

Five steps
to ensure you're

GDPR

retail ready

Data has risen to form the backbone of omnichannel retail, with ever-increasing levels of customer data offering retailers the opportunity to analyse consumer behaviour and ultimately create personalised shopping experiences.

The collection, storage and use of shoppers' data has just become much more challenging, however, thanks to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which aims to give individuals back ownership and control of their personal information.

This means retailers must gain explicit consent from their customers to their personal data across multiple channels. Retailers also need to understand why they are holding data, where it's stored, who is in charge of it, how secure it is, and what it's used for.

Here are five steps retailers must take to become GDPR compliant:

1 Create a comprehensive data log

Retailers need to create one clear and comprehensive log of all the data they hold, including details of where it is stored. This includes understanding the systems used to store and process data, and how these systems work together. Creating a data log and "map" is the first step towards fulfilling some of the GDPR's central principles:

- Data accessibility (consumers' right to access data that companies hold on them)
- Data portability (consumers' right to download their data and re-use it for their own purposes)
- Consumers' right to be forgotten.

This data log should also outline the nature and sensitivity of data that is currently held. This will help retailers decide what it can be used for, if it can be held and for how long.

2 Improve security and create a data breach plan

Under GDPR, you must notify affected customers within 72 hours of a data breach. You must also be able to explain what happened, why, the risks customers have been exposed to and the next steps. This makes an effective, well-rehearsed data breach plan essential.

This plan should also include a way to identify security breaches, guidelines to speed up coordination between key internal departments and external communications with affected customers.



3 Review current processes used to obtain consent

GDPR requires all retailers to gain unambiguous, active, and explicit consent for the use of customers' personal data. You also need to explain in simple language what data you have collected and what you use it for. Retailers cannot use the data for any other purpose than has been agreed with the customer.

Consent must be gained actively and explicitly, so silence, inactivity or a pre-ticked box is not enough to show permission has been granted.

Retailers might also need to re-obtain consent for data they have previously gathered. If so, retailers should come up with a plan to re-obtain consent for the data, without breaking any of GDPR rules (e.g. avoid using data that was not properly obtained to re-solicit consent).

4 Create processes allowing customers to access and download their data

Under GDPR, customers have the right to access, export and transfer their personal data if they wish (also known as data accessibility and data portability). In practice, this means retailers must create processes that enable customers to download their own data within 30 days of a request.

Retailers must also create processes that allow customers to be forgotten, ie to delete their data if they request it.

5 Review all third-party contracts

Retailers are likely to work with vendors or other third-party partners who act as data processors. Under GDPR, retailers are accountable for how data is processed and used, but in case of a data breach or misuse, retailer and vendor share the liability.

This means that retailers can still be fully liable if their data processor partners suffer data breach or misuse. It is the retailer's responsibility to clearly set out how the vendor should use the data, so retailers need to set out clear and comprehensive guidelines on data use for any third party.

Retailers should also review all the contracts they hold with these partners to ensure there are no accountability ambiguities.

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