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# The Retail Hive

## Is retail ready for GDPR?

After months of discussions and endless articles in the press, GDPR is almost here – but is anyone really ready? Even some of the most prepared businesses are still not fully certain that they have done everything that they need to, with many accepting that some elements of GDPR will have to remain a work in progress after the regulations have officially come into effect.

For the majority of organisations, the process of becoming GDPR compliant has thrown up as many questions as it has solutions, and it's likely that a lot of these queries will remain unanswered until we have seen GDPR in action.

This April, Sally Green, Co-Founder and Editorial Director of The Retail Hive, joined several leading retailers – and Hive members – to talk through their final GDPR preparations and discuss some of the most pressing concerns facing retailers ahead of next month's deadline.

## Legitimate interest

Legitimate interest has become a buzzword in the GDPR arena, but what does it actually mean and how can we successfully define it?

For example, does 'interest' mean that the individual has to have purchased from your brand? How recent should that transaction be, to still be classed as 'legitimate'? Naturally, this varies from market to market – an online grocery store would expect much more frequent engagement and purchases than a furniture shop or bicycle store. Let's face it, even the most loyal customer is unlikely to buy more than one sofa or brand new bicycle a year.

Interestingly, some retailers have already established a clear, written classification to use as a benchmark, while others are maintaining a more fluid approach. How this will be perceived under GDPR regulation remains to be seen.

**Takeaway:** *What we class as legitimate interest will undoubtedly vary from business to business, but setting a clear outline for your own organisation is a good starting point. This benchmark could change once we see GDPR in action.*

## Consent vs GDPR consent

One of the biggest questions for retailers: is consent that was secured in the past compliant under GDPR guidelines? Unlike 'legitimate interest' data, these customers have ticked a consent box. Unfortunately, that consent may not be legally viable once GDPR comes into effect. This depends largely on the legal statements and privacy policies that have accompanied previous data collection activities.

Under GDPR you are legally obligated to state for how long you intend to keep an individual's data on file, and what you will use it for. For some retailers, this 'past consent' data sits in a grey area, with many choosing to prioritise data without any consent attached before tackling this section.

**Takeaway:** *It might be best to deal with your 'dark' data – that which has no clear source or consent – before tackling your engaged customer database.*

## Horror stories: database destruction

GDPR horror stories serve as a cautionary tale to retailers embarking on a mass GDPR opt-in drive at the last minute. One recent anecdote involving a six figure database receiving just 14 opt-ins is enough to give any digital marketer nightmares.

**Takeaway:** *Legal compliance is essential, but rushing headlong into a sweeping opt-in/opt-out strategy without consideration has its risks. General consensus among our members seems to be to take your time and split your data into clear sections before attempting to secure consent. You may need a different approach for different data sets.*

## Physical data

GDPR doesn't only cover online data – it will effect data across the entire business. As many of our members have discovered over the last year, this data can appear in some interesting places. Something as simple as contact details left with a store colleague can be classed as data sharing – and it's unlikely to come with legal written consent.

Eradicating non-compliant data of this kind requires a mass training exercise, ensuring that all members of the business are aware of the importance of safe data storage and disposal. Policing and encouraging this can be difficult, but not impossible. Even the simple step of keeping a paper shredder in stores can be a good way to promote efficient data disposal.

One Hive member has appointed data champions across different aspects of the business. These champions not only report on data discrepancies and potential noncompliance: they also feedback on the impact that data compliance initiatives are having on their department, to ensure that unnecessary difficulties don't arise.

**Takeaway:** *Consider how data is handled in your business, and how this might need to change. GDPR doesn't begin and end on 25<sup>th</sup> May: you need to keep thinking about compliance as you move forward.*

## Do you really need it?

It's a simple question that can easily be lost in the GDPR frenzy, but do you really need the data you have? The emergence of 'big data' has seen a lot of businesses, retail or otherwise, collecting reams of data that isn't necessarily useful to them.

GDPR has given many of our members a good excuse to look objectively at the data they have and ask whether it's really worth having. If it's not, cut your GDPR workload by removing it from your systems (safely), before focussing on making relevant data compliant instead.

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## About The Retail Hive

The Retail Hive is an exclusive peer to peer network which is a community of decision makers for digital retail and retail marketing. Our mission is to build a community of retail leaders and create a single, trusted platform for you to connect and chat with your peers, discover and share relevant

industry content and exchange ideas that will help you to drive results and build your professional network.

To find out more please contact Paul Kehoe at The Retail Hive email: [paul.kehoe@thehive-network.com](mailto:paul.kehoe@thehive-network.com) or visit [www.thehive-network.com](http://www.thehive-network.com)

