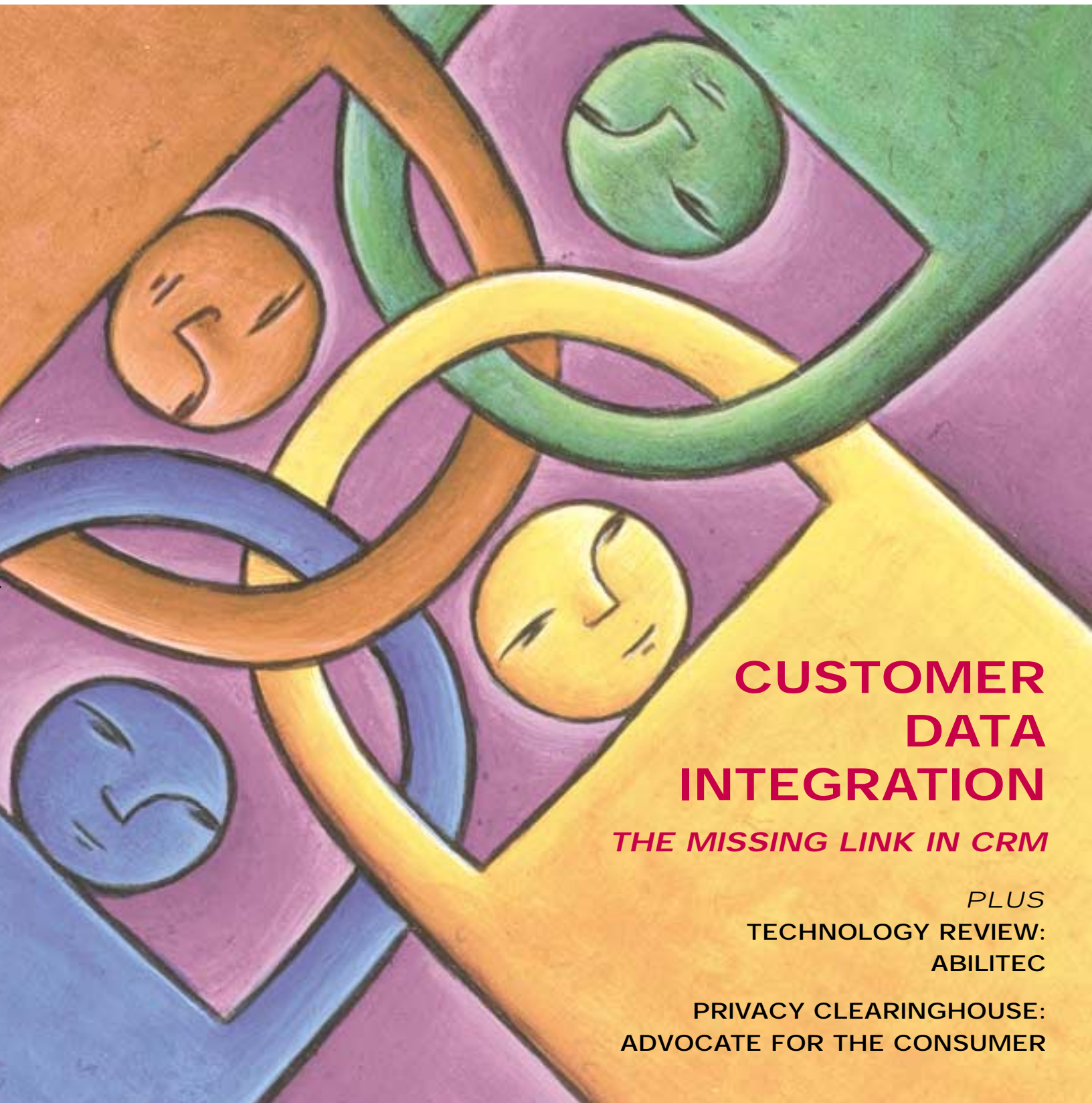


# Case -in- POINT

Volume 6 • Issue 2 Spring 2000



## CUSTOMER DATA INTEGRATION

*THE MISSING LINK IN CRM*

*PLUS*  
TECHNOLOGY REVIEW:  
ABILITEC

PRIVACY CLEARINGHOUSE:  
ADVOCATE FOR THE CONSUMER

*Remember when  
those guys said your customers would never  
buy this stuff. And you said,  
yeah they would.  
Well guess what? They did.*

*- the Future*



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Will your future speak of success? It will if it includes Acxiom.

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Both globally. And locally. So you can create opportunities. Opportunities that drive success. And success that will make your future very bright indeed.

**ACXIOM**<sup>®</sup>

Creating future without fear.



▼  
**COVER STORY 2**  
**FORGING THE**  
**MISSING LINK**

What you don't know about your customer can really hurt. Experts agree that most companies are bumping up against severe customer data integration problems on the road to effective customer relationship management.



**PRIVACY CLEARINGHOUSE 5**

**ADVOCATE FOR THE CONSUMER:  
 EMPOWER CONSENT & ACCESS**

As effective customer data integration becomes easier, consumer knowledge can be more accurately maintained and used. It will also be easier to more actively include consumers in the protection and management of that knowledge.



**TECHNOLOGY REVIEW 6**

**ABILITEC BREAKS THROUGH CDI BARRIERS**

The once-cumbersome work of consolidating and enhancing customer records is transformed.

# Forging the Missing Link

Among the toughest, yet most crucial, jobs in the modern enterprise are those of standardizing, consolidating, and maintaining customer data. Tough, because to do them well requires the support of ultra-fastidious, highly skilled data handlers, supported by powerful technology that can quickly verify and correct millions upon millions of data elements. It also requires clear business rules across the enterprise, supported by rules-based systems able to handle the thousands of anomalies that undermine customer data integrity.

Data management is crucial because it is key to any company seeking competitive advantage through customer centricity. Success boils down not to which customer relationship management (CRM) system you buy, but to how well you set up processes and systems for shepherding data that fuels those systems. Data-savvy individuals are in short supply. And automated transformation systems are seldom geared to handle the fast-changing data from today's evolving marketplace.

It is not surprising, then, that poor customer data integration (CDI) methods are commonplace, and frequently hamper returns on major enterprise investments—such as CRM and enterprise resource management (ERM) systems (also known as Enterprise Resource Planning, or ERP systems). Effective CDI is fundamental to these applications, as well as to the summarization of data for data warehouses and data marts (see Figure 1 above).

“A little knowledge is not enough to market and sell effectively to today's savvy customers, who have a myriad of choices

and are flexing their power by demanding better, ever more-personalized products and services,” said Charles Morgan, company leader of Acxiom Corporation, [www.acxiom.com](http://www.acxiom.com). “To believe that genuine CRM can be implemented effectively without *all* the relevant knowledge about your customers would be a major mistake.”

Complex customer data quality problems make it difficult for companies to realize their visions for information-powered operations that really focus on customers. So significant is this issue that technology executives last year moved customer data quality from fifth to first place on their priority lists ([www.informationweek.com](http://www.informationweek.com)).

Said META Group's senior program director for Application Delivery Strategies, Elizabeth Shahnam, “CRM leaders must take dramatic action to optimize their systems around the customer, or their customer relationship investments will not pay off.”

## Little Change: Until Now

Many veteran marketers have been frustrated by their inability to get a reliable view of their customers. Sophisticated software systems for customer contact management don't perform as well as hoped. A customer calls in or e-mails about a problem, and the systems—armed only with last week's data—fail to recognize a key transaction that occurred yesterday. Or Web data that could be used to recognize good prospects is siphoned off to databases that have nothing in common with other data systems, making it impossible to analyze the information.

These are typical CDI problems. They can be readily solved, but too many companies come late to the realization that their most important investment in CRM lies here—in fundamental data integration issues. They have to adopt a top-down commitment to making their data work.

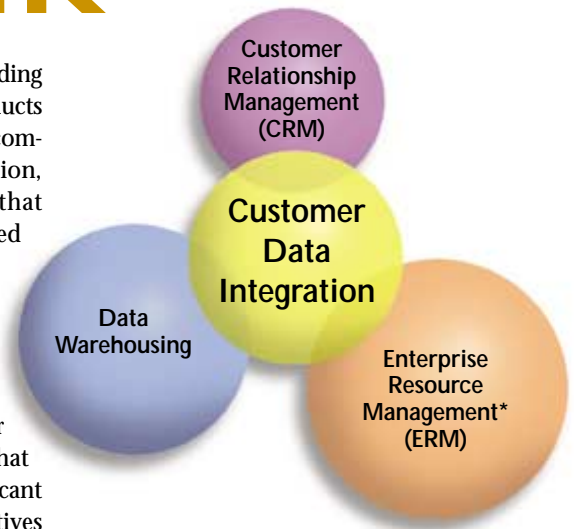


Figure 1: According to IDC, the combined worldwide software and services markets for CRM, ERM, and data warehousing were \$88.5 billion in 1999, a figure that IDC expects to grow by 23 percent per year to \$201.5 billion in 2003. CDI is considered critical to all three categories.

Source: IDC and Acxiom Corporation.

\* ERM is synonymous with Enterprise Resource Planning, or ERP.

This means valuing data at the point of capture, and caring for it as carefully as they care for their financial assets. They have to make a corporate commitment to educate every worker on the value of each customer interaction, and to establish the common rules that will preserve that value.

Only a handful of outsourcers have real experience with CDI. According to Aberdeen Group, [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com), the greatest CDI expertise is typically found among companies that got their start in supporting the direct-marketing industry 20 to 30 years ago. “The best of these specialists have developed highly refined merge rules as well as server and disk farms to integrate large files,” noted Aberdeen Group's analysts in a 1999 report. “Because data integration is a core competency of these services, match rates are typically much higher than can be attained through in-house initiatives.”

## The Integration Grind

Defining what constitutes a match between different occurrences of customer or prospect information is a crucial process that requires tremendous experience in working with name and address inconsistencies. The gray areas are numerous and confounding. If the business rules for matching up records are defined too broadly, linkages may be inferred between records that actually are unrelated. Conversely, if the matching rules are too strict, multiple occurrences of important transaction history or other information about an individual will be missed.

A somewhat simplistic sampling of common CDI complexities is shown in Figure 2. Difficulties in correctly matching up multiple sources of information about an individual can arise from:

1. Actual errors or variations among multiple occurrences of a name associated with the same address, such as Janice A. Smith and Janet A. Smitt;
2. Similar or identical names occurring in a certain geographical region, where the occurrences might be two different individuals or could be one person who travels between a work address and a home address, or someone who has more than one residence;
3. Identifying all records pertaining to an individual who has changed residences or business addresses (in the U.S., fully a quarter of the population moved within the past year);
4. Identifying all records pertaining to an individual who has changed his or her name, and possibly address as well. (At least 2.5 million marriages occur per year in the U.S., creating all kinds of surname complexities, including new hyphenated surnames, the use of both married and single names in different parts of a person's life, maintenance of the single surname, and adoption of the husband's married name);
5. Correctly identifying foreign names, which may present different name-line sequences as well as compound

characters (accents [é] and umlauts [ü], for example). Foreign names often require specialized matching tables to handle parsing and standardization.

## Toward Mutual Benefits

Companies must be able to handle incoming changes quickly and with far greater precision as they move out of batch direct-response marketing campaigns and into using data to guide all customer interactions. As consumers, we've all experienced the numerous frustrations

that result when a company doesn't seem to recognize our loyalty, and know how readily that frustration can turn into defection.

Effective CDI practices help companies overcome these problems, providing significant qualitative benefits, such as:

- ▼ **Competitive advantage.** The ability to respond swiftly to a competitor's offensive, or to identify and act on a new market opportunity, is largely data-dependent. Armed with quality information about prospects and customers,

PROBLEM	EXAMPLE	
Name Error	Occurrence A	Janice A. Smith 123 Poole Street Andover, NY 12346
	Occurrence B	Janet A. Smitt 123 Poole Street Andover, NY 12346
Duplicate Names, Different Addresses	Residence	Richard N. Cross 44 Park Avenue Tarrytown, NY 10591
	Work Address	Richard N. Cross 828 South Broadway Tarrytown, NY 10591
Address Change	2000 Residence	Dan B. Smith 2 Toulouse Street New Orleans, LA 70113
	1998 Residence	Dan B. Smith 66 Peach Tree Blvd. Atlanta, GA 30302
	Country home, 2000	Dan Smith Cardinal Way Copake, NY 12516
Name Change	2000 Residence	Sally Gleason 1025 Allegheny Road Seattle, WA 98146
	Professional	Sally Black American Manufacturing Corp 4130 Highway B Seattle, WA 98171
	1998 Residence, when single	Sally Black 3 Pheasant Road Ft. Lee, NJ 07024
Foreign Names	Atique Abul-Se Nassef 59 Tulberry Road Danbury, CT 06810	

Figure 2. Difficulties in correctly matching up multiple sources of information about an individual can arise from these very common problems.

companies can make better decisions much more quickly. Many of today's dot-com battles, for example, are fought in matters of minutes on the Web. Failure to notice an offensive, or to respond to it in time, can mean significant loss of position and customer loyalty. The more sophisticated companies are perfecting their customer knowledge base and their ability to continually refine and test approaches to customer care and sales, every day, around the clock.

- ▼ **The ability to better identify customer relationship needs.** If an individual registers at a Web site requesting information, enhancing the resulting record with external enhancement data helps a company determine how to follow-up with the most appropriate offer. This in turn can develop a greater bond with that individual. That same individual may also turn up at the company retail store the next day to further investigate their purchase, and they may have purchased a gift for a spouse from the catalog last Christmas. Only if all of that knowledge is available at the moment of next contact can the company provide the potent relevancy that consumers now expect and demand. Relevancy is the key to both relationship profitability and customer loyalty.

- ▼ **Better enterprise flow of information.** The dynamic routing of customer transaction and contact information across systems in the enterprise relies upon solid data resources. It helps to minimize errors in handling, and maximize the company's ability to convert and keep customers. At one major U.S. financial institution, such cross-enterprise integration is considered key to all future success. Every interaction—whether through a Web site, a retail encounter, or a response to a marketing campaign, is viewed as a touchpoint for serving the customer's immediate needs *and* for augmenting the company's understanding of that customer's total set of financial-service needs. Only in

## CDI Front-Runners



### Lands' End Takes Aim at Customer Service

U. S. cataloger Lands' End, [www.landsend.com](http://www.landsend.com), exemplifies a new breed of customer-centric companies that recognize the value of CDI. The company is investing heavily in personalizing customer relationships through data-based insights. The first step has been to clean up its 25-million name database, thereby providing better customer service, eliminating duplicate mailings to customers, and reducing use of natural resources.

The company is also looking to CDI to support a rapidly growing e-tailing business, which last year produced just over 10 percent of its \$1.32 billion in sales revenue. "Lands' End is committed to providing customers with the most personal and responsive shopping experience available anywhere online," said Bill Blass, vice president of e-commerce for the cataloger. Personalized shopping tools that enable online shoppers to get online or telephone support from Lands' End representatives strengthen the company's position as an online customer service leader, he added. This requires integrating existing data with new Web-based systems.



### Conseco Finance Changes Models

Conseco Inc., [www.conseco.com](http://www.conseco.com), is a fast-growing financial-services company. But, in fact, it is fast becoming an information company. "Conseco isn't just insurance, investment, and lending products," said Greg Schneider, senior vice president of marketing information management. "Increasingly, we are a great repository of information about who buys those products."

According to Schneider, every touchpoint with the customer is an opportunity to truly listen to and learn about that individual's needs. Using a powerful customer data infrastructure, the company can integrate scores from various sources (such as credit-risk models, cross-selling models, acquisition models, and collections strategies) and transform it into data that can drive an effective interaction. It is one of the innovative companies to license the new AbiliTec CDI technology offered by Acxiom Corporation, with which the company plans to increase the household penetration of its insurance and financial-services product suite. "Currently more than 20 percent of our customers have two or more Conseco products," said Schneider. "By migrating the rest of the company to the practices that got us to this level, we expect to continue to aggressively grow products per household."

this way can the company find what they call "the right product for the right consumer at the right time."

- ▼ **Greater consumer trust.** Surveys have shown that consumers are willing to share their data with companies that safeguard it and use it appropriately to improve their lives. What angers and

frightens them are intrusive marketing campaigns making irrelevant offers or offers that reveal too much knowledge about their private lives. Good CDI practices, therefore, must honor all available consumer protection guidelines. Doing so can help a company

*continued on back cover*

# Advocate for the Consumer: Empower Consent & Access

As CDI gets easier, it will also become easier to work with consumers to protect and manage their privacy better.



Customer Relationship Management (CRM) efforts are putting new focus on the need to aggregate customer information across the enterprise. Ironically, they are also spawning new possibilities for protecting the privacy of the very individuals that aggregated information describes.

Specifically, new Customer Data Integration (CDI) technology that can accurately and quickly pinpoint all records about an individual can give consumers greater control over what information is stored and how it is used. The consumers' right for such control is a fundamental principle of fair information usage.

Today, handling consumer requests for access to their records can be problematic for companies that can't properly integrate their data. Balkanized systems residing in numerous departments may contain many references to John Smith, for example, each with different spellings and addresses. It is difficult to confirm which references describe the same John Smith, and which name and address is most current for him. If Mr. Smith calls to ask what information the company has stored about him, it is difficult to respond with certainty.

Companies that practice effective CDI don't have to worry. On the contrary, they can openly invite dialogues with their Mr. Smith's, knowing that these interactions could become defining moments in deepening customers' loyalty.

### Creating Dialogue Around Consent and Access

Consumers, commercial enterprises, and lawmakers the world over are searching for an equitable balance between the data use needs of commerce and the data protection needs of consumers. Two key principles at the heart of this balancing act are *consent* and *access*.

**Consent.** In some markets, privacy guidelines or laws grant consumers the right to give express consent (opt-in) to any commercial use of their information. They stipulate that consumers have the right to know how the data is to be used, and to object to other uses without consent. Europe's new privacy laws, which are setting new standards around the globe, further stipulate that when a consumer declines consent, that information must be updated in the database immediately.

■

**With new CDI technology on the market that can more accurately and quickly pinpoint all of a company's records about an individual, it actually becomes possible to give consumers greater control.**

■

When CDI systems work properly, both consumer and company can realize these goals, and have far more flexibility in how consent is handled. It becomes feasible, for example, for consumers to give consent in response to a specific company request, to opt-out of all marketing, or to specify selective uses that they consider acceptable. That information can be immediately assimilated and flagged across the enterprise, so that all systems that deal in customer transactions will recognize the preferences of that individual. Now the company can reliably respect the consumer's wishes, something that was previously impossible.

**Access.** Similarly, a basic doctrine of fair information use is that consumers always have the right to *see* what information is

stored about them and to *correct* it. This, too, has not been easy to enforce. Have you ever tried to change your address with a company that doesn't integrate its departmental systems? It can be infuriating to the average consumer, who doesn't understand why a simple request seems to be repeatedly ignored.

Effective CDI not only eliminates such frustrations, but also opens the door to a new kind of consumer relationship. When an individual calls or e-mails, worried about what a particular communication says about a company's knowledge of them, the company can instantly respond (after a security check to authenticate the caller's identity). For example, if Mary Collins stops while shopping on-line to investigate her personal data file, the e-tailer is facing a decisive moment in the relationship. What happens next will either alienate Ms. Collins or deepen her loyalty.

Ideally, the company should access a real-time aggregation of its records on Ms. Collins, and send her a complete list of all the internally- and externally-supplied information it holds. Along with this information, the company should provide a clear explanation of how it uses the information to serve her better; how it safeguards the data; how she can correct or remove all or part of the information; and the company's fair use practices.

This response turns a potentially negative situation into one that solidifies the relationship. Some consumers, in the face of such a response, may even become proactive information partners. That is, with their concerns about privacy alleviated, they may now want to work with the company to correct and augment their data files on an ongoing basis. Thus advocacy builds trust, and trust builds relationships. ■

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## AbiliTec: Breaking through CDI Barriers

The once-cumbersome work of consolidating and enhancing customer records is utterly transformed.

AbiliTec is, without question, a new generation Customer Data Integration (CDI) technology. It breaks new ground in the ability to accurately and quickly identify each occurrence of an individual among one or many files, and to resolve variations in content.

Acxiom Corporation, a long-time provider of CDI services for major corporations in the U.S. and Europe, announced AbiliTec in the fall of 1999. The product moved out of beta-test phase in the first quarter of this year, and is now being implemented at a number of companies around the U.S. Early adopters include direct merchant Lands' End, insurance and financial-services provider Conesco, and eFunds, a subsidiary of Deluxe, and partnerships are also underway with Dun & Bradstreet and others. These enterprises are enthusiastic about AbiliTec's potential role.

Companies investing in customer relationship management (CRM) technologies will be immediate beneficiaries of the new CDI technology. (See "AbiliTec Aids Customer Contact" on page 8.) According to industry analysts, data compartmentalization is an enormous obstacle to companies trying to achieve single customer views. Even the most visionary companies struggle to integrate all of the data they have about customers from multiple systems. Dot-com startups don't fare much better. Although they may lack the layers of legacy systems hobbling more established firms, few have the experience to effectively clean, analyze, and use the deluge of data their Web sites and other points of contact are producing about prospects and customers.

Abilitec breaks through data compartmentalization, releasing information held hostage in one or another departmental



**"AbiliTec linking of customer data across multiple data sources brings unprecedented accuracy and speed to the CDI process. This obviously can reduce data management costs. But even more dramatic are the potential improvements in customer relationships."**

— Duncan McClain —  
DPD Marketing Leader, Acxiom Corporation

system. It speeds the process of validating and deduplicating incoming information, eliminating the need for complex data transformation procedures. As a result, companies can quickly get to a place of clarity and define a singleness of purpose for their marketing efforts.

"AbiliTec will do for customer data integration what FedEx did in the world

of package delivery by adding unmatched speed and accuracy to the process," said Duncan McClain, marketing leader for Acxiom Corporation's data products. "While corporations are hard-pressed to keep up with the corresponding name and address changes, Acxiom automates the integration of dispersed customer information into a single, recognizable portfolio."

### Leapfrogging Old Methodologies

In order to effectively bring all occurrences of a prospect's or customer's information together to get a comprehensive view of their relationship with the enterprise, many things must be brought into alignment. Company practices in collecting data, recording it, and consolidating it with existing data sources must be rationalized to work as a cohesive system, so that everyone is actively engaged in safeguarding and enhancing data value. The underlying processing systems must also be finely tuned to yield maximum accuracy in the quickest possible time.

AbiliTec makes a radical break from existing technologies. More importantly, it enables related business processes to occur smoothly, and at any speed, including real-time. It eliminates resource-intensive processing steps and uses a dramatically more accurate approach for identifying and validating unique records.

AbiliTec has won early cheers from technology analysts. The Aberdeen Group of Boston, MA, [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com), published a review of the technology in October 1999 entitled "Acxiom's AbiliTec: Key to Creating a Total Customer View." Aberdeen's analysts focused heavily on the transformational capability of the technology for companies trying to practice effective CRM:

"AbiliTec works by altering the data integration paradigm. Responding to real-world difficulties that enterprises face, the AbiliTec service combines

the benefits of an outsourced data integration solution (reduced in-house processing and sophisticated record matching) with a rapid turnaround time.... Once the enterprise adopts the AbiliTec “standard,” various customer-facing systems and applications will be able to match diverse customer data from both inside and outside the corporation in seconds. As long as companies have customers, they will struggle to optimize their valuable customer relationships. Enterprises that want to minimize the struggle should investigate Acxiom’s AbiliTec technology. It will be key to forging a total view of the customer.”

### How it Works

AbiliTec replaces conventional methods of matching customer data records. It uses a proprietary technology that matches incoming records against Acxiom’s knowledge base to (1) resolve misspellings (which can cause the company to mistake one individual as multiple individuals); and (2) to verify name and address changes or other field variations. AbiliTec assigns a “link” to each name and address. These links are appended to each record in the client’s data files, enabling easy identification of duplicates or other records that should be suppressed, as well as permitting accurate identification of cross-file relationships in all subsequent CDI processing.

The AbiliTec process itself is far less labor-intensive than most data integration efforts. Clients initially send records to Acxiom containing just three pieces of information: customer name, customer address, and corporate customer ID number. Acxiom then returns the corporate customer number along with the AbiliTec “link” representing the name and address. By simply repeating this process for each customer file it wants to clean, integrate, or enhance, a company can quickly accomplish what previously took weeks of effort and considerable manpower from many departments.

## FILE TRANSMISSIONS

Batch	FTP	Online Transactional Processing (OLTP)
Recommended for file sizes over 1 million records.	For files under 1 million records.	For data sources that can be captured immediately for real-time customer integration needs, such as call-center or Web transactions.

### File Transmission and Update Methods.

Data files can be exchanged with Acxiom using any combination of the three delivery methods above. Most companies do the initial update via tape and then update monthly or weekly via FTP, or in real-time.

The AbiliTec links are designed to be persistent to reduce the need for continual maintenance. Acxiom defines two classes of accuracy:

1. *Maintained links*, which are continually validated and for which the company sends out instructions to enterprises when a change is detected and a new link required; and
2. *Derived links*, which are generated on the fly and do not follow individuals as they move. Changes to the links identified through knowledge base updates at Acxiom are periodically published and made available to clients.

■

Recent demonstration projects offer early proof of AbiliTec’s powers to improve accuracy, accelerate data processes, and improve data quality.

■

**Privacy Protection.** According to Acxiom sources, privacy considerations were carefully built into AbiliTec. It is a non-discoverable technology and is fully compliant with all U.S. industry standards and regulations.

Acxiom executives expect the technology to dramatically improve the management of customer preferences

and privacy rights by making it easier for companies to verify individual customer communications preferences. AbiliTec can also enable companies to support customers who want to access, correct, or selectively suppress elements of their data history with a company. (See “Advocate for the Consumer: Empower Consent & Access” on page 5 of this issue, or online at [www.acxiom.com/caseinpoint-v6n2-b.asp](http://www.acxiom.com/caseinpoint-v6n2-b.asp).)

### Benefits Across Multiple Uses

Acxiom demonstration projects conducted in recent months provided early proof of AbiliTec’s powers to improve accuracy, accelerate data processes, and improve data quality.

**Enables real-time CRM across the enterprise.** Enterprise relationship management becomes feasible after initial appending with the unique AbiliTec link. AbiliTec reduces the time required to update records and to enrich files with external data enhancements by as much as 90 percent. So companies using AbiliTec in OLTP mode constantly capture changes to their customer and prospect records, including transaction data, changes of address or name, or appending of analytical scores or external data enhancements. Consequently, when customers contact the company, CRM systems can access accurate, up-to-the-moment records that reflect the individual’s total relationship with the company, and responses can be suitably personalized.

**Underlying improvements in data accuracy improve hygiene and maintenance.** The technology’s improved name

## ABILITEC AIDS CUSTOMER CONTACT

AIDS IN PROCESS OF:	BATCH PROCESSING OF CUSTOMER FILES	REAL-TIME CUSTOMER CONTACT (TM, WEB, POS)
<b>Establishing Baseline CRM Process</b>	Removes technological obstacles to process change (i.e., the ability to quickly and accurately identify all relationships with the individual consumer across the enterprise spurs development of new business processes).	With the technological ability to identify every time a customer touches the organization, companies can move quickly to empower every worker to safeguard valuable data from each new contact.
<b>Establishing Baseline File Accuracy</b>	The process of appending AbiliTec links to each record improves accuracy in initial and all subsequent processing of customer or prospect files.	Each record link provides the basis for correctly identifying the individual consumer at all future points of contact, enabling more appropriate responses to all inquiries and orders.
<b>Validating New Contact Information</b>	File processing not only can quickly clean up name and address anomalies, but can append additional information to aid in contact strategies.	Real-time validation of incoming contact information permits a company to handle each consumer communication quickly and accurately. Customer service is improved.
<b>Supporting Cross-Enterprise Information Flow</b>	With the AbiliTec linking technology in place, every system that touches customer information can be linked.	Real-time data update becomes feasible.
<b>Protecting Consumer Privacy</b>	Rapid and frequent consolidation of transaction files ensures up-to-the-moment file suppressions, where appropriate.	If a consumer calls to inquire about data on file, or to request selective opt-out or opt-in, the company can respond appropriately, further building trust.

Companies investing in customer relationship management (CRM) technologies will be immediate beneficiaries of the new CDI technology. All need to quickly and accurately clean, analyze, and use the deluge of data their Web sites and other points of contact are producing about prospects and customers.

and address matching consistently lifts match rates during the record-hygiene process by 2 to 5 percent. For several clients, lift improvements exceeded 10 percent. This means that more individuals from a company's various systems can be verified and correctly identified as unique individuals and matched with an accurate, deliverable address.

Many of the most impressive accuracy improvements were reported in databases

matched to other company systems (finding multiple occurrences of the same customer), or matched against suppression files, which eliminate individuals because they have requested no marketing calls, are in prison, have declared bankruptcy, or are deceased.

For example, a financial-services company using AbiliTec flagged 9.8 percent of its customer records for suppression. This was a 297 percent improvement over the

3.3 percent it found using traditional processing methods. That single processing step reduced its mailings by 325,000 pieces of mail, saving the company at least \$162,500 a year. That figure, of course, does not include potential liability for mailings to consumers on "do-not-call" lists, consumers living in "do-not-call" states, or current customers.

**Greater overall returns on data-related investments.** Higher match rates improve downstream data-management activities. These include everything from cross-file deduplication and integration to direct-response deliverability, demographic and lifestyle enhancements, and data analysis. Ultimately, the data's use in marketing campaigns, customer-service centers, and online will yield greater returns through these improvements.

Acxiom's early AbiliTec demonstration projects cited measurable benefits for companies in a range of industries, including financial services, retail, insurance, telecommunications, media/publishing, technology, and direct marketing. According to Acxiom insiders, the demonstration projects validated the company's early optimism and excitement over AbiliTec's capabilities.

Said Charles Morgan, Acxiom Corporation company leader, "We now have a large body of conclusive data that not only validates our leaders' optimism, but increases it several-fold." ■

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AbiliTec<sup>SM</sup> is our new customer data integration product. Revolutionary technology that enables true customer relationship management.

AbiliTec gives you a single, accurate view of a customer across multiple business lines and databases.

At unheard of speeds, and with unmatched accuracy.

AbiliTec combines our knowledge of consumer information and our technological superiority so you can know your customer better than ever.

If you'd like to know more about this exciting product, call us at 1-888-459-DATA.



**ABILITEC**<sup>SM</sup>

**ACXIOM**<sup>®</sup>

**1.888.459.DATA**  
[www.acxiom.com/abilitec](http://www.acxiom.com/abilitec)

privacy assured

continued from page 4

make a favorable impact on consumer trust by reducing or eliminating the incidence of bad data that leads to over-marketing or irrelevant marketing efforts. CDI can also transform the marketer into the consumer's advocate, providing the basis for private, informed dialogues with consumers about the personal data they want to see used or suppressed. (See page 5 of this issue, or [www.acxiom.com/caseinpoint/cip-v6n2-b.asp](http://www.acxiom.com/caseinpoint/cip-v6n2-b.asp), and "Beyond Consumer Privacy to Consumer Advocate," at [www.acxiom.com/whitepapers/advocacy.asp](http://www.acxiom.com/whitepapers/advocacy.asp).)

**Quantifiable and Immediate ROI**

The benefits of effective CDI are also quantifiable. Beyond simple valuation of cost savings on outbound direct-response efforts ([www.acxiom.com/whitepapers/wp-09.asp](http://www.acxiom.com/whitepapers/wp-09.asp)), there are potentially rich new streams of profit from deeper relationships with consumers. In everything from customer acquisition campaigns to collections, poor data quality has a significant, quantifiable cost. There is also a significant opportunity cost to the inability to identify profitable customers or deepen their relationships.

When one high-tech company began analyzing its diverse customer data from

Web and telephone contacts, it discovered that it was missing enormous cross-sell opportunities. Not only were many of its best corporate customers potential buyers for at-home computing and telecommunications needs, but they often moonlighted as well. It wasn't until all of that individual's relationships with the company's different product divisions were brought together that a clear customer value could be understood. From there, the company charted a course to deepen the relationship even further, multiplying that value beyond anything that could previously have been achieved.

**Conclusion: A Timely and Important Ability**

As our economy has shifted from a supply-side to a demand-side model, technology—specifically the Internet—has dramatically raised customer expectations and demands. Companies moving toward full CRM know that the process of discovering who their best customers are and what they really want begins with Customer Data Integration. Without a complete picture of a customer's interactions with an organization, it is impossible to generate maximum results.

So investments in better CDI are more important than previously recognized for

successful implementation of CRM solutions. Although many companies have acknowledged CDI difficulties, trade attention continues to focus on front-office or back-office customer information management systems. Now it's time to tend to the hard work of conforming and standardizing the data that can effectively link both front office and back office into a seamless whole. Without it, it's impossible to get a single view of the customer. Without CDI, even well-meant investments will just waste valuable time and money in an era when no one can afford to waste either. ■

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