

March 2003

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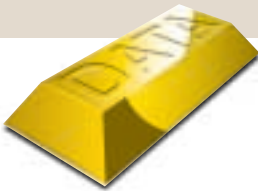
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House-builders: a new database

NEW

Windowbase have launched a new database of house-builders. It is not just new, it is a new type of database. If you've been using any of the standard lists or databases of house-builders, you're in for a surprise. A very pleasant surprise.

AT THE TIME of writing deputy prime minister, John Prescott's Communities Plan for England is due shortly. The plan could mean 400,000 more houses are built over the next 30 years, representing huge opportunities for companies selling building products.

But to sell, you first need to know who to sell to. If your business is selling to house-builders there's no shortage of lists to choose from. Some are more official and apparently authoritative than others, although they vary in the numbers of builders listed and what they cost. Some are cheap - and so they should be. If you've used any of them the chances are that like us you'll



have been disappointed, however prestigious the source of information.

This is an all too familiar problem to Windowbase. Information that is presented as 'straight from the horse's

mouth' is often riddled with inaccuracies and largely out of date. With house-builders our starting point, as with all our databases, was what was available from various readily available lists - all reliable sources you might think. In fact we found in the region of 1,000 names that were not even house-builders. Names that could have been included in an expensive mailing campaign with no hope of ever generating a sale. A couple of fruitless mailings on this scale and you could have spent more than the cost of the database!

One of the particular difficulties with house-builders is that the sands are constantly shifting. There is no definitive

continued on page 2...

Circulate this to...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

DLOs: Direct contact

DO YOU SELL ENOUGH to DLO's?

HUNDREDS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES with housing stock, and the large housing associations, have their own direct labour organisations. Whatever they're known as - DLO, direct works, property care, contracts division, and so on - between them, they handle HUGE quantities of work on housing. Work that requires all manner of supplies and services from the outside world.

There's all sorts of almanacs and yearbooks that can tell you the names of local authorities but Windowbase tells you **the names of the actual people** you need to contact. The people who are

responsible for making decisions about buying in... the very people you'd need to be dealing with.

As usual, what you get is a complete database, verified with the date of each record.

Get in touch direct. Send them your mailings, your latest technical literature. Make the follow-up calls, make the appointments, take the orders, do the business. Start with Windowbase data, and you can add your own fields, to show when you last made contact, what the outcome was, when you need to see them again. Export the converts into a separate worksheet, so you can keep track of progress. And make money.

...continued from page 1

list; companies acquire, exchange assets, merge or demerge, set up regional offices, and change their structure at a rapid rate. And it's happening right now. So if your data was correct a couple of years ago, it won't be any more.

We make it our business to research the information held on the lists, by calling every name until we have verified the basic details. And, as always, we date the verification so you know at what point in time exactly the details were accurate. Good and reliable information about company name, address, postcode, telephone and fax numbers is an invaluable business tool and will save you incalculable time and money.

But we didn't stop there. With just under 4,000 currently active house-builders in the UK we know that you will probably want to target your sales, and to do this you need more than just basic contact details. And this too is what makes Windowbase stand out from the crowd. We think about the



information that will be important to you. How big is the house builder? How many houses do they build? What house price range do they build for? Is this a head office or regional office? Who are the decision makers, the managing directors, the buyers and their

titles? Where are they? And what about their telephone numbers? Is L Donaldson a Mr, Mrs or Ms? If it matters to them then it is worth getting right. In some cases, what products and materials do they use? When was the information collected and validated?

For some products eg windows, conservatories and roofline (fascias and soffits) we go further, to enable you to search and pinpoint your target market with precision. We identify the material used to make the windows or conservatories - hardwood or softwood, pvc-u, aluminium or other materials? What is the mix? And what percentage of houses are built with conservatories? The result? In the region of 4,000 validated records of UK house-builders that includes 1,800 records with detailed information on windows, conservatories and roofline.

And to be even more helpful we have tagged the major house-builders so that even where the companies have different names they can be clearly identified and the affiliation seen.

The complex structure of house-builders can be a barrier to trading. The Windowbase database of house-builders gives transparency to a highly active market with huge potential for your product. Leaving you to concentrate on selling rather than searching.

The Ultimate Sales Tool

YOU'LL NEVER REALLY KNOW just how good Windowbase is until you've tried to work with other databases. We got into the database business because we were frustrated by the quality of what was around and wished for something better.

Any list broker will happily supply you with hundreds or even thousands of company names at what may seem a reasonable cost, until you try to use the information.

You are likely to have a company name, address and telephone number. Some may have a contact name, others may indicate company size. But a surprising proportion won't be contactable or will hold inaccurate details.

Poor lists cost more than you think. Wasted mailings that go to companies that have gone out of business, gone away, or no longer do what they are listed as doing can be costly. Think of

all the time spent stuffing and mailing as well as the postage and materials sent. More importantly think of what your sales team hoped to do with the enquiries you expected or, worse still, the

cost of your salespeople looking for firms that have gone under when they could be selling to those that are up and coming. Poor lists can set you back. Lost time is lost forever.

Are things really that bad? When we started off we were pretty green. We thought that most of the information in telephone directories, Yellow Pages and other sources, although limited, would be correct and relatively current. How wrong we were. Lists do vary in quality, but in our experience most are marred by errors; telephone numbers that turn out to be faxes, postcodes that don't match the addresses, contacts that have moved or died, spelling mistakes that make letters undeliverable or telephone numbers that draw

blanks. Information that was wrong in one database seems to find its way, recycled and uncorrected, into several others. Information that was right five years ago may not be much use now so it's important to know how old the data is. The difficulty for occasional users is in identifying the errors. Apart from disappointing returns or poor quality enquiries how can you tell?

A new concept in databases

When we set about producing our own Windowbase databases we called and spoke to every company and verified the facts. All details are kept

accurate and up to date to satisfy our own obsessive standards. And the databases do more than list company names and addresses. For one thing we like to know when the data was current so

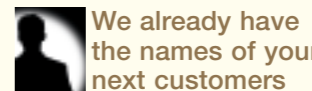
we date stamp each record with the validation date. And we give each record a Windowbase reference number, so we - and you - can track names changes.

In most cases we ask additional questions to add extra useful information. The data you get gives you not only full contact and company size but also useful information about materials and brands contacts use or specify, whether they be window fabricators/ installers, housing specifiers or house-builders.

No database will ever be 100% accurate because new businesses emerge, others fade away and existing businesses evolve. But Windowbase data undergoes a constant process of renewal so that new,

merged, moved or 'gone away' firms are identified, and changes within companies are captured promptly.

The result? A database with a difference, and with built in knowledge of your markets. That's why we call ourselves The Information People. Our objective is to do the legwork for you and to supply the best data available - the Ultimate Sales Tool.



We already have the names of your next customers

You want to find a steady stream of tomorrow's customers so your sales team can make the case for your company directly, but you don't want your sales team wasting time, effort and opportunity chasing phantom companies or dead ends. Active users of Windowbase believe they have the answer - the Ultimate Sales Tool. Nick Dutton, Sales & Marketing Director of fast growing Synseal Extrusions

says, "If I had to have just one item in my budget, my Windowbase database would be it."

And how do you even begin to work out which are your potential customers? Fortunately you don't need to. Our housing specifiers database, for example, not only gives you contact details for each individual responsible for specifying window policy within a local authority or housing association, but provides the details of that specification. You will know which materials are specified, which brands or systems they use, if any, and which standards the specification is based on. Information about glazing, hardware and security is also included. Last but by no means least, we find out if the organisation has a window replacement programme underway and, if so, the number of dwellings that still need windows replacing.

Specifiers: Win! Win! Windowbase!

LOCAL AUTHORITIES, all over the country, are transferring their stock to housing association ownership, and it's a pain keeping track of all the changes. If you're doing it yourselves, that is. Take a look at our website:

www.winbase.co.uk for information on how to obtain accurate information about specifiers.

The sales department is paid to sell, yet you're expected to keep up to speed on what's happening where. It's a costly and time-consuming process, and it takes your eye off the ball. When you let Windowbase become your research department, you can take a fresh look at how you're selling to specifiers. A database means that, instead of phoning to make appointments - often unsuccessfully - you can do regular tactical mailshots instead. Keep your name in the frame at a fraction of the

cost, then make the follow-up calls. Instead of spending **hours** on motorways, **minutes** on the phone can produce better results. Cut your costs AND increase productivity? Two for the price of one - now that's what we call Win-Win.

Essential details

Windowbase offers you **1,400 names** (plus all other details) of architects and surveyors - people who are incredibly difficult to contact, because they're out on site a lot of the time.

Just ask yourself, if Windowbase find it hard to talk to these people between 9:30 and 12 noon, 2:00 and 4:30 in the afternoon, can your sales team be doing a brilliant job? Anyone who's trying to speak to a few hundred technical officers has exactly the same problem as Windowbase.

It's no good having the car, the name and the phone number, if the guy you need to contact is always out. The miles all add up, as do the overnight stays in hotels. What exactly are you getting in return, apart from bills?

With the Windowbase **specifiers data**, you can be certain your literature will land on the right desk. Tactical mailshots get attention sooner or later, as long as what you offer is what they want. It's all a matter of timing.

So, if your company's attitude is still to hand some year books to a rep and tell him to get on with it, you might do better to pour money straight down the drain. In the last two years, the details changed on almost 1,200 records. That's an awful lot of information to keep up-to-date AND important enough to your company that it really should be held in a central file.

NEW Sealed unit manufacturers database - with Kitemarks

THE NEW Windowbase database of Sealed Unit Manufacturers offers over 1,000 companies, with senior contacts and - in the majority of cases - the average number of sealed units made each week. It comes in three forms - mailing labels; mailing labels plus a printed telephone follow-up listing for single usage - or with full-size information and BSI Kitemark numbers - on a computer disk for unlimited usage. (By unlimited we mean for 'exclusive use by our immediate customer'; the copyright in the data remains with Windowbase.)

NEW All-Ireland window, door & conservatory companies

ALSO NEW for 2003 is the updated All-Ireland database - as with the UK data - details of the company activity, materials used by them and information on the company size. The data is comprehensive. It even provides phone and fax numbers for use within Ireland or from the UK. The information on over 1,000 current companies may be purchased as labels, labels plus phone follow-up listings, or as computer data under licence for unlimited usage.

The Quality Index



Quality for specifiers

WHERE DO YOU LOOK when you want Quality Assured windows, doors etc? As a specifier, all you'd want is a short-cut to a complete list of who's got what, because it takes too long checking with various suppliers who don't always tell it accurately. Somehow the certificate is always promised but never delivered. And it's equally annoying for all the companies who have invested in Quality Assurance. Now all you need to do is click on

www.thequalityindex.co.uk

and see who's got what (and, in some instances, who hasn't).

What do you know?

Do you have your own website yet? Do you know how much it costs? Do you know how many visitors it gets? Do you know how do they find out about it? Have you ever asked yourself any of these questions? More importantly, perhaps, have you asked anyone else? It's one thing to have your own website but it's an expensive toy if nobody's using it.

Do you know what search engines are?... Google, Yahoo, or someone like that. Have you ever tried finding your own website details in Google? It's no good searching on Windows, because there's more stuff to do with Microsoft than anything else.

If finding it is troublesome, people aren't going to bother, so you could be spending (wasting) a lot of money each year, and nobody even knows your website exists. If they're looking for quality companies, the search should be easier, surely. Have you tried keying Quality Windows into a Google search? The list still seems endless.

What everyone needs is a better search engine, preferably with a name that everyone can remember - one that has already sorted the wheat from the chaff.

So try [The Quality Index](http://www.thequalityindex.co.uk). It contains

details of all the window and door companies who've got BBA, ISO 9000 and Kitemarks.

Take a look some time:

www.thequalityindex.co.uk. If you're Quality Assured, please do check the website and confirm that all your details are correct. If there's anything that needs adding or correcting, please email martin@tqi.info and we'll make the changes.

If you've got one or more of those certificates, your name should be there. Specifiers, in particular, know exactly what you've got and how to get in touch. Just the name, address and phone number at the moment, plus certification details where they can be verified.

When people want instant information, the Internet is definitely the place to look, as long as it isn't for a needle in a haystack. The Quality Index cuts out 99% of the searching. All you have to tell everyone is: we're in [The Quality Index](http://www.thequalityindex.co.uk) and they can do the rest. That might be all the average local government specifier needs to know. All the rest is there already. If you make trade windows, or you're targeting house-builders, they'll be looking for all sorts of details, including (possibly) your price lists etc - the sort of information that normally goes into websites, these days.

Care and grooming

HAS YOUR BUSINESS database got a good appetite, shiny eyes, and a healthy coat, or is it so listless and dog-eared that you feel ashamed to take it out for a walk?

A database is only as good as the information that it contains. Lots of people throw every scrap of information they can grab into it, and hope that the action of putting it there will somehow make it valid.

The old rule of GIGO ("garbage in - garbage out") applies as much to databases as to anything else in life. Someone asks if you've met the new guy at RJC Components: "Robert Johnson, I think his name is." It rings a bell, so you make a note to record it...

scribble a note to your secretary saying: "Put that in the sales database." And you think, "I must check that out." You don't, of course and, sooner or later, a mailing goes out. Unfortunately, the company name was right,

NO OFFENCE, MATE, BUT
CAN YOU STOP CALLING?



but Robin Johnstone is not impressed with your 'personal' letter.

Managing a database means taking some

key decisions, and someone must be responsible for updating. When you add a record to the database:

- ensure it's correct;
- note the source of the information;
- record the date it was added or changed.

That way you'll be able to recognise which could be out-of-date and which might need checking. When you use Windowbase data, you get used to seeing the validation date on every record. When you hear of changes to the data:

- ensure someone is responsible for making the change;
- remove obsolete records to a special archive;
- check the changes are also made to other data (your agency, for instance, who has your last mailing list).

... More on the care and grooming of databases next time.

For further information,

please fill in your details and tick your area of interest below and return to: Windowbase Ltd

Reader's name: _____

Company: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Windowbase Ltd

FREEPOST

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House-builders DLOs Specifiers Sealed Units Ireland TQI Window Companies