

Module: Digital Skills

Newsletters, email communication and GDPR

Data Protection and GDPR

There are **three key areas to focus on**, data permission, data access and data focus.

1. Data permission

Data permission is about how you ask people if they want to receive news from you. Consumers must express their consent to be contacted or communicated to. Practically, they need to confirm (in writing or through clicking on a box) that they want to be contacted. So, if you include a Newsletter Subscription in your website, you must always add a dedicated clause that they have to check or a box that they must tick in order to give you permission to send them your newsletter.

According to the GDPR website, if your mailing list includes people who have explicitly accepted to receive marketing emails from you prior to May 25th, 2018, then you can continue to communicate with them, otherwise you will need to obtain consent from them.

(https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/reform/rules-business-and-organisations/legal-grounds-processing-data/grounds-processing/does-consent-given-25-may-2018-continue-be-valid-once-gdpr-starts-apply-25-may-2018_en)

Also, by the rules of GDPR you are not allowed to pre-tick a box for them and you are obliged to write explicitly your communication policy. You also need to include a link to a privacy statement on your web forms. (<https://www.superoffice.com/blog/gdpr-email-marketing/>)

2. Data access

The right to change their data, gives consumers the ability to amend their personal profile. GDPR offers people a method to have more control over how their data is used. It is the organisation's responsibility to ensure that users can easily access their data and remove consent for its use. Therefore, it is imperative to include an unsubscribe link within your email marketing template.

3. Data Focus

GDPR requires to justify the processing of the personal data you collect. Therefore you can only ask for data that you need for a reasonable and justifiable cause, e.g. you might ask for people's age to check if they are adults or for their birthday in order to offer them a personal discount on the occasion of that day.

How to use newsletter and e-mail marketing

Create your list through your website and social media, grow it and use it often.

Make the sign-up process as quick and easy as possible and don't forget test if it works on both desktop and mobile devices. Use double-opt in to prevent spam and false sign-ups.

To maintain your list (or multiple lists if you want) , but also to send easily and with zero (or low cost) you can use a mailing system like MailChimp: <https://mailchimp.com/>

Create a sending strategy that provides with goals and purpose for the future. What do you want to accomplish and how do you plan to accomplish it? How often will you write? What are your future events, exhibitions, and campaigns that you would like to write about? Use a planning system so that you don't miss important events and dates.

Use pre-determine metrics to measure your effectiveness. MailChimp for example, creates and uses an Email Marketing Report that helps you measure your metrics.

Also, always instal Google Analytics on your website so that you can measure if you are driving users you're your newsletters to them. Start using Conversion Tracking and Campaign URLs so you can track clicks from your newsletter.

Use automation and don't answer manually. Through automation you can add features like answers to your users' actions – e.g. Thank You e-mails if they have signed for one of your events.

Aesthetics: be careful about aesthetics. Your newsletter must transfer your organisation's identity and personality. Use coordinated color schemes or abide with your logo. Use a consistent (the same preferably) letterset to become immediately identifiable. Use visual aids like photos or videos to attract attention.

Provide interesting, unique, and useful content. Ask yourself: «What do my readers want to read?», is this content only advertising or do I offer valuable information or resources to my readers”?

You can find more guidelines and ideas about creating a newsletter here:

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/guide-creating-email-newsletters-ht>

And a useful tool (free to a great extent) for creating beautiful newsletters (and leaflets and brochures) is Canva: <https://www.canva.com>