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What is a database?

What is a database:

A database is an **organized collection of data**, stored and accessed electronically. Databases are typically designed to organize the data to model aspects of reality in a way that **supports processes requiring information.**

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Why use a database?

Why use an advocacy database:

1. Keep advocate data stored in **one place**

2. Keep advocate data **organized** and **clean**

3. Acquire **additional information** about your advocates

4. Easily **append information**

5. Better **target** your advocates for higher rates of engagement

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1) Data stored in one place:

- Having your advocate data stored in the same place and in the same way allows you to learn about your advocates and know who they are.

- *For example:* How many are there, where are they located, how long have they been involved in your issue, etc.

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2) Keep data organized and clean

- Keeping your advocate data organized and clean means that you can *trust* the information that you gather from your advocates.

- *For example:* You know your number of advocates is accurate because there aren't duplicates in your system.

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3) Acquire additional information

- Putting your advocate data in a database allows you to acquire additional, *new* information about them. A good database will augment your advocate information based on what it already knows about your advocates.

- *For example:* Who are their legislators, what districts do they live in (and don't live in), is their email address valid, are they opening your action alerts, etc.

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4) Easily append information

- Once you have your advocate data in a database, it's easy to add new information to advocate profiles once you have it.

- *For example:* If you've collected data on what types of campaigns your advocates enjoy participating in, easily upload that into your database. Did you meet with a group of advocates recently? Add notes and comments to their profiles.

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5) Better target your advocates

- Once you know who your advocates are, trust the information you have on them, and are easily able to augment the information you have, then you can start strategically targeting your advocates with specific asks.

- *For example:* Is a vote coming down to one or two legislators? Send an alert just your supporters in that district. Trying to get more supports to call their legislators? Target people that have activated around that issue previously.

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- Advocacy organization saw their open rates plummet, more and more emails were being flagged as spam

  - Hadn't updated their advocacy database in a long time
  - Decided to focus on increasing the quality of their recipient list
  - Removed inactive email address from their list, as well as contacts that hadn't opened any emails from the organization within the last year
  - Saw immediate jump in both open rates and aggregate opens due to the fact that they were only sending emails to engaged and interested advocates

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How to set up an advocacy database?

How to set up an advocacy database:

1. Define your end goals

2. Work backwards to determine what information you need in your database to achieve these goals

3. Follow best practices

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Define your end goals

Determine what you want to do with the information in your advocacy database:

- Do you need to be able to send out **emails**? What kind of emails do you need to be able to send out?

- Do you need to send out action alerts to invite advocates to participate in **online campaigns**? Who will you want to invite to partake in those campaigns, and what types of campaigns will those be?

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Worksheet: define your end goals

	Emails *What emails do I need to send?*	Campaigns *What campaigns do I plan to launch and send out?*	Metrics *What metrics to I want to be able to pull after I send out emails/launch campaigns?*
End Goals:	- Weekly issue-area newsletters - Fly-in invites	- Write a Letter campaigns - Tweet at your Member campaigns	- Actions by age group - Actions by issue area
Information needed:			

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Work backwards to determine required information

Once you know what you want to do with your advocacy database, work backwards to determine what information you need in your database to accomplish those goals:

- ○ Do you need to be able to send out **weekly newsletters** around different issue areas that your organization works on? Be sure to include in your database which of these issues your advocates care about.

- ○ Are you planning to launch **campaigns on social media**? Make sure you have a field to capture which of your advocates are active on social media.

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Worksheet: determine necessary information

	Emails *What emails do I need to send?*	Campaigns *What campaigns do I plan to launch and send out?*	Metrics *What metrics to I want to be able to pull after I send out emails/launch campaigns?*
End Goals:	- Weekly issue-area newsletters - Fly-in invites	- Write a Letter campaigns - Tweet at your Member campaigns	- Actions by age group - Actions by issue area
Necessary information:	- Names, email addresses - Issues that advocates care about - Advocates that attended previous fly-ins - Advocates interested in this year's fly-in	- Home addresses, district information, legislators - Advocates with Twitter accounts	- Age of advocates - Issues that advocates care about

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Case Study #2

- Environmental group wanted to learn more about their advocates to better engage them in their advocacy efforts

  - Started sending out regular polls throughout the year to hear about what issues their advocates cared about the most
  - Used poll results to inform their advocacy strategy, but also sent results back out to advocates that had participated. Saw open rates around 60% for these emails (much higher than their average)
  - Was able to followed up with specific asks for certain people based on their poll results (i.e. referrals into their advocacy program)
  - Ultimately saw their average participation rate in campaigns double from the first half of the year when they started this practice to the second half of the year

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Database best practices:

1. Have a data maintenance plan

2. Automate maintenance when possible

3. Set up integrations (or migration plans) for multiple databases

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1) Have a data maintenance plan

- Determine when and how advocate data gets updated

- Know your advocates' unique identifier

- Document processes so that everyone uses the database and updates information in the database in the same way

- Put someone in charge of managing your database

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2) Automate maintenance when possible

- Use forms that can collect updated information directly from your advocates

- Set up syncs from reliable sources that *are* updated regularly

- Utilize a database that updates information for you

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3) Set up integrations and migration plans

- If you use multiple databases that need to talk to each other, consider setting up integrations so that you have the most up-to-date information in all of your databases at all times

- If you can't set up an integration, come up with a *migration plan* so that all of your databases with be updated at regular intervals, even if not automatically

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