Road	23900 Mercantile Rd	23900 MERCANTILE RD	23900 MERCANTILE RD
Address2				
City	Cleveland	Cleveland	CLEVELAND	CLEVELAND
State	OH	OH	OH	OH
ZIP	44132	44122	44122-5910	44122-5910
Office phone	(216) 765-1122, ext. 8227	216-765-1122	216 765 1122	2167651122
Email	dmesnick@smartsolutionsonline.com	dmesnick@smartsolutionsonline.com		dmesnick@smartsolutionsonline.com

Contact: Bill Bullock

	Correct data	Infogroup	Mardev-DM2	Worldata
First name	Bill	William	BILL	WILLIAM
Last name	Bullock	Bullock	BULLOCK	BULLOCK
Title	General Manager	General Manager	GENERAL MANAGER	GENERAL MANAGER
Company	Turbosteam	Turbosteam LLC	TURBOSTEAM CORP	TURBOSTEAM CORPORATION
Address1	161 Industrial Blvd	161 Industrial Blvd	161 INDUSTRIAL BLVD	161 INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD
Address2				
City	Turners Falls	Turners Falls	TURNERS FALLS	TURNERS FALLS
State	MA	MA	MA	MA
ZIP	01376	01376	01376-1611	01376-1611
Office phone	(413) 676-3016	413-863-3500	413 863 3500	413-863-3500
Email	Bbullock@turbosteam.com	bbullock@turbosteam.com	WBULLOCK@TURBOSTEAM.COM	WBULLOCK@TURBOSTEAM.COM

Observations about the data

Having done two successive annual studies on the accuracy and completeness of B-to-B compiled data, we brought with us certain assumptions as we prepared for a study on response data. Most direct marketers expect that, while compiled data provides better market coverage but is less accurate, response data is more accurate but gives you less breadth of coverage.

Just as we were surprised at the results of our compiled data studies, which showed better than expected accuracy, we are now surprised at the response data we looked at, which is broader than we anticipated. The number of companies reported by SIC, and the number of contacts per company, were impressive. Comparing the counts with last year's compiled data (which is not quite fair, since a lot can happen in B-to-B data in one year) we

would say the response databases are holding their own, certainly debunking our long-held assumption that response files give limited market coverage. When it comes to the individual contacts, less than a handful were missing records or particular data elements.

As we expected, the data reported was fairly accurate, with only a few minor errors. When there were errors, they were not fatal for marketing purposes: The mail or email would still be deliverable, and the telephone call would eventually get to the prospect, in most cases.

The data field with the most problems—either missing or less accurate than other data elements—was email.

We generally conclude that:

- The data available in response databases is quite similar in accuracy and completeness to compiled data.
- As was shown by our past studies, data varies by vendor, and each vendor has its strengths and weaknesses.

Advice to business marketers ordering from response databases

Our advice to marketers about response data is similar to that on compiled data. We urge caution when ordering data from these databases. Marketers should develop a detailed ordering methodology, to increase the likelihood that the data they receive is what they were seeking.

Our guidelines:

- Given the wide variances in data quantity and quality, it's essential that you investigate thoroughly the data sources and maintenance practices of the vendors you are considering.
- Specify exactly what you mean when ordering data. Don't make any assumptions that the vendor's definition of a term is the same as yours.
- Be very specific about industry selections. Find out if the vendor uses SIC, or some kind of conversion algorithm.
- Keep an eye out for vendor specialization by industry. Companies and contacts vary widely by vendor. For additional market coverage we suggest that you explore industry specialty files for both prospecting and data append purposes.
- Conduct a comparative test before you buy. Here are three approaches you can try:
 1. Send each potential vendor a sample of records from your house file and ask them to add data fields. Include a few dozen records on which you know the "truth," to assess accuracy of what comes back.

2. Order a sample of names with phone numbers from a prospective vendor, and then verify the accuracy of the records by telephone.
3. Order 5,000 records from a single state, from multiple vendors. Ask the vendors to deliver the file in ZIP sequence. Examine them. A high incidence of identical records among the vendors will be a strong indicator of likely accuracy.

We hope our research is useful to business marketers who are renting or buying response data. This information will serve as a guide as you conduct your due diligence.

Ruth P. Stevens consults on customer acquisition & retention, and teaches marketing to graduate students at Columbia Business School. She is the author of *Trade Show and Event Marketing* and the forthcoming *Maximizing Lead Generation*. She can be reached at ruth@ruthstevens.com.

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This publication is part of a series entitled **Business-to-Business Database Marketing**, by Bernice Grossman and Ruth P. Stevens. Papers published to date include:

- “Online Sources of B-to-B Data: A Comparative Analysis, 2010 Edition” (March 2010)
 - “Online Sources of B-to-B Data: A Comparative Analysis” (January 2009)
 - “Our Data is a Mess! How to Clean Up Your Marketing Database” (October 2005)
 - “Keep it Clean: Address Standardization Data Maintenance for Business Marketers” (February 2006)
 - “Outsourcing Your Marketing Database: A ‘Request for Information’ is the First Step” (March 2006)
 - “Enhancing Your B-to-B Database with Data Append” (November 2006)
 - “15 Thorny Data Problem That Vex B-to-B Marketers, and How to Solve Them” (November 2006)
 - “What B-to-B Marketers are REALLY Doing with Their Databases” (September 2007)
- These papers are available for download at www.dmrsgroup.com and www.ruthstevens.com.