

DATA QUALITY VENDOR EVALUATION CHECKLIST

YOUR CRITICAL DECISION

When you pick a data quality vendor, it's important to make sure that your idea of "data quality" and what you want out of the project lines up with what the vendor thinks and produces.

If you and your vendor aren't on the same page—if you have a more ambitious needs than the vendor can meet, or the vendor expects your project to conform to their software—your project isn't going to be as successful as it could be.

You need to ensure that your vision of "success" and the vendor's are the same. So, to avoid starting on a lengthy sales process with a vendor who isn't right for you, it's smart to be choosy about which vendors you decide to talk to.

This checklist is designed to help you make that decision.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

First, go through this checklist with your project in mind. In the column labeled "You," check off the options that best characterize your project needs.

Then, as you research vendors, go through the checklist again for each vendor, referencing the vendor's website and any materials you have from them to answer the questions. Consider factors like: What does the vendor emphasize on its website? How does the vendor talk about data quality? What kinds of customers does the vendor feature in its marketing?



SO YOU USED THE CHECKLIST... NOW WHAT?

Start your shortlist with any vendors that match you on every single point on this checklist. If you still have open slots after that, fill them with vendors that match your list closely. This checklist is a guide, not a mandate, and you can still have a great project with one of these not-quite-perfect matches.

If you only have one or two things in common with a vendor, though, that doesn't bode well for a successful long-term relationship. Those vendors aren't a good fit for your shortlist.

As the world of data evolves, rigidity is the enemy of success—both for you, and for vendors. So finally, keep this in mind: if you find a vendor with a compelling vision that doesn't match everything on your checklist as closely as you'd like, don't be afraid to re-evaluate your approach or ask the vendor to go into detail about how their approach would work with your specific needs.



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SOLUTION TYPE

Consider the type of solution you need: software? Services? Both? Focus on vendors that talk about the kind of offering you're looking for.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
Software Only						
Software and Services						
Services Only						

OUTCOMES

What do you want to happen when you identify a data quality problem? If you want to repair problems, don't pick a vendor that prioritizes dashboards for monitoring. Likewise, if you're mostly interested in assessment, a vendor that emphasizes its automated repair is probably a bad match.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
Monitor Only						
Monitor+Worklists						
Monitor+Worklists+Auto-Repair						

RESULT DATA

What kind of data do you want to emerge from the data quality process? Do you want to create a cycle of improvement and corrections, or is a basic stats report enough? Check whether a vendor's offering is designed to produce the thing that you want.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
Statistics Only						
Push Corrections						
Golden Records						
Golden Records+Push Corrections						

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DOMAIN

Many companies looking for data quality are thinking about customer data. If you're one of them, good news—any data quality vendor should be ready for you, though you should always confirm that they can work with all your customer data.

If you need data quality on non-customer data, you'll need to be more selective from the start. Limit your considerations to vendors that look beyond the customer domain.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
Customer Only						
Multi-Domain						
Non-Customer Only						

VENDOR SPECIALITY

Some data quality vendors only do data quality and closely-related software, while for others data quality is a piece of a larger portfolio. If having data quality (and therefore, the needs of DQ customers) be the centerpiece of your vendor's concentration is important to you, you'll be better off with a more focused vendor. If you'd prefer broad expertise over having data quality centered in the vendor's priorities, look for the opposite.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
High DQ Focus						
Moderate DQ Focus						
Minimal DQ Focus						

SCALE

Make sure the scope of your project matches up with the specialty of your vendor.

Launching a project that will touch every corner of your Fortune 100 simultaneously, backed by an army of internal talent? You're likely better off with a big name that will be hands-off and let your people take over, instead of a vendor who focuses on highly-customized solutions with white-glove service that you don't need.

But when you have a limited scale, fewer (or no) in-house experts, or a smaller organization? Now that personal focus is just what you need to fill knowledge gaps, instead of being lost in the shuffle buying from a big name that expects you to figure it out.

Pick the scale that best resonates with your understanding of your project. Don't worry if the details don't match up with your situation in every particular.

Then, look at the projects that potential vendors showcase on their websites and in their case studies, and focus on vendors who feature projects at or near your scale.

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To give you a starting point for thinking about project scales, here's some rough categories:

- **Elephant:** Project is very complex and spans multiple divisions or departments at a very large enterprise.
- **Clydesdale:** Project is complex and is focused within a division/department of a large enterprise or throughout a medium-sized enterprise.
- **Tiger:** Project is complex and is focused within a division/department of a medium-sized enterprise or throughout a small enterprise.
- **Great Dane:** Project is complex or very complex, and is focused within a division/department of a small enterprise or throughout an SMB.
- **Coyote:** Project is moderately or not very complex, and is focused within a division/department of a small enterprise or SMB.

	You	Vendor 1	Vendor 2	Vendor 3	Vendor 4	Vendor 5
Elephant						
Clydesdale						
Tiger						
Great Dane						
Coyote						