

Release dated : 1 May 2003

DATA PROTECTION – UK BUSINESSES ARE CLEANING UP THEIR ACT

Experian reveals massive increase in online data cleansing

Businesses in the UK are placing greater emphasis on keeping customer and marketing information up to date, according to the latest figures from Experian[®], provider of Experian Intact, the UK's most widely used online data cleansing service.

Eighteen months on from full enactment of the Data Protection Act (1998) in October 2001, research revealed that there has been a dramatic increase in online data cleansing by UK companies, with demand rising six-fold over this period. One of the most encouraging findings is that recognition of the importance of maintaining up-to-date databases is spreading into more business sectors. Charities, sports, recreation and political organisations have all significantly increased their use of Experian Intact.

Since its launch in May 2001, Experian Intact has become the UK's most widely used online data cleansing service. In the past year alone Experian Intact has cleansed around 400 million records, a figure equivalent to screening the entire population of Europe.

Consumer records make up the bulk of the online data cleansed to date, and with over 100 resellers signing up to the Experian Intact service in the last 12 months, this trend is set to continue. However, there has also been a significant increase in the cleansing of business-to-business records. Since the launch of the business-to-business element of Experian Intact in early 2002, the number of records processed has grown by 50 per cent each month.

Phil Singh, Head of E-commerce for Experian's Marketing Services division, commented: "The research demonstrates high levels of growth in the sector. This is extremely encouraging and indicates that UK businesses increasingly value the importance of regular data cleansing - not only in terms of complying with data protection legislation, but because it makes good business sense as it improves the overall effectiveness of marketing campaigns. Data cleansing is no longer restricted to major blue-chip organisations - Experian Intact can be used quickly, securely and conveniently by businesses of all sizes."

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Online data cleansing is becoming a key element of direct marketing campaigns, helping to maximise effectiveness, whilst reducing costs and the negative implications of mailing inappropriate individuals. In particular, 'tactical cleansing' is on the increase, with companies cleansing their customer databases immediately prior to embarking on a direct marketing campaign to ensure that data is as up-to-date as possible.

"Customer data can decay very quickly and tactical cleansing not only helps to improve the targeting of campaigns and reduce waste, but can also help to protect a company's reputation by screening for individuals who may have recently joined one of the Preference Services. Around 250,000 people a year sign up to the Mailing Preference Service and twice that number join the Telephone Preference Service. Experian Intact makes it far easier to intelligently and selectively cleanse customer data, giving organisations the flexibility and opportunity to employ best practice when it comes to data cleansing," continues Phil Singh.

A key reason why online data cleansing using Experian Intact has grown so rapidly is due to the accessibility of the service. As an entirely automated solution, Experian Intact enables businesses to submit data, any time of the day or night, via a secure web-based interface. Users no longer need to install software on their PCs to use Experian Intact, which gives companies multi-user access to the service and the additional flexibility of being able to cleanse data from any location.

Experian Intact is the largest and most comprehensive online data cleansing service available in the UK. Data can be submitted securely online for analysis and Experian Intact will deliver a free comprehensive data quality audit outlining any inaccuracies within the data. Businesses then have the option to use Experian Intact to cleanse and update the data, although there is no obligation to do so. For further information visit www.experianintact.com and click on Free Data Audit.

This press release can be found on <http://press.experian.com>. For more information on Experian, visit the company web site on www.experian.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Experian

Experian helps organisations find the best prospects and make fast, informed decisions to improve and personalise their relationships with their customers. It does this by combining sophisticated and intelligent decision-making software and processing systems with some of the world's most comprehensive databases of information on consumers, businesses, motor vehicles and property. Through multi-channel delivery of its products and services, Experian enables its clients to conduct secure and profitable e-business and develop state-of-the-art CRM systems for communicating and building one-to-one relationships with customers. Experian is a subsidiary of GUS plc and has headquarters in Nottingham, UK, and Costa Mesa, California. Its 12,000 people support clients in over 50 countries. Annual sales are almost £1.1 billion.

For more information, visit the company's web site at www.experian.com.

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