



How to Evaluate Global Data Providers

B2B Buyer Roadmap

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Introduction

Business data has never been more plentiful, giving go-to-market professionals a wealth of options for driving growth. But as information sources and signals evolve and expand, unlocking actionable insights becomes exponentially harder.

In evaluating data providers, decision-makers often prioritize quantity and affordability, leading to a few common queries: “How many accounts can you offer?” or “What’s your cost per contact?”

Advanced GTM teams, however, know that their inquiries have to dig deeper to uncover the true value proposition of a data platform. Consider the dynamics that make quality and reliability so important:

- **High rate of job transitions:** Frequent job changes among professionals mean contact databases must be updated more frequently to remain relevant.
- **Increasing complexity of mergers and acquisitions:** As M&A becomes more intricate, the data surrounding corporate structures, employee roles, and company information requires more sophisticated management.
- **Technological advancements:** The global emergence of cloud computing, 5G, artificial intelligence, and machine learning quicken the computing and execution process for both internal and external company initiatives.
- **Need for real-time data:** Staying competitive is synonymous with having access to real-time data to make timely, informed decisions.
- **Increased data volume and variety:** McKinsey estimates global data creation will grow to more than 180 zettabytes by 2025. The sheer volume and diversity of data available today require more sophisticated operations to store, process, and analyze effectively.

To truly evaluate the ROI of a data partner, business leaders must look beyond the volume of records being provided — putting data relevance, granularity, and quality at the forefront.

Here are some of the most important factors to consider, steps to take, and questions to ask when choosing which global data provider to trust.

Choosing between a list or a platform

In the world of data, value doesn't create itself. Sophisticated data orchestration platforms have become a must-have for data leaders everywhere — considering data decays at a rate of 2 to 3% each month, or 30% year-over-year. Compounding those numbers, about 60% of businesses fail to measure the annual financial cost of poor data.

With the introduction of an integrated data platform, teams can enrich, cleanse, and unify records for companies and contacts, generate insights, route data where they need it, and maintain a competitive standard of quality, coverage, and compliance.

Moreover, data platforms automate much of the manual data-related tasks sales and marketing teams often deal with — freeing them to focus on higher-value tasks like prospecting and selling.

The Value of Good Data

According to Forrester's Data Ethics and Technology Report, "the quality of business decisions you make using data will depend on the integrity of the data."

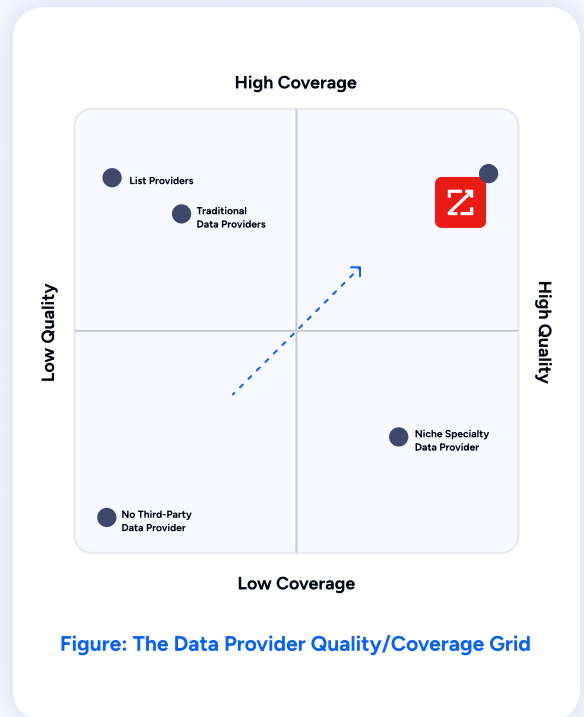
For example, when you use outdated contact information for sales prospecting, you waste time and tarnish your reputation. When you feed models with quality information, you know the output is trustworthy — that's the value of good data.

Rethinking how to evaluate data

What makes data good or bad? The value of data is based on how well it helps you achieve goals. Extracting value from data is not merely a matter of which option is cheapest. Cost may be an important evaluation factor, but as with most third-party global data purchases — optimizing for costs may come with potential sacrifices in data quality.

Sales teams usually seek a balance between quantity (data coverage), quality (data accuracy), and cost. But these can often be opposing forces. Some vendors choose to cover a narrow range of data sets or attributes, capturing certain kinds of specialty or niche data.

Other vendors attempt to provide a large number of records and often sacrifice quality due to outdated methods of gathering, cleansing, and managing data. The following grid shows this quality-quantity trade-off.



Pro Tip:

Think about the concept of 'coverage,' not just quantity. Coverage indicates live records that are actionable, active, and verified. Quantity is more superficial.

Ask your provider what their data validation process looks like, and what steps they take to provide quality data coverage within their platform.

Rethinking how to evaluate data

It's important to consider both quality and coverage when evaluating a data provider. Since every company has different goals, each will have a unique path for getting the most value from business data.

One company's tolerance for data quality will differ from another based on several factors, including the solution sold, the markets served, and the level of granularity required. When in doubt, prioritize quality over quantity. ZoomInfo's formula to measure the quality of data, or "data reliability" is one way to vet data quality.

	Coverage or Quantity	Accuracy
Data Reliability=	$\frac{\text{(Match Rate)}}{\text{Fill Rate}}$	$\frac{\text{(Match Confidence)}}{\text{Fill Confidence}}$

In this formula:

Match Rate (%) =
the portion of records matched

Fill Rate (%) =
the portion of fields containing data

Match Confidence (#) =
the level of certainty the match is correct

Fill Confidence (#) =
the level of certainty the filled information is correct

The Value of Good Data

A useful step is to decide which is more important, quality or quantity, for each of the data attributes you need. For example, if your business primarily operates online, you may prioritize high-quality direct-dial phone numbers and email addresses over physical addresses.

Consider that for most B2B teams, it can take an average of five or six phone calls to convert a cold contact into a lead. And for email marketing, a high bounce rate can ruin your reputation as a sender. Keeping your team in touch with the right contacts and your emails delivered to the right inboxes — that's the value of good data.

Defining your goals with data

To get the most from your business data purchase, make sure to understand what you aim to achieve with it. Setting clear parameters around what you need data for will guide you to the provider who best fits your needs. Here are some examples of how your goals will change your data requirements:

- Depending on which countries you're targeting in your go-to-market strategy, can the data provider work with different privacy regulations?
- If your sales team has to make a certain number of calls in a day, does the data provider offer the volume of phone numbers you expect?
- For outbound marketing, you probably want to maintain email bounce rates at less than 2%. You should ask providers how they can help you meet that benchmark.
- If you plan to merge multiple data sources, select a data provider that can help you unify and normalize several data sets correctly.
- If your priority is master data management, you need to understand the total match rate a provider can deliver and the fill rate for the fields that matter to you.
- If you market to small businesses, make sure the data provider thoroughly covers the data for companies at that level.
- If you need to know a certain data attribute, like sophistication rating, industry classification, or annual revenue, make sure the provider can deliver it with a high degree of confidence.

The Value of Good Data

You have lofty growth goals, but you can't always hire new team members to help you reach them. Consider the average annual salary of a sales representative.

Now imagine making them three to four times more effective because they spend their time making connections and engaging prospects, instead of researching contacts and hunting through business articles — that's the value of good data.

Identifying your Data Needs

Once you've established what you expect out of data, document the important attributes you need and develop a list of required types of data fields, data services, and quality standards. Use this list as a general guide:

What are our data accuracy and coverage needs? (low, mid, high)

- Email bounce rate
- Match rate (coverage)
- Match accuracy
- Fill rate (coverage)
- Fill accuracy

What regions or countries do we need?

- North America
- South America
- Europe, Middle East, Africa (EMEA)
- Asia-Pacific (APAC)
- United States (US)
- France
- United Kingdom (UK)
- Germany
- Australia & New Zealand
- China
- Japan
- India

What types of business data do we need?

- Company name
- Industry classification
- Website URL
- Employee count
- Revenue
- Physical locations
- Parent-child relationships
- Market news and trends
- Sophistication rating
- Model scores
- Technographics
- Intent data
- Scoops
- Small and medium business (SMB) data

Contact data

- Name
- Phone number (direct)
- Phone number (main)
- Email addresses
- Job title
- Department
- Physical location
- Social media profile

What types of data services do we need?

- Flat file delivery
- APIs
- Webhooks
- Enrichment
- Multi-vendor enrichment
- Cleansing
- Deduplication
- Lead-to-account matching
- Modeling
- Scoring
- Routing
- Customer Success Support

Can we achieve these privacy measures?

- Consolidated customer data platform as much as possible
- Proactive notifications, alerts, based on local jurisdictions and laws
- Encrypt data at rest and in-flight
- Easy 'Opt-out' option
- Employ a 'Do Not Call' field
- Able to monitor how data is being used (B2B vs. B2C)
- Trusted in my target market(s)
- Reliable language translation

Questions to Ask a Data Provider

When evaluating data providers, ask the following questions to uncover more details about what you'll get:

How do you measure how trustworthy your data is?

Find out if they have the most current information possible. Ask how the provider measures the completeness and correctness of the data being offered.

How do you gather and verify data?

When you hear terms like "artificial intelligence," "algorithms," "proprietary processes," or "search aggregation," ask questions. A data company should be able to tell you details about how they capture information.

What types of integrations do you offer?

What tools will be available to us on a regular basis? While some vendors may offer integration, the capabilities are not always the same. For example, ZoomInfo's integration allows you to map and set individual fields to "Complete if Missing" or "Overwrite Data."

This gives you control over which information goes where and at what time. You may not need that much control over the integration process but if you do, ask.

How can I ingest your data?

The ability to onboard data from a provider in a systematic, efficient way is critical for your company to expand its reach in the market. Make sure the vendor offers customizable ways to enrich data directly into your tech stack and standardize data across multiple sources.

How often is your data refreshed and how do I know when something changes?

Business data is prone to frequent changes. To get the most out of sales and marketing intelligence, it has to be up-to-date. Beyond data being current, it may also be important to be alerted of what's changed in real-time when it happens.

Can you share some recommendations for using data based on my goals?

Here are a few examples:

- Ask how your data vendor can help you get the highest email deliverability from your campaigns.
- Can predictive analytics be applied to our data to identify leads with a higher likelihood of conversion?
- What processes can we implement for regular data enrichment in our CRM to maintain current and accurate customer information?
- In what ways can we use your data to personalize customer experiences across different touchpoints?
- How can we use your data to map and optimize the customer journey for improved customer experiences?

What are your privacy practices?

Ask the vendor you're evaluating what resources they can share with you to help maintain compliance. This is especially true if you are prospecting into a market for the first time. If a data provider has spent a considerable amount of time and energy on compliance, you are likely to find their data meets the same rigor.

Why is your data priced as it is?

The pricing offered by a data provider can often give you hints about how trustworthy the data will be. This is not to say you should always buy the most expensive option. Rather, consider the cost of a tool as a measure of value.

Depending on your internal operations and go-to-market processes, the depth and breadth of data will vary. It's important that — along with pricing — your data provider can offer customizable data plans so you only get the data you need.

ZoomInfo: Investing in Worldwide Data Coverage & Quality

ZoomInfo has spent the past several years working to improve its data quality and coverage around the world. Our efforts have paid off in dramatically improved contact and company data, everywhere our customers go to market.

Specifically, ZoomInfo has expanded its global data to include:

- 104 million company profiles — 6X growth
- 321 million professional contacts — 3X growth
- 174 million emails — 2X growth
- 94 million mobile numbers — more than 3X growth

ZoomInfo customers, like international talent agency Kintec Global Recruitment in Manchester, England, are already seeing the difference. So far, Kintec has managed to close significant new business deals in its region, significantly contributing to its growth since partnering with Zoominfo in 2021.

“ZoomInfo’s platform is fantastic — it’s the best tool for sales and cold business development. I’ve used it to close significant new business deals within my region. I rate the product highly and have seen valuable improvements in their global data coverage. I look forward to continuing to drive growth through our partnership.”



Patrick Scully
Managing Director
Kintec Global Recruitment

Global Business Data You Can Trust

Building a business in today's globally connected environment is challenging enough. When choosing where you should invest, a top-quality, compliant, reliable data partner should be at the top of the list.

Learn more about ZoomInfo's world-class data today — and help your go-to-market team unlock insights, engage customers, and win faster.

zoominfo.com ↗