



**dbg**

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# Guide to choosing suppression files

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**Data suppression can be a confusing process with so many files and claims from data providers, varying pricing and results, and the many legal implications and regulations – it's no wonder some people choose to ignore it rather than battle to understand it.**

Suppression is not only a legal obligation but a sensible business decision, as the implications of not cleansing and updating data are enormous. This guide aims to help you in your approach to data quality.

## What's your aim?

Perfectly clean and accurate data is a tough task considering the statistics:

- 13% of the UK public move home each year
- £18 million per year is wasted mailing the deceased
- 18,000 registrations are received for the Telephone Preference Service each day
- 240 businesses move premises
- 300,000 people get married each year

But if you have an aim in mind of why you're carrying out data suppression then the approach and files you should use are easier to determine. It is also worth considering the data you are processing. For example, if it is your top customers then you want to use the best possible data matching as the value of these records is very high, whereas with a 3rd party data file you might go for more cost effective files.

We've considered a few motives for data cleansing and suppression and provided a guide to the files most appropriate.

## Compliance

From a legal perspective, organisations need to suppress data against the Telephone Preference Service (TPS), the Corporate Telephone Preference Service (CTPS) and the Fax Preference Service (FPS) and it is recommended to run data against these files every 28 days. Any organisations who are members of the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) and who follow the DMA code of practice are also required to suppress against the Mailing Preference Service (MPS) and the Baby Mailing Preference Service (BMPS).

In addition to these files and in accordance with the Data Protection Act it is advisable to check for deceased and goneaways within your records.

## Saving money on mailings

Data suppression should save you money on mailings regardless of the files you use. Many data processing providers offer a data audit to determine the best files to use for the lowest price; they can suppress using hierarchies with the cheapest files matching first to make the process as cost effective as possible. Suppression prior to the mailing is the best method, so you catch all recently updated records and stay compliant at the same time.

## Finding customers who have moved

There is a common misconception by marketers that database suppression is about reducing your marketing pool of contacts by removing records from your mailing files. In reality removing these contacts improves response rates but suppression also provides the opportunity to find contacts at their new address. There are a number of files on the market that enable this and we would recommend using a combination of these files and a hierarchy to suit your needs – it costs more to find a new customer than keep an existing one so it makes sense to use your budget on tracking customers to their new address.

The most recommended files for forwarding addresses:

- Equifax reConnect – estimated 22million records
- Experian Absolute Movers – estimated 20million records
- Royal Mail NCOA Update – over 20million records on file
- Gas Reactive – contains 8 million records

### **Brand reputation and good marketing practice**

If you are looking at best practice for suppression we would recommend using all files required for legal compliance and working to the DMA code of conduct: MPS, BMPS, FPW, TPS, and CTPS. In addition, we would suggest using at least one deceased and goneaway file to suppress those who cannot respond. The best results would be obtained using multiple files and ensuring the most recently updated file is used first in your processing hierarchy. If brand reputation is key then matching against alias names and using a form of best matching will mean that you are making all efforts to keep your data accurate and up-to-date.

### **Summary**

Data suppression can be something you do to tick a compliance box, to save money or to improve your marketing. The process can be simple - choose a provider and let them do the work. However, with the variation of industry files available and intelligence of data processing experts it can become more a science which can help you achieve your objectives.

### **Suppression terms explained**

#### **Goneaway**

A contact who is no longer registered at the given address and no forwarding address is known.

#### **Preference services**

Marketing industry regulated files where consumers can register their details and opt out of unsolicited marketing.

#### **Permanent flag**

Flagging a contact as a record to suppress permanently from your marketing activity.

#### **Hierachy**

Ranking on suppression reference files in order of preference when processing data.

#### **Best match**

Matching to the highest level your data allows - household, individual, DOB - relating to each individual record.

#### **Confidence level**

Matching against a preset number of industry suppression files to set a confidence level to suit your business.

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