



Five smart ways to prepare for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In April 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into place across the European Union. The law will give people more of a say in how organisations use their personal data. Significantly, it will be illegal to send someone marketing communications without their 'unambiguous' consent.

For marketers, this raises a question – how do you encourage people to opt-in to your marketing? It's an important challenge to solve. Get your opt-in strategy right, and you'll head into 2018 with a database of engaged contacts, receptive to your marketing messages. Get it wrong and that database you've worked so hard to grow and keep up to date will become unusable.

To get a head start, here are five ways to start opting in your data before the law takes effect.

- 1. Begin with those who like you** – Within your customer relationship management (CRM) system, assess which contacts are most responsive to your marketing. The chances are, these repeat responders enjoy hearing from you and pay attention to what you have to say. Let these contacts know that to stay up to date on new products, promotions and company news, they need to opt-in.
- 2. Perfect your opt-in page** – You'll need to create a web page that encourages people to fill out a form and consent to receive your marketing. As with any landing page, you'd be wise to test different copy and design layouts to see which convert best. When you think you've got it right, drive as much traffic there as possible – linking to it from your blog, newsletters and in employees' email signatures.

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3. Utilise your CRM – A good CRM will provide insights into your contact database: the messaging people find engaging and the content with which they interact. Learning how your contacts like to be marketed to will help inform how you persuade them to opt-in. For example, if your newsletter is especially successful, make a point that opting in will guarantee continued access to it.

4. Exploit in-person events – Perhaps you hold your own events, or attend trade shows popular with your target audience. These events are an opportunity. Take along your tablet ready to invite delegates to fill out your opt-in form online.

Having a digital record is important, as it will let you trace where and when you gained consent. By comparison, just accepting someone's business card will leave you open to prosecution.

5. Produce remarkable content – People love to learn helpful tips that add value to their day-to-day lives. Build your reputation for providing high-quality content that people find truly interesting. You can use this material as a bargaining tool: in return for access to your content, they have to fill in a form that opts them in to your communications.

Taking the appropriate steps now is an opportunity for marketing and sales teams. By adapting, you'll learn how to get results from your technology and data while exploring creative ways to keep your audience engaged.

Ultimately, it's a chance to re-focus on what your customers want. Now, you need to be even more mindful of how best to communicate – how often to email contacts and the kind of messaging that works. The end goal: to build your reputation as a compelling brand with whom people want to engage.

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