Column: **You Betcha**

Title: **Have You Been Slimed Recently?**

If you've been reading analyst descriptions of the CRM market, good chance you have.

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Feel like you're covered with a sticky, mucous-like substance after reading analyst reports about CRM? Well, if you've been reading output from market "research" firm Aberdeen Group, it may not be your imagination—as a recent "Wall Street Journal" article reveals that Aberdeen has been failing to distinguish between real research and paid "research"—where dollars drive outcomes.

That's right. You can't even believe the "research" you read from supposedly upright firms.

What's worse, Aberdeen ain't the only outfit working out of the prone position. Some sticky, smelly stuff emanated from another "research" Group last year–claims of 80% CRM success rates coupled with refusals to reveal the data sources. And some of the vendor stuff, and not just from Siebel, slicking up customer satisfaction numbers to try to pick up sales slack—equally slippery. Not to mention slime ball stuff from more than a few consulting firms, too.

Makes you want to head for the bath tub to wash it all off.

But that's no good, because you're only going to get slimed again…and again and again. Unless, that is, you rise up and do two things:

- Only believe data from statistically significant, random sample studies where the researchers have no stake in the outcome.
- Insist that all issuers or citers of research data reveal the research methodology, sources of data and any deviations from professional research standards.

Think that's asking you to move mountains? Hardly. You wouldn't believe how sensitive the media is to having readers question the veracity of what it prints. Just a steady stream of e-mail requesting detailed information on unsupported data citations–coupled with insistence that research-citing vendors cough up their sources and methodology— that'll take a fire hose to the slimy stuff. You betcha.

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