

Pamela Mauldin
Marietta College

Reviewer's Background

As the Director of Annual and Planned Giving at World Learning, Brattleboro, VT, I worked closely with Peter Wylie learning the concept and process of datamining specifically as it pertains to annual giving inclination. Before that time I had never studied or practiced datamining. Since my training, I have used datamining consistently to drive solicitation lists, find major and planned giving donors, and to create strategy and budgets for annual fund plans.

Datamining and research is not my full time job nor is it even mentioned in my current job description. I use datamining to drive strategy, budgets, and time allocation. It takes the guess work out of which constituents the Development Office should be spending their resources soliciting without personal bias towards certain groups.

Product Pros

- The program starts off with a clear course introduction. The introduction quickly overviews what will be covered, basic concepts that will be practiced and what fundraisers can gain from taking the class. For newcomers to datamining, it will confirm the benefits of the activity.
- Quizzing yourself before you start the instruction is a great idea. At first I thought “This will be easy”, and then when I missed one of the questions I paid closer attention. A humbling experience but a great way to pick out sections you might need to spend more time on or run through twice.
- The course provides good suggestions for what fields in your database to start testing. When individuals are introduced to datamining it is intimidating because the first thing on your mind is the statistics component. Advice on what fields to begin with (lifetime giving, marital status, home phone, etc.) is a huge advantage and a little comforting to folks not yet secure with what they are doing.
- The software is ideal for fundraisers that do not have time for the whole course at once, using checkmarks to flag the sections that have been completed.
- The interactive quizzes and questions keep your attention. It makes the software feel almost personalized.
- A wonderful course for people that have used Data Desk for datamining before. I learned a couple shortcuts in Data Desk and it served as a great refresher. Sometimes during a busy season I won't use Data Desk for a month or two. This CD works for an “Oh, yeah! Now I remember.”
- There is a lot to learn about datamining but this course has all you need to know to start.

Product Cons

- It might be clearer if each section on the page had some type of number coding. I was confused as to where to start.
- The introduction might flow smoother if “Using the Lesson Book” and “Course Introduction” were switched in order. The course introduction is more of what you are expecting to see and hear first.
- The time of each section would be helpful to know as you go through the workbooks. For me it would determine if I had time to work through another section before my next meeting.
- During the first section in which the instruction was working with Data Desk I opened Data Desk and tried doing the work as it was being covered because I didn’t know that the files would be given to me at the end. Stating during the introduction that each file will be given to you as you need it would be helpful for the user.
- Not all sections were marked complete after I finished them. Adding “Close” buttons to all files, because that is what triggers the completed mark beside each section, would avoid this.

Product Review Summary

I would recommend this course to anyone interested in datamining. Each step is clearly defined with great examples and exercises. The only suggestions I would make are all related to the presentation of the material, which I outlined above. Comparing this CD course to the personal way in which I learned, several benefits are clear: a) the purchase of this product would serve an institution well as fundraising professionals come and go; datamining knowledge isn’t lost with the vacating person b) the CD allows you to learn at your own pace and around your schedule c) if time lapses between sections you can review the last section before you move forward. With this course learning datamining doesn’t have to only be available to the organizations that can afford training or to the select few researches that are able to go to conferences—now it can fit on the bookshelf as a resource forever.