



A Data Transformation Across Borders for Essity

Objectives:



90%

match rate to Dun & Bradstreet data



80%

high-confidence matches



Improve data hygiene, reduce duplicate records

In 2018, Essity's Professional Hygiene (EPH) business unit moved from being managed regionally in North America and Europe into a combined transatlantic business unit. Shortly thereafter, the Middle East, India and Africa regional business was incorporated into the business unit. The result meant that instead of being managed at the regional level, business data would need to be integrated and managed centrally.

Additionally, their global customers were asking for a more holistic view of their business with Tork, EPH's leading brand. In order to meet that customer requirement, EPH needed a better way to combine and relate data from multiple systems, business processes, and even across languages.

Key products used:

D&B Connect™

D&B Rev.Up™ ABX

D&B Visitor Intelligence

IN SEARCH OF A HOLISTIC VIEW OF GLOBAL BUSINESS

- Sales model shifting to hybrid or fully online
- An increase in the amount of online data
- Combining North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) into a single business unit created the need to manage data across regions
- The company needed a better way to combine data from multiple systems, business processes, and across languages in order to provide global customers with a more holistic view of their business with the company

“WHY AREN'T WE USING OUR CRM DATA FOR OUR DECISION-MAKING?”

Neil Honaker, the data quality and data privacy manager for Essity Professional Hygiene, is responsible for the overall data, hygiene governance, business processes, and data privacy compliance for the business unit.

According to Neil, the first step in their data journey was to deploy a single customer relationship management (CRM) system for the new, consolidated business unit, a step taken in early 2019. But then there was a question from executives and management teams, “Why aren't we using data from our CRM to aid in our decision-making?”

“Operationally, our CRM was a key tool for sales, but it had developed into a tactical tool without a lot of strategic value,” commented Neil. “We had to address the nagging question of why we weren't using all of the data that we were collecting. The dream of a single unified system to drive increased strategic value was still just a vision.”

What quickly became apparent was that even with a more unified technical application, success was going to be based on the data itself. “The truth was that our data was working against us. We were challenged by inaccurate or incomplete data, data that was outdated, and a proliferation of duplicate records in our system. All of this led to a lack of trust in any strategic analysis we tried to produce,” remarked Neil. “If we were ever to achieve the data-driven decision-making we were seeking, we needed to build trust back into our data and the systems that used it.”

After all of the time, money and resources already spent to combine what was previously three businesses into a single organization, trying to get buy-in for an additional project was difficult. “Ultimately, the value proposition we created connected Essity's digital transformation journey, which was ongoing in parallel, with the beginning of our analytics journey. We found ourselves on the verge of deploying a data lake, but we still lacked confidence in our data quality and governance. We were at risk of seeing our data lake birth as a data swamp.”

DATA HYGIENE — A FIRST STEP

Neil is quick to explain: “If analytics is the engine that drives the business, then data is the fuel. Trusted data is the most crucial element. Without it, everything else are just fancy tools and applications that ultimately will fail to deliver value.” Yet the definition of data hygiene can vary from organization to organization. For Essity, it covers these four points:

1. The account name is accurate.
2. The account address is accurate.
3. The account market segmentation is accurate.
4. The account exists uniquely in systems, meaning no duplicates.

“For these first three points, ‘accurate’ means the data has been verified by a trusted third party. But when it came to duplicates, we had a lot. We tried de-duplication based on fuzzy logic using names and addresses, but it was only partially successful, as a business can have more than one real name. We tried using APIs such as Google to geo locate accounts based on addresses in our system, but that didn't help our need to verify the market segment for the business.”

“Duplicates were only some of the challenge. Record completeness was poor. And going back to our original need, that data be trusted, we had to know if we could trust our own matching algorithms, which meant we would need to develop a grading and scoring system for our matches.”

Rather than going it alone with a homegrown system, it made sense in terms of time and resources to partner with Dun & Bradstreet (D&B).

“One of the benefits of using **D&B Connect** was the Match Optimization service. A Dun & Bradstreet analyst reviewed our matched and unmatched records to discern patterns for why something didn’t match, or perhaps matched with a lower confidence code than we wanted,” Neil explained. “Working with global data means we ingest information with a lot of local and regional quirks in naming, not to mention character sets that we don’t see in North America. Dun & Bradstreet’s Match Optimization service was critical in helping us understand ways we could modify our processes or ingestion methods to drive even better results in match grades, confidence codes and overall data hygiene.”

MEASURING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Benchmarking and identifying key performance indicators (KPIs) are a key step for any project to secure organizational and executive support. After all, if the goal is to improve, you must be able to show improvement over time. “The best metrics for us at the beginning of our project were simple: the percentage of our data we could match to data in the Dun & Bradstreet Data Cloud, and our duplicate percentage based on a Dun & Bradstreet D-U-N-S® Number appearing more than once in our system.

“Working across multiple systems, business processes and data sources, it took a while for us to understand our baseline. Then as we began to better understand why the metrics were what they were, we identified a better way of understanding how our data hygiene was improving over time. This became the measurement of unique D&B matches to our account data. Although the overall match and duplicate rates are useful, ultimately, as we remove duplicates from the system, measuring unique matches lets us know that we’re getting better at proactively preventing duplicates, not just finding them for removal later in the process.”

In early 2020, with benchmarks in hand and a refined set of KPIs agreed upon with stakeholders, the team was ready to launch an operational data hygiene model. However, as is common to many data management efforts, there were four challenges that they grappled with:

- 1. Data is never stagnant.** Data changes and decays over time, which impacts trust. “Achieving our target of data hygiene was kind of like washing your hands. They only stay clean for a little while. Then you have to repeat. Continuous effort was required to keep our data clean.”
- 2. The volume and variety of data are always increasing.** The team had to constantly adapt to changing business processes, data sources, and external influences.
- 3. The value of data changes.** With the changing business climate and priorities most companies faced in 2021, Essity had to adapt and apply governance to an ever-changing ecosystem of requirements and requests from business stakeholders.
- 4. Change is intrinsically tied to culture.** “In the end, change is about people,” says Neil.

“A technological solution alone would not solve all of our problems,” noted Neil. “We had to consider how people work and how they react to change, whether it’s in the system or the business processes that we employ.”

A fifth challenge also arose during the project: “Remote workforces and the downstream impacts of the pandemic exacerbated all of the challenges we faced with data velocity, volume, variety, and value. The silver lining was that it highlighted how important our partnership with Dun & Bradstreet was, and how critical it would be moving forward,” said Neil.



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THE PACE OF DIGITAL CHANGE INCREASES

Pre-pandemic, Essity had already started seeing a shift toward more digital engagement with sales and marketing. Neil saw a heightened need to relate physically acquired and communicated account data with what was now coming in through digital channels. Complicating this was the number of tools in the sales and marketing stack, which continued increasing, contributing again to the challenges of data velocity and variety.

“Because of this, our platform strategy with Dun & Bradstreet was not static either. It continues to evolve to address the challenges of these changing environments. We started with **D&B Connect** and Match Optimization to handle our heavy lifting, as it provides us with options for both manual batch processing and API processing for data matching and enrichment. We have since added native integration with our CRM using **D&B Optimizer for Dynamics**, **D&B Rev.Up™ ABX for web**, which is driving better data hygiene from our web forms, and **Visitor Intelligence**, which is identifying the business entities that visit our websites.

“Along with data hygiene, my other responsibility is for data privacy and protection, so I am acutely aware of how the changing legal requirements on the use of cookies—especially in Europe—are affecting how businesses identify and understand their digital customer interactions. Our implementation of Visitor Intelligence is still in its early stages, but already we are understanding our web traffic in ways not possible before. The firmographic information we receive from D&B is putting us closer to the sales and marketing holy grail: A seamless connection between digital and physical customer interactions, all of which is made possible by having a D-U-N-S Number wherever we create or ingest account data. With all of this data available and capable of being uploaded to the D&B Rev.Up™ ABX bundle we are creating new ways to perform whitespace analysis, customer lookalike modeling, and more.”

All of these applications have the same Dun & Bradstreet data at their core, an advantage for the team. “This gives us confidence that we will find our customers and related insights to ensure robust data hygiene in our applications and analysis,” said Neil.

For all data sources, the D-U-N-S Number is used to de-duplicate against CRM and other core application data before that data is ingested. For third-party acquired data, the D-U-N-S Number is used to de-duplicate before combining with any data feed coming from Essity's data lake. “We've succeeded in operationalizing the concept. Good data hygiene isn't a one-time goal but an ongoing process that must be supported by all parts of the organization. The best proof-point for that philosophy is that we can show how our data now is both trusted and being actively shared and utilized across teams and projects.

“And it's not just about Dun & Bradstreet's data and applications, either. The company's insight, brainstorming, and willingness to share best practices and understand our specific challenges have been key contributors to our success,” observed Neil.



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A BETTER VIEW OF THEIR DATA

Through this project, EPH has accumulated a lot of lessons learned and now has a better understanding of the technical, organizational and business impacts on their data. They've been able to deploy a plan for continual improvement and assigned ownership for making it happen.

"Along with that, of course, have come the numbers that everyone wants to watch," said Neil. "To date, we have increased our data quality by 10% in North America and 20% to 30% in Europe, where much of our data challenges initially existed. We've deployed a Microsoft Power BI data hygiene reporting suite to allow key users and stakeholders real-time visibility into their data. And we've instilled an understanding among stakeholders and project managers of the power of the D-U-N-S Number as our signal of trust. Having a D-U-N-S Number on an account record is an indication that we have ticked the boxes on each of the four elements that we use to define data hygiene." (See above.)

Essity continues to push targets and expectations higher.

By the end of 2022, the aim is to have better than a:



90% match rate to
Dun & Bradstreet data



80% of those matches as
high-confidence matches



a unique D-U-N-S match
rate, not counting
duplicates, of better than
85% at high confidence

"Duplicates continue to be a struggle for us," said Neil, "but with the deployment of Optimizer for Dynamics and a wider roll-out of D&B Rev.Up™ ABX and form fill functions, we are beginning to close the gaps that allow duplicates into our data ecosystem."

BEST PRACTICES

- Define what “good” looks like. Don’t let demand for perfection stand in your way of getting started.
- Create simple, realistic KPIs in the beginning, but let stakeholders know that these will change as you begin to understand your organization’s overall data hygiene.
- Identify the obstacles and challenges that poor data quality and hygiene cause for your daily users. For Essity, one of the biggest issues was inefficiencies caused by the number of duplicates in their system.
- Benchmark and design a process to measure and show improvement over time. Continual improvement is the most important aspect of a journey to better data hygiene.
- Changing an organization’s culture and how things are viewed and get done can be your biggest obstacle, so find relatable use cases for various stakeholder groups, both in how poor data hygiene negatively impacts your business and how better-trusted data can benefit everyone in the future.
- Most of all, don’t be afraid to admit you need help. Few journeys of any length or importance are successful if undertaken alone.

ABOUT ESSITY AND TORK

Essity is a leading global hygiene and health company. Sales are conducted in approximately 150 countries under the leading global brands TENA, TORK, and others. Essity has approximately 46,000 employees globally, conducts sales in 150 countries, and had net sales in 2021 of approximately \$13 billion. The company is headquartered in Stockholm.

ABOUT DUN & BRADSTREET®

Dun & Bradstreet, a leading global provider of B2B data, insights and AI-driven platforms, helps organizations around the world grow and thrive. Dun & Bradstreet's Data Cloud fuels solutions and delivers insights that empower customers to grow revenue, increase margins, manage risk, and help stay compliant—even in changing times. Since 1841, companies of every size have relied on Dun & Bradstreet. Dun & Bradstreet is publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: DNB). Twitter: @DunBradstreet

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