

Is your data worth selling?

A practical guide for companies considering data monetisation

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Companies that sell their data successfully don't get there by accident.

The alternative data market is growing steadily. Buyer budgets are at a three-year high, with 97% of institutional buyers expecting their spending to increase or hold steady¹. For data providers, the commercial model is unusually durable: Neudata's data shows renewal rates above 90% and average client relationships of 6 to 7 years. For most businesses, that kind of client retention is difficult to replicate.

Getting a dataset to market, however, takes real commercial effort. This includes compliance work, sales infrastructure, timeline management and product decisions that have nothing to do with the quality of the underlying data. Most projects that stall do so not because the data is bad, but because the company treated monetisation as a data problem rather than a commercial project. The ones that move fastest treat it like launching a new product line.

This guide is for CDOs, data leaders and company owners asking whether data monetisation is worth pursuing. It covers what makes data commercially valuable, who the buyers are, what the path to market looks like, and what it costs in time and resources. Within that, it includes six questions to help you assess whether your data has a realistic path to revenue. You will find these in chapter five. The principles apply whether you are a CDO at a large enterprise or a company owner exploring this for the first time.

1. Who buys data and what do they want from you?

Before assessing whether your data has value, it helps to understand who you would be selling it to. There are three buyer categories that account for most commercial activity in the external data market: institutional investors, AI companies and corporate buyers. Each has distinct needs.

Institutional investors

Hedge funds and asset managers are the most established and active data buyers. They have been buying external data for over 25 years. Their procurement processes are well-defined and they pay well for data that works.

What they are looking for is signal. In the investment context, that means data that predicts or explains something that moves the price of a tradeable asset. For example, consumer spending data that anticipates retail earnings, freight volumes that precede industrial output, or job postings that signal hiring momentum before it shows up in official statistics. The data does not need to be exotic. It needs to be clean, timely and demonstrably connected to something investors care about.

Institutional buyers do not want personal data. Personal data is a disqualifier. Hedge funds and asset managers run every data purchase through compliance, legal and engineering teams before any buying decision is made. Any dataset containing personally identifiable information will not clear that process. Anonymisation and aggregation are baseline requirements for entering this market.

Institutional buyers also expect a completed due diligence questionnaire (DDQ - a standard document covering data sourcing, rights and compliance), a schema document, sample data and a clear explanation of how the data is collected and what rights you have to sell it.

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