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**Introduction**

As the world of advancement continuously strives to operate at the most efficient and effective level, a noticeable increase has been seen in the area of data mining and modeling by fundraising professionals. This increase has led to more attention paid to the topic by professional organizations, software vendors, and other groups that work with or within the advancement industry. Seminars or workshops on data mining and modeling are popping up all over the country at a variety of gatherings. As interest grows and more and more knowledge is shared through conferences regarding the potential power of data mining and modeling, more organizations are beginning to explore how data mining and modeling might be used in their organization. Unfortunately, for all the knowledge gained at a conference or through other mediums, many organizations find themselves struggling as they actually try to implement the concepts learned. Key Donor, a collaborative effort from Data Description, Inc. and Peter Wylie is a multimedia training course designed to assist organizations with making the move from conceptual understanding to actual implementation. The purpose of this document is to provide a review of the Key Donor course.

**Product Review—Key Donor**

There are four essential areas that must be considered when performing of a review of a product such as Key Donor. These four areas are usability, content, appropriateness, and overall effectiveness.

**Usability**

Key Donor utilizes several different software applications during the course including the Key Donor user interface, Microsoft Excel, and Data Desk. For those users who are not familiar with Excel or Data Desk, the course does an adequate job of providing clear instruction of how to accomplish a given task in the application. Although some technically advanced students may find minor issues with the Key Donor user interface with which to quibble, and some less technically courageous students may find the user interface to be intimidating at first, overall the user interface does an effective job of transferring the desired knowledge to the students. One of Key Donor's nicest features is the manner in which it breaks the entire course down into smaller, manageable segments with the ability to save a student's place in the course. This feature allows the course to lend itself easily to a paced study approach, a situation likely to be necessary in the fast-paced world of advancement where most professionals would be hard pressed to schedule the time necessary to work through the course in one sitting. The logical grouping of various concepts also assists in referring back to specific elements of interest within the course. The overall design of the technologies used to present the course are reflective of the creators extensive knowledge of the advancement world and a testament to their

commitment to providing professionals with the tools necessary to perform data mining and modeling.

## **Content**

The content of the Key Donor course is remarkable. In one consolidated location the course discusses every major issue that its students are likely to encounter as they seek to implement a data mining and modeling strategy. Key concepts are kept simple without excluding any necessary information and the course begins with a review quiz that is quite effective in preparing users for the activities and discussions that follow. A particular strength of Key Donor is its very practical approach designed solely to help its students in actually implementing data mining and modeling. The course provides the knowledge necessary to transform data mining and modeling from a post-conference buzz word into an integral part of fund-raising strategy. Particular care is paid to giving students the opportunity to ensure that they understand the course, and the interactive quizzes and hands-on activities allow users to be certain that they will both be able to know the technical specifics of how to build a model as well as understand how to create an effective model. In addition to clearly sharing the relevant concepts and providing the training to perform the actual steps in a data mining project, Key Donor goes one step further in its quest to enable its students by addressing several additional key areas of potential concern. Key Donor voices several of the key questions likely to be raised by students even in cases where the questions are difficult and are answered in different ways by other data mining professionals. Key Donor answers these questions in a logical and overall acceptable manner that should leave its students satisfied. Key Donor also addresses other areas that are often missing in data mining and modeling discussions such as the role of the environment in a data mining project and the difficulties that may be encountered when trying to achieve organizational buy-in for the use of a designed model. The content of Key Donor provides its students with all the information necessary to internally create a working model and to strategically use that model in fundraising activities and to overcome any potential roadblocks to success.

## **Appropriateness**

Key Donor is designed for students that have had some exposure to the idea of data mining and modeling but who have little or no experience in actually creating a model, and its style and content are certainly appropriate for that audience. The course clearly identifies its target audience in its introduction and makes good on its promise of showing that audience the next steps to take. The hand of Peter Wylie is extremely evident in the course as it brings what can be remarkably complex activities into an arena where “ordinary” fundraising professionals can utilize them without feeling incompetent in the face of new techniques of fundraising. Key Donor is a perfect resource for organizations that are thinking about performing data mining and modeling but who are struggling with how to make it happen with the resources that are available.

## **Overall Effectiveness**

Overall, Key Donor is an absolutely tremendous product. Data Description and Peter Wylie have collaborated on a resource for fundraising professionals that provides the perfect mix of the key areas of consideration of a product. The product is usable, informative, and audience-appropriate. More importantly, each of these areas remains effective even in relation to the others. Too often, training resources are audience-appropriate or informative but are not usable or are easy to use but don't provide useful information or are just simply directed to the wrong audience. Key Donor should have tremendous impact on its consumers by truly enabling its students to create and implement data mining and models that are certain to have outstanding results.

From beginning to end, Key Donor takes a no-nonsense, practical approach to teaching its students the art of building and applying a donor model. The course begins by making it very clear what the goal of the course is as well as why it was created and who its target audience is. The honesty and candidness when discussing the specific issues that most organizations are likely to go through when trying to implement a model is refreshing and leaves course students feeling that they will soon have the ability to create actionable strategies based on data mining and modeling. This candidness and focus on actual creation and implementation of a model is present throughout the course, and one of the strongest points of the course is that it forces students to work through the actual steps necessary to create a model for their organization. One of the highlights of the course is its focus on interaction as it allows students the opportunity to test their understanding of both the concepts presented as well as the actions necessary to translate those concepts into action. From the first review quiz of basic concepts to the final activity using Data Desk, Key Donor allows students to be certain that they can understand and utilize the tools being presented. Key Donor extends this focus on preparation for implementation even further by answering some key questions that most students are certain to ask as well as by addressing issues regarding the management of change and other environmental issues students are likely to encounter when trying to implement a model in their organization. Key Donor provides a very holistic approach to implementing data mining and modeling and takes special care to address potential roadblocks in a variety of areas.

Key Donor utilizes a variety of applications to transfer knowledge including several which may not be familiar to all students including the actual Key Donor interface itself as well as the Data Desk application. Although some technically courageous students may find minor issues with the Key Donor interface about which to quibble and some less courageous students may find the program initially intimidating, overall the software provides an effective mechanism for its purpose.