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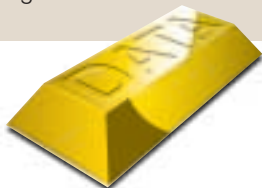
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Looking and seeing

BRITISH GAS rang the other day, asking if they could supply us with electricity. Thanks very much, but we'd settle for gas (of which there is none in our area). The telesales person didn't have the faintest idea what I was talking about.

Telesales used to be associated with double-glazing. Nowadays, if it's not gas or electricity, it's all sorts of offers to reduce phone bills. As far as consumers - us, the general public - are concerned, it's getting up everyone's nose yet it does the business. Our name, Windowbase, says which business sector we started with



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Take your partners

HOUSING IS A KEY COMPONENT of the UK economy and a unique one - our European neighbours view our booms and busts with some perplexity. Economists are kept busy predicting what the monetary policy committee of the Bank of England will do with interest rates and the impact that any increase or decrease may have on house values. Homeowners have revelled in high home values and borrowed against them to boost their immediate spending power. In so doing they help prop up the economy and fend off recessions.

Our latest boom now shows signs of cooling. Yet prospects for house-builders are hotter than ever. Scarcity of land and housing, particularly in the South East, are high on the government agenda and, however the housing market in general performs, the only way for house-builders is up.

Yet, despite high house values and good prospects,

house-builders operate within a highly competitive environment. They are constantly looking for new ways to reduce building costs through new materials and building methods or through service and supply. Whatever route they take, house builders are keen to develop long-term partnerships with suppliers. Consistency and reliability are bred of stable

relations, which in turn can help to reduce costs and lead times.

Partnership with house-builders can be highly lucrative, but finding partners is no easy task. The structure of house-builders is varied and complex. Reaching decision-makers for buying the materials you produce can be a frustrating and time consuming business. Windowbase has done the groundwork for you - in effect our database of house-builders will act as your dating agency. It's up to you to make the first move and, if you delay too long, you may find everyone's already paired up. **Don't be a wallflower. Call us now.**

Circulate this to...

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

Looking and seeing

...continued from page 1

but we've come a long way. Once, our customers were almost all in the window industry - now they barely make up half.

Accurate information about house-builders, for example, is obviously useful to the window industry but that's because they have always been pro-active in making direct contact with their target customers.

There's a regional office of a national-name house-builder in Nottingham, whose buyer has just got married. Went for his honeymoon in Thailand. One or two people know this. Three or four people forgot this. Five or six people stuck that fact in a USER field in their house-builder's database. They're the ones whose calls feel more like a pleasant chat to break up a long, boring afternoon. Still using so-and-so's kitchen units . . . or roof tiles, central heating boilers etc? And did you get our information about the new P2000LX?

Be under no delusion, what sound like personal calls are going to become far more common, as and when the rules about telemarketing tighten. Cold calling is a pain, anyway. Much easier to scan through your files about a person and call for a quick chat. (And don't forget about the Data Protection Act; see www.dpr.gov.uk)

So, if you've dreaded making a start, assembling data on an entire industry sector, just be grateful that Windowbase has taken all the drudgery out of it for you. Get your hands on the house-builders database and you can start by scrolling down for the names you recognise. In the User fields, you can key in that Richard went to Phuket and, at weekends, he rides his Fireblade at obscene speeds around the Peak District. Give him a call. Actually, he's a bit fed up with his present lintel supplier. And ask him about his speeding ticket but don't say I told you.

Oh . . . of course . . . you can't . . . unless you have the database to start with.

Celebrating conservatories



Photograph courtesy of Shepley Windows

Major events in life trigger waves of purchasing. Birth, marriage, divorce and moving home are all good news for manufacturers and retailers. Each one generates a period of active spending. Lists of new parents, new spouses and recent movers are highly prized by providers of goods and services.

Another major event sparks off a whole range of purchases. The conservatory market is booming, fed by low interest rates, high house values, unprecedented levels of borrowing for home improvements and the high cost of moving.

A new conservatory does not remain a glass shell with concrete foundations for long. Flooring - tiles or carpets, lighting, heating, ventilation, blinds, furnishings and decoration, even air conditioning, are added to bring



it up to the same level of comfort as the rest of the home.

Conservatories are often part of a wider makeover to give a feeling of living 'outdoors'. They may be installed in conjunction with a garden makeover, perhaps involving hard landscaping, fencing, decking and new patio furniture. And yet the markets for both internal and external conservatory related products

are still largely unexploited. If you sell or supply any of these products, now is the time to sit up and take note.

How do you reach potential customers? Do you rely on chance and wait for them to come to you? You can only really target them by knowing who they are. And who better to approach than the companies that sell the conservatories in the first place?

This is where Windowbase really comes into its own, telling you who makes and who installs conservatories. And it's in the interest of conservatory companies to have recommended suppliers of related goods and services. The potential for partnering is very much alive - but it won't be forever. Maybe you should get in touch with your potential customers before your competitors do, so get in touch with us first.

Work smarter, not harder

HOWEVER AMBITIOUS a sales manager you are, you are unlikely to be the best without the right sales tools.

Some still take the hard road to success and launch sales reps into deep water with no map and no compass. Sales people are left to do their own research and spend time pulling lists together, probably based on old or inaccurate information. They end up rushing around on spec with a poor rate of success. It's a waste of an expensive resource and doesn't leave much time to do what they're good at - selling. Who missed the sales targets - them . . . or you?

Smart sales managers understand that knowledge gives an edge over competitors, and a sound bank of knowledge is the best starting point for any selling organisation. That's why the first thing they buy is Windowbase data. Immediately they have up-to-date details of contact names and positions . . . enough precious information about prospects for sales people to hit targets directly, whether by mail, 'phone or email.

Being smarter avoids some potentially expensive pitfalls. We provide monthly updates of companies that have registered with the Telephone and Fax Preference Services and quarterly updates of changes in company and contact details on some databases. Clever folk use a database wisely, keeping it updated with any additional details the

team discover along the way.

Performance is measured by results. Success comes easier with the right tools, and Windowbase is a heavyweight in terms of providing valuable information. Success doesn't go unnoticed for long and many of our customers have moved jobs two or three times. And guess what's the first thing they do once they've moved? That's right - buy a Windowbase database.

Upwardly mobile Windowbase customers now with their third employer!

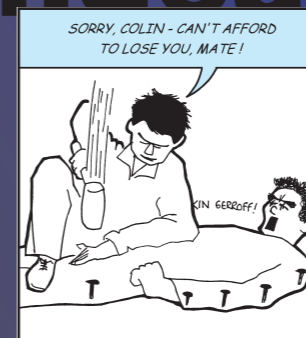
It's nice to get repeat business. Each time from the same person. They leave one company, join another and discover - with horror - that their new employer doesn't use 'Windowbase'. So they sign up again - and again! It's good to know that successful people use Windowbase. Umm. Come to think of it, is it the other way around, . . . that people using Windowbase are more successful? So that's why we get so much repeat business . . . !

The undead

IF YOU WANT to get in touch with the dead, some of you can walk down the corridor, into Purchasing, to do just that. We're trying to contact "the dead", every day of the week. Each time our data gets an update, lots of company names pass away, bound for the big filing tray in the sky.

Have you ever wondered what happens to all the people who worked for those companies? They don't die, too. And most of them don't spend the rest of their days watching *Kilroy* and *Countdown*, either. More likely, they take a bargain late-deal fortnight in Marbella before starting work somewhere else. If Colin worked in Dewsbury (and was any good) the odds are he'll show up around there again.

Your company did business with Colin's company but you did business with Colin. And now he's disappeared. Did he have your number? Or did you



ensure that, before it hit the fan, you had the means of getting (and staying) in touch with him, not his company?

The names of good contacts keep cropping up and it's your job to ensure it doesn't happen by chance. You don't pay next month's instalment on your mortgage by chance.

Who ever heard of anyone in Sales who doesn't want to be a winner? Tell them to go find Colin, otherwise he might as well be dead, as far as your company's concerned. First step - look in Windowbase.

Cleaning your data

As clean factory floors make for efficient production operations, so clean sales databases lead to efficient marketing. And just as it seems a waste of time sweeping factory floors when under pressure, so cleaning data can be seen as just a nuisance.

Windowbase supply information on data changes each quarter as part of the updating provided with the Window Installer and Fabricator database, but we notice customers can be reluctant to ensure that obsolete records are removed.

In a sense all data is 'out of date' because it is constantly changing. Our concern is in identifying what has changed.

'Cleaning your database' means you need to:-

- Remove Companies that have ceased trading;
- Remove Companies whose business has changed and are no longer relevant to you;
- De-duplicate Companies that appear twice - because they have moved, or because you have both branch and head offices;
- Update changes of telephone numbers and personnel so that your attempts to contact them are effective each time;
- Keep a record of when the data was last checked and - preferably - by whom.

These are the main points. You have much more information that needs checking...

It costs money. But not cleaning costs too:-

- Mailing costs at, say, a minimum of £1 per time for a simple mailer sent to wrong or obsolete addresses.
- Mailing costs as above, plus the poor image you give when potential customers receive two copies of everything. Even poorer image when you send mailings to the wrong person, especially if that person left the company some years earlier.
- The cost of sending your sales force to the wrong address ("Yes, of course I should have checked, but *you* gave me the address!"). At an average of four sales calls a day, a salesperson is probably costing the company at least £40 per call. But that is only the direct cost. The lost opportunity of the sale that could have resulted by calling on a *genuine* prospect can be ten times that. And these costs can multiply out of all proportion if overnight stays away from home are involved.

Even our subscribers have to ensure they are applying the quarterly updates correctly. For Access users, there's a free program that applies updates and offers the choice of removing deleted records. Say 'no' and the records stay in the file, which is fine if you want to do something with them. But although they are clearly marked (with a "!" in the Result field), it is easy to forget them when that next mailing is required urgently. When your mail bounces back, you look for someone to blame.

A major strength of the Windowbase service is the validation date given on each record. Although we attempt to contact companies on a regular basis, it's not always possible to insist on a reply. Users of the database can make their own judgements about the data, and refuse, say, to mail any record that is more than eighteen months old. Windowbase will keep trying to track down the company until its status is confirmed. In the meantime users stay in control of their own decisions and thus their marketing costs and efforts.



Quality Street

Are you strolling along Quality Street or going to the dogs?

THERE ARE STARS in every field of activity. Andrew Flintoff and Alan Shearer come to mind. They're human, just like the rest of us, but it's like they don't breathe the same air as us. They're in a different class. Talent plays a big part in sportsmen's achievements but there's no shortage of business endeavours that rise to the top, like the cream always does, through little more than attitude and perseverance. As often as not, quality companies are also Quality Assured companies, and the website www.thequalityindex.co.uk helps you find them - quickly.

Lots of people, in the big, tough commercial world, look to share a moment or two with some really useful names. Architects as specifiers, for instance, get to decide where huge orders get placed, so plenty of attempted contacts there. Only a lot of them have taken the Quality Street, achieved ISO 9001, so they don't talk to companies that

haven't. How could they? They talk a different language. They're the top 5%, a fairly elite bunch. Needless to say, they prefer to do business with each other.

Be under no delusion, as partnering takes a stronger grip on public sector spending, it will be the names we see in The Quality Index who are going to be the winners, in much the same way as a small builder isn't going to crack it any more without membership of Constructionline. Everywhere we look, these days, clubs are springing up and we need more than money to join. Agrément holders, for instance, have an inside track to NHBC house-builders. QA is actually becoming essential for *Secured by Design* at last.

If you log onto www.thequalityindex.co.uk once a month or so, you'll notice there are more and more products and services listed. Travel the same route, down Quality Street, and the gates open for you to walk in and exchange cards. Make appointments. If your

company isn't taking that route, that's fine too but, without certification of your own, you might start to realise why you're wasting your time with a whole host of names.

Readers of this can be divided into two categories: the haves and the have nots. If your company has achieved certification, there's a special market to which only a select few have access. If you haven't, don't despair because there's always someone else who'd just as easily settle instead for a free lunch, or a night at the dog track, in exchange for a slice of his business.

Oh yes - there's a third category: their BBA certificate still looks good, framed and hanging in Reception, because nobody ever notices (the receptionist included) that it expired three years ago! Their name's in The Quality Index, too, only it says EXPIRED next to it.

So are you strolling along Quality Street or going to the dogs?

How to have a lucky sales force

DON'T YOU EVER WISH you were lucky? Some people always seem to be in the right place at the right time. They fall into a ditch and come out smelling of violets. So when someone comes along and stuffs your pockets with tenners, you don't know whether to laugh at your good fortune or wonder what the catch is.

In business you need a plan. It may not look like 'planning to make money', but working with no plan is certainly 'planning to lose money'!

Any plan must be based on the real world. No - the *real* world - not the one you assume it to be! If you plan to ski home, it helps if there's snow. So look out of the window before putting your skis on. In business, you look to make sure you know where you are going each day, before setting out. I recently heard of a company who recruited a salesman to improve their Yorkshire sales - but he lives in Sussex! "Why?" we asked. "Because he's good!" was

the reply. He then proceeded to call on companies in the South-East. "How's the Northern expansion going?" We next enquired. "Not very well", they said. Surprise Surprise!

A little bit of luck

You can find out how many companies there are in the UK - by region. Not just house-builders, but window companies too, by materials they use.

Just log onto the web site -

www.winbase.co.uk - you don't have to buy anything, just tick a few boxes and the magic numbers are there:- numbers by region. (Because the South East is enormous, we divide it along the Thames for convenience in all our databases); numbers by company activity.

You can decide where those extra sales people need to be located, and it needn't cost you anything. Now is *that* luck?

The catch? A terrible temptation! You see the price for a set of mailing labels, and the charge for having the full details of all those

companies on your computer. A lucky find when you think that in most industries the best you can hope for is an out-of-date telephone directory. We want your business, and we know that we'll get it - whenever you want more luck than just an excellent plan. If you are looking for information that's regularly refreshed, then come to Windowbase and help to make your sales force lucky too.

Cheeky bugger!

ONE SALES MANAGER, when he needs a few gee-up subjects for his sales meetings, logs onto the Windowbase website, clicks on back Issues, and uses some of our little articles.

He starts out with a download of 600 or so words and works it up into a 20-minute session. Not even one of our customers! Should we be flattered?

For further information,

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

Reader's name: _____

Company: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Windowbase Ltd
FREEPOST

OL5525
3 Spring Bank Lane,
Rochdale,
Lancs OL11 5ZZ

Email: info@winbase.co.uk
Website: www.winbase.co.uk

House-builders DLOs Specifiers Sealed Units Ireland TQI Window Companies

windowBASE®

Windowbase Ltd, 3 Spring Bank Lane,
Rochdale, Lancs OL11 5SE

Telephone: 01706 644308

Fax: 01706 759898

Email: info@winbase.co.uk

Website: www.winbase.co.uk

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