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Sneak Preview of  
upcoming e-Book  
"Survive The Recession:  
How to Build a B2B  
Marketing Database in  
10 Weeks"

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This e-book is a free sneak preview of Chapter 4 from the upcoming book  
*“Survive The Recession: How To Build A B2B Marketing Database in 10 Weeks”*.

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## SPECIAL REPORT: 10 Slip-ups to Avoid When Creating a B2B Marketing Database

Creating a marketing database is like an Indiana Jones action flick. Right when you believe yourself to be safe from further danger, another step crumbles from under you. The most nondescript evil lurks down crevices you'd rather avoid. But swing confidently over any pitfall, avoid the following slip-ups and you will find the hidden treasure so few companies are able to enjoy:

- Knowing who and where your costumers are.
- Knowing what they've bought for you and why.
- Knowing how and when they've responded to your promotions.
- Knowing how you can bring more value to them, so they may become more valuable to you.

**NO DATABASE = NO MARKETING INSIGHT.  
IT'S THAT SIMPLE**



## Slip-up #1. Focusing on immediate needs vs. long-term opportunities

Customer preferences shift. Markets change. But what do you think is more dependable, a fad or a trend? Marketers must be quick to respond to shifts in market demands. But to stake your career on a fad wouldn't take you far, would it? The same applies to building your marketing database.

The pressure may fall on you to produce quick results and deliver a quick hit. That can be valuable. But it has limited impact, because a database is more like a fruit tree than a fruit stand. And going for low hanging fruit implies that the tree is not empty higher up. So you better have a long-term plan in mind if you start a marketing database project.



## Slip-up #2. Focusing on technology vs. business process

What you do and how you do it are two different things. Driving a nail into a wall is one thing. Using either a hammer or a frozen chicken is another. The same applies to technology vs. business process. There is only too much technology available to build your marketing database with. But don't confuse the tools of marketing with the method that you'd follow when marketing with a database.

Your custom rules of operation should always trump any best practices from any marketing software vendor, if they provide your marketing with a comparative advantage. Don't commoditize your marketing process by buying an off-the-shelf solution! Who is the best judge of what's advantageous to you? You and your results are.

It may seem that adopting more technology product features guarantees your success. Well, features, in fact, will test your success. They may even enhance it. But adding more features never guarantees technology adoption from those meant to use them. Like frozen chickens,



technology features have a shelf life and an often skeptical reception among marketing practitioners. A sound business process, on the other hand, outlasts any technology.

### Slip-up #3. Focusing on data storage vs. workflows

Unless filtered, stagnant water becomes a breeding ground for many types of pathogenic bacteria. Don't think of your database any differently. Dump dubious data. In other words, keep the system fresh by streaming into the database both up-to-date and clean data, and by keeping it pure through rules-based filtering.

Whether you disinfect your data streams on their way to the repository or after you've collected everything in one place does not matter half as much as focusing on the thorough filtering of your data rather than merely on storing all you can get your hands on. If you do otherwise, then you will throw a serious monkey wrench into your marketing database.

Clean data, no matter the amount, is like motor oil that lubricates the gears of your marketing engine. You want that engine to be reliable. And no matter how many quarts of oil you pour into your system, if you don't filter out the sand, you're going nowhere fast.



### Slip-up #4. Focusing on data quality vs. data entry

By the time you get data into your spanking new database it may be too late to worry about data quality from the sources, because you will have too much of it to correct all at once. So don't try to boiling the ocean. As Homer Simpson might put it, a filter is worth a thousand doh's! Clean your data over time.

Set up first a variety of filters for anything going into or coming out of your database. But then switch gears and build a case for changing data entry policies at the place where your data originate, if possible. This way whatever is collected at the source will be reliable to begin with.

Over time such an arrangement will generate measurable improvements in data quality at lower cost, since a steady stream of enlightened data drives out darkened data. It's easier to swim with the current than against it, so clean the data streams on their way to the reservoir, and eventually the reservoir will consist mostly of clean deposits.

### Slip-up #5. Focusing on data vs. information

The difference between these 2 becomes obvious whenever you need to create a summary report for some executive. The database, for example, shows that you have 30 unique company name versions of Acme Inc., all at the same building location, let's say 1234 Acme Industrial Parkway:

- Acme
- Acme Professional Services Group
- Acme Inc
- Acme Corporation.
- Acme - Accounting Dept.
- Acme Attn: Ebenezer Scrooge



And on and on they go...all 30 of them! Each of these company names is perfectly legitimate. They were not entered incorrectly at the source. (There just wasn't a common filter set up to make the company name consistent across all systems all at once. See Slip-up #4...but that's a whole other topic.)

The issue here is that not only do you know that you only have 1 and not 30 Acme accounts that you sell to, but now you also know from your own marketing database that all your revenue from this single account is spread out across 10 of these 30 instances of Acme Inc.

Um, what's your report to the exec going to look like?

You're witnessing the difference between data and information. The 30 versions of Acme Inc. are data. The one revenue number summed up under a single Acme Inc. account is information. In other words, information is data in use.

If you spend too much time and effort working on getting all 30 versions of Acme to look alike, instead of focusing on aggregating the 10 versions that account for all of Acme's revenue that your exec needs to drive business decisions with, then you're focusing on the data and not on the information problem.

Knowing that the business can depend on useful information drawn from a storage of digital impulses (a database) is what makes that tool valuable. Neat data for data's sake is like streetlights in the middle of the South Pole. Pointless. Information not data is the name of the game for Marketing and executives.



## Slip-up #6. Focusing on information vs. metrics

Now, information may be the name of the game. But the end goal is metrics. Your marketing database could offer all the information in the universe and what would that get you? Information overload. Your goal is to produce results. And to accomplish that you must measure your progress.

It's easier to control whatever you can measure. When it comes to databases, that's the only way to go. Measure both what you can control and also what impacts behavior the most. You become what you measure, because measurements track behavior and make it evident and



undeniable. If you wish your database to be of value in supplying useful information to its users, then determine what must be measured to monitor performance and progress with it. Then stay focused on the metrics.



## Slip-up #7. Focusing on too many metrics

A marketing database may consist of thousands of records described by hundreds of attributes. The possibilities for combining all these attributes to produce a wide variety of metrics can be nearly endless. But numerology is not a marketing technique. (At least not in my book.) It's not about how many metrics you can pull out of the database. It's about which metrics you should apply to meet a specific marketing objective.

It's only too tempting to create an ever growing library of measures to track an ever increasing number of activities and operations. But that is another form of information overload. You will end up having to create another database just to track the metrics that you'd be producing from your first database. That's not a bad idea, if you're big enough to handle the job. But if you're just starting out, then watch out!

Once you're drawing a steady stream of metrics from your database, reevaluate periodically their usefulness and retire anything that is not helping the business achieve its primary objectives. Stay trim. It will place fewer burdens on the system, as you won't have to hunt for more ways to populate your database to make or keep metrics significant. (Who cares that 85% of your customers are in the hardware industry if you had industry information associated only to 5% of them in the database?)

Keep your metrics universe manageable and your marketing database will be manageable and useful as well.





## Slip-up #8. Focusing on cost vs. return

Useful data is costly -- costly to procure, costly to maintain. But a database without data is like a kiss without lips. So you will always be under pressure to keep the data flowing in and out of the database. This requires very often quite a bundle. Don't stay focused on the cost and how to minimize it, fearing that without more budget you won't be able to grow your database.

Frugality should not lead to stunt growth. You will fail to grow your database if you fail to prove that all that data you keep paying lots of money for produces little return to the business. It's amazing how quickly cost becomes secondary in a discussion focused on ROI. Build a model to project and track gains from the marketing database, and your love affair with it will last.

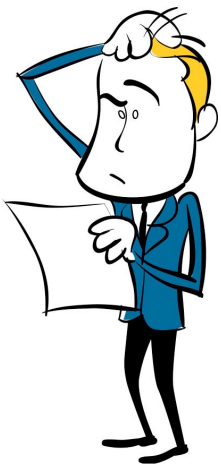


## Slip-up #9. Focusing on lists vs. people

It may seem to a marketer that information technologists are too picky. For them a spreadsheet is not a database. But wouldn't you take issue if any techie said a marketing campaign is the same as an email blast? (If they are in your eyes, then I'll assume you work in the hinterlands of Finance or the dungeons of Shipping and Receiving, and far from the happening place in your company!)

No matter what kind of database you have (or what you call it), eventually some contacts in it will end up in front of you in the form of a list of names. Treat those names carefully! Name, rank and serial number is for prisoners of war not your customers. Don't lose sight of the big picture.

Every record in a list is only a symbol. Each represents real flesh and blood. And few



things provoke greater ire in a busy, spam-inundated professional than impersonal treatment from those who made it passed the spam filter. It's rude. It's presumptuous. And it increases attrition against your database. (Ever heard the term 'opt-out'? It matches another well known one: 'kiss of death'.)

It's more costly to replace than to retain an existing customer. So treat contact lists as if they were an auditorium full of people looking up to you on stage, wondering why you've called them to gather around. It will keep you on your toes and your database without holes.



## Slip-up #10. Focusing on corporate governance vs. corporate culture

We've surveyed 9 pitfalls guaranteed to land your marketing database efforts right where the sun don't shine, if you're hapless enough to slip up around the edges. But I've saved the best for last.

Whether you already have a marketing database in production or whether the paper from your brand new business case to build one has barely cooled off the printer, you've better not come anywhere near this next pitfall, or you'll be dead before getting a chance to quip "query for a list".

It's as simple as this: adapt or conquer. I mean, if company culture won't make adherence to a new and dynamic database marketing strategy possible nor are you willing or able to enforce it, then don't even begin to attempt modifying or creating a marketing database. It's not worth it. If you were hired to build it and these are the conditions you find yourself in upon arrival to your post, flee!

This is not to say that you must run from challenges. It takes a lot of guts to launch a company-transforming marketing database no less than if you were launching a CRM or ERP system. It's a good challenge. But skydiving without a parachute, though exhilarating, seldom allows for a repeat performance.



So if your plan cannot adapt to the corporate culture and you're not senior enough in authority to come, see and conquer that culture, then you're done for before you even start. But with sufficient authority and appropriate sponsorship you do get a chance for success. But not if you focus on corporate governance.

“Coming on site to set down the law, marshal, in this here silver town is crucial, but only if you're the marshal and not the waterworks civil engineer.”

It's all about the wild, wild West, when it comes to changing the way a company does marketing using a database as if it were an ancient Greek oracle. Some of the prophecies from it won't fit in well with some influential yet poor performers.

So, remember that governance is secondary to culture. You may have all the laws of the universe at your fingertips, but unless that finger can pull a trigger and, in extreme cases, fire somebody resisting change, you're at the mercy of the well-connected town folk working in your marketing organization. They always got more guns than you do.

*For tips on how to deal with various types of corporate cultures and improve your chances of success, read my article ["The Good, The Bad And The Ugly Of Marketing Operations Governance."](#)*



## About The Author

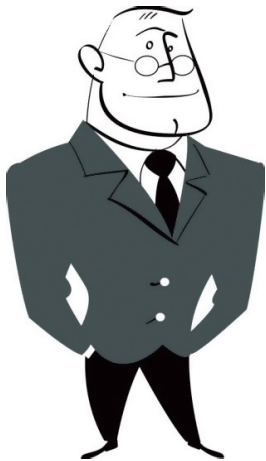
Arturo F. Muñoz is a Marketing IT process strategist who, like a modern day Christopher Columbus, navigates with companies lost in a sea of customer data to chart their business processes and design the basic instruments that unify a view of their customers.

He leads the task of gathering torrents of disparate data scattered throughout global organizations and offers the business a compass to market, sell to, and service the client base more intelligently – also, faster, cheaper and right. This solidifies the relationship between Marketing, IT and Sales, and keeps the marketing executive from scrambling because of a lack of comprehensive reporting and accountability about the use and performance of marketing resources -- costs and ROI -- thereby enabling effective alignment of marketing tactics to the overall business strategy.

Arturo has served as director of database marketing at Hitachi Data Systems, director of customer knowledge management at Lucent Technologies, and in senior database marketing positions at Alcatel, Sybase, and Oracle Corp.

He holds a master's degree in international managerial economics from the Claremont Graduate University, and a bachelor's degree in international financial economics from the University of California, Santa Cruz; has served as a process design and international trade consultant, and is fluent in Spanish.

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