



TURNING THE PAGE ON GDPR

GDPR has been seen by many as a burden, but Jason Connolly, director of Next Generation IT, says the smart company can see advantages from handling information well.

GDPR has generated some positives for business, one of which is bringing into focus the value and importance of data. This focus has brought about the decision by many companies to invest in the protection and management of this most valuable asset.

Having control over the information you manage and the platforms you store the data on will, if done correctly, bring about positive change in your business. Some businesses have begun to employ people in roles that relate, positions such as data protection officers, information officers and digital officers. Regaining this control and creating a value for money balance of internal accountability and external support has become the smart choice.

The recognition of the risks and the intelligence to adapt and look for the opportunities is what set apart the companies that will continue to gain from the changes.

During the two years preceding GDPR, a lot of the focus was given to the potential fines. The smart businesses saw through these scare tactics and quickly began to concentrate their efforts on more productive thinking. The potential impacts of fines, direct compensation claims and, more importantly, the potential for reputational damage were understood by most businesses very early on, but companies that used these risks as levers

to gain funding and invoke change were the ones who quickly moved forward. The recognition of the risks and the intelligence to adapt and look for the opportunities is what set apart the companies that will continue to gain from the changes. If you haven't recognised the opportunities then don't worry, it isn't too late. Here are some tips to get the ball rolling:

- **Gain control** – Remember when IT was a black box in the corner, something you needed, like car insurance, but were too afraid to start unravelling the detail and small print. If you have been smart, you will have removed this knowledge barrier by strengthening your agreements with providers, potentially employing an information or digital subject matter expert on the company side of the fence and most importantly bringing the topic into clear focus at a board and management level.
- **Building trust** – Some companies have used GDPR as a differentiator for their business. GDPR is all about the rights of the individual and committing your focus in a customer-centric way rather than just a transactional way. Moreover, advertising your transparent approach to data management helps your customers make informed decisions about your company.
- **Alignment** – GDPR doesn't just impact one part of the business or, as some people may have thought, just those in IT and compliance, it impacts the entire business. The smart businesses used

this as an opportunity to build bridges and stronger working relationships between their internal teams. For some, the alignment opportunity extended beyond just the internal, through to their external partners and providers.

- **Re-engage** – For many, GDPR required the updating of T&Cs, legal agreements or the need to seek the consent of data subjects. This obviously led to businesses contacting the people who use their services. The smart businesses used this opportunity to engage with customers in a positive way and the more successful strengthened their relationships with customers.
- **Value for money** – Getting value for money out of GDPR may have come as a surprise, but increasing efficiency, increasing quality, reducing service failures, increasing positive customer engagement and lowering data storage costs through data minimisation are just a few examples of how this can be achieved.

The need to remain focused on compliance, even if you believe you have achieved it already, should continue. There will be plenty of precedents emerging and keeping an eye on this evolving subject is just as important as the race to get ready. Oh, and in case you haven't heard, the new ePrivacy Regulation is on its way, so now is probably not the time for the smart business to rest on its laurels. ■