

# Go Beyond the Basics to Improve Database Quality

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Most marketers know the importance of database quality in generating successful direct mail campaigns. Most are even familiar with the basic services involved in database hygiene – ZIP+4, Delivery Point Validation, NCOA<sup>Link</sup>, and duplicate elimination to name a few. What may not be so familiar, however, is that greater value can be derived from these services if time is taken to pay attention to the details and go beyond the basics. The value will come through in a cleaner database with improved mail delivery rates and increased ROI of direct mail campaigns.

## ZIP+4 and Delivery Point Validation (DPV)

So, what more is there to know about ZIP+4 and Delivery Point Validation (DPV)? Marketers run their list through ZIP+4 software to standardize addresses, validate ZIP Codes and add information so they can barcode their mail, but how many actually take the time to look at the DPV codes that indicate the accuracy of the delivery address?

It is highly likely that there are addresses flagged as non-valid delivery points and these may not be delivered. On another level, some addresses may be identified as a “multi-unit dwelling” and have either an invalid or missing unit (e.g. suite or apartment).

Because your database is probably used for more than just mailings, you need to consider what to do with addresses flagged as potentially undeliverable. The first instinct would be to remove the name from the list. However a “drop” solution isn’t a one size fits all remedy. You will probably want to treat prospect records different than customer records, and high value customer records different than other customer records. Where it’s important enough to build a more accurate and complete address, services such as expanded address correction and apartment append are available. The amount of effort you use to clean them up will vary.

## NCOALink

NCOA<sup>Link</sup> offers information about people and businesses that have moved. Sometimes a new address is provided and other times the new address is not available. Prior to mailing, be sure to drop records where no new address is available. NCOALink processing includes ZIP+4 and Delivery Point Validation.

## Duplicate Elimination

When removing duplicates, consider your criteria, because it can be critical to the success of your direct mail campaign. There may be times when it’s appropriate to send one mailpiece per address, and other times each person should receive a mailpiece. Additionally, if there is information such as phone, email, etc. in one record but not another, capture the information into a “kept record” so you have a more complete picture of your customer/prospect.

In summary, if you’re a marketer, look beyond the basics. Next time you process your database, be sure to take advantage of all the value these services have to offer. You’ll have a cleaner database, improved mail delivery and increased ROI of your direct mail campaigns.