

Top 10 tips for database management

Leading a project drawing on the expertise and processes of a multitude of project Partners, the My Electric Avenue team have experience in combining, aligning and collaboratively refining database management using third parties. We are keen to share our knowledge with you – and so we have collated a ‘Top 10 tips for database management.

1. Know your basic storage and access needs

First things first: don’t make your database overly complex. Specify the basic needs for data storage and access, considering that access should be as easy as possible for your users. This may mean utilising standard data processing tools (such as Excel) and a basic set of automated reports. Create this specification as early as you can. By getting that basic structure in place, the database will be readily available at a later stage when you need it.

2. Be picky about your platforms

The easy option now, may not be in a year’s time. You’ll have defined your specifications for a database, and there may be a couple of platforms that look like they suit your needs. Research each carefully, partners’ may have their preferences, but make sure your choice reflects the needs of the project, not those of one or two partners.

3. Have a central base, that works

It’s important that all Partners have access to the most up to date information – having all relevant data in one place, with processes wrapped around it that all adhere to, makes this easier.

4. Direct, ongoing contact with database provider

After you have your database commissioned, it’s good to maintain a level of direct contact with the provider for support. It is likely that there will be elements of data missed from initial brainstorming and planning which need to be added or bolted on at a later date. Having direct, ongoing support will ensure that further database development, and re-commissioning is a smooth process and importantly, doesn’t hinder progress on the project.

5. Understand the nuts and bolts

Collecting data from across several third party databases needs further consideration, at the start of the project. Ideally, as you’re developing data protection processes. Each database will have been built for other objectives and purposes than your project’s and each are likely to have their own quirks and characteristics. Spending time upfront with your partners to fully understand how their systems work can not only help streamline the data collection process, but troubleshooting too.

Project leads



Project partners



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Unexpected data should be expected in these types of projects, so it helps to have a complete view of the process to quickly identify the cause.

6. IT problem-solving on the go

Beware that a degree of on-going problem solving is likely to be necessary in order to iron out issues that arise with your database. Consider having internal IT resource dedicated to its setup; by being up to speed from the get-go, they can provide knowledgeable and rapid support on a task basis during the course of the project.

7. Is your data correct?

It's critical to be able to trust the data in your database, but errors can occur in a multitude of ways – and most likely will. Inconsistencies may appear for example when data is imported, or when different databases are synchronised. Look out for factors such as duplicated entries, missing updates made by other parties, typos that mean certain entries are excluded from searches, gaps where you expected there to be data, or information that is incorrectly assigned across participants or technical devices. Design a validation process early on that you can rely on to capture key issues.

8. Anticipate knock-on effects from other systems

If your database interfaces with other systems run by Partners or third party providers, chances are there will be knock-on effects when they make changes or updates at their end. Agree upfront that such changes will be communicated to you ahead of time, so that you can plan for impacts.

9. Enable others to collaborate

Take yourself out of the loop where you can. By providing project Partners with access to a central database, you can enable them to access data independently – and to collaborate with each other. By encouraging communication directly between parties, they may also be able to rectify database-related issues without your direct involvement. The project will progress faster for everyone.

10. Go for low risk data capture

Simpler is likely to mean better when it comes to data import into your database. Minimise the risk for error as well as the verification processes you'll need to reassure yourself that the transfer was successful. An 'off-line' method such as data transfer via CSV files may prove robust – and sufficient for your purposes. Remember also that you may require both historical and live data; ask yourself if these should be imported using the same methodology.

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