Heinz 57: Approaches to GDPR Consent

Concep asked professional services firms how they had approached getting email consent in the run up to 25 May 2018. These are results of that survey.

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Variety is the spice of life

- Some firms have a well-balanced blend of client email consent planning and execution
- Others take a pick-and-mix approach to gaining GDPR consent
- For a few firms it just leaves a bitter after taste

In response to a client request, marketing technology firm Concep asked their professional services clients and their social networks to complete a survey on the eve of the introduction of the EU's GDPR compliance deadline on 25 May 2018. They wanted to know how firms had approached their consent campaigns and what the response rates had been.

The survey asked a variety of professional service firms – including financial services (26%), legal (54%), consulting (6%) and real estate (3%) sectors - about their preparedness for GDPR in terms of email marketing. The specific questions asked included: Have you sent out a campaign to get consent for email marketing? Did you clean your data lists before you sent your campaign? How many contacts did you send it to? How many campaigns, including reminders, did you send out? What percentage of contacts gave their consent? Was an option provided for contacts to manage their email preferences? What other measures have you put in place to get email consent?

Focus on 6 Sectors



Consulting
6%



Financial Services
26%



Legal
54%



Real Estate
3%



Other Professional Services
11%

To email or not to email? That is the question

There was a widely varied response to the survey in terms of preparedness for GDPR compliance – including those that carried out careful planning, implementation and data handling. There were those that were planning to but had not yet done anything as yet and those that said they hadn't done any campaigns at all. In response to the question about sending out an email marketing campaign by the 25 May deadline:

- 56 per cent said that had implemented a campaign
- 31 per cent said they hadn't
- Just over 12 per cent they were planning to imminently

Three quarters of those that said 'No' to a GDPR email consent campaign were from the legal sector; the remaining quarter from the financial sector.

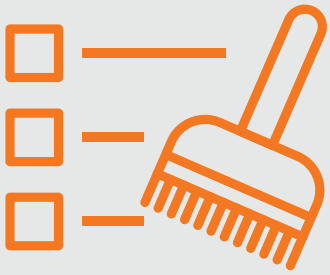


Coming clean

Two-thirds of professional service firms (62.5%) cleaned their data for invalid addresses before sending out their campaign.
This compared to 28 per cent who used their GDPR consent campaign as the opportunity to clean out their marketing lists - all of these firms were from the legal sector. A remaining 9.5 per cent responded they didn't clean their lists either before or after sending the campaign.

While there is no right or wrong way to do this, one of the opportunities that GDPR offers marketers is the chance to get rid of invalid data so that future email campaigns perform better on deliverability.

Just under 10 percent felt they had no need to clean their data, presumably as they were confident their data was good to go in the first place.



62.5%

Cleaned their lists BEFORE sending out the campaign

All roads lead to consent

The wide range of different campaign approaches used by professional service firms to gain GDPR consent is possibly best demonstrated by the number of emails, including reminders sent out to contacts:

- Just under one third of firms said they sent out one email only
- Nearly a quarter said they had sent out one email AND a reminder
- A similar ratio (22%) stated they had sent TWO emails AND a reminder
- A quarter said they had sent out THREE emails or more

Two thirds of the firms that sent out just one email were from the financial sector. There is an even spread of types of professional service firm sending out 2, 3 or more than three emails for their consent campaigns.

28.0%

Used their GDPR consent campaign to clean their lists

9.5%

Did no list cleaning for this campaign

Poles apart

There was a real dichotomy in terms of the numbers of contacts emailed by professional service firms in their GDPR consent campaigns and who completed the survey.

Nearly a third of respondents said they emailed less than 10,000 contacts. The same percentage of respondents said they sent out emails to between 10 and 50 ,000 contacts. At the other end of the spectrum, over 20 per cent of professional service firm said they sent out emails to over 100.000 contacts.

Given the wide range of campaign volume, it's not surprising then that survey respondents reported a huge degree of polarisation in the email consent rates:

- Nearly 50 per cent of those that emailed contacts only achieved a 10 per cent consent rate (27% of firms) or between 10 to 15 per cent consent rate (23% of firms)
- At the other end of the spectrum, nearly a quarter of professional service firms (23% of firms) reported that 75% per cent of their contacts had given their consent
- The rest of the firms responding achieved consent rates of between 15 to 50 per cent
- No firms achieved between 50 to 75 per cent consent rates
- Only one law firm responded that its legal team had advised that client consent was not necessary

How do you like your eggs... ?

The majority of professional firms that completed the survey said they provided an option for their contacts to manage their own email marketing preferences (78% of firms).
A small minority (8.7%) either stated 'No' they hadn't , or were planning to do it at a later date (8.7% of firms).
The only small divergence was firms that stated that contacts could manage their marketing preferences 'in their email footers' (4% of firms).
With preference management tools readily available to Concep platform users it makes sense to see such high numbers reporting they had incorporated preference management into their GDPR consent campaign.
Preference management tools are a great way to ensure you are delivering relevant, timely content to contacts.

The Full Monty

Professional Services marketers implemented every possible method to obtain email consent. These included using traditional hard copy forms, sign-in forms linked to email signatures, building consent into sales conversations and electronic contracts.

The formats professional service firms put into place to get email consent break down in the following way:

- Hard copy forms (17%)
- Built into sales conversations (11%)
- Built into electronic contracts (11%)
- Sign in form linked to email signatures (17%)
- CRM Email Trigger (9.5%)
- Email platform, email trigger (19%)
- Other (9%)

Most firms however, reported they were employing a mix of both traditional and digital approaches to gain consent. Only two firms, from the legal sector, relied solely on hard copy forms to gain consent. Most other firms using hard copy forms are also using some form of electronic consent – such as built into electronic contracts, woven into sales conversations and sign-in forms linked to email signatures.

One firm is using the full repertoire of consent tactics - both traditional and electronic. However, at the time of the survey they had achieved less than 10 per cent consent rate.

Method in the Madness

Even with immediate GDPR deadline looming, Concep's survey highlighted that there was a gap between those professional service firms that were fully prepared, those that were not and some that simply weren't doing anything.

A third of firms have said 'No' they were not sending GDPR consent campaigns, with a further 12 per cent only contacting clients after the 25 May, 2018 deadline. One firm is reportedly giving up email marketing entirely in response to GDPR! This seems a little drastic given that email communication is one of the top channels for B2B audiences, Perhaps it highlights the need to either do email communication really well - or not at all.

It was encouraging to see that most firms had carried out some form of house management prior to the deadline. Two thirds of firms that responded cleaned out their data contacts prior to sending out GDPR consent campaigns. A quarter of firms questioned were sending out the consent email campaign as a way of self-cleaning their databases. Either way, they should benefit from better email performance going forward - both in deliverability and most likely in engagement too - especially if they have implemented preference manager which the majority did. The key is to remember to continue as you have begun, with regular data checks and processes for managing data.

Professional services marketers designed a wide range of campaign formats to gain GDPR consent – a third of firms sent out just one email; a quarter sent out three emails or more. This diversity was reflected in the campaigns' consent rates with half of firms reporting less than 15 per cent consent rate. On the flipside, a quarter of firms reported that 75 per cent of contacts had given consent.

Professional service firms also used a variety of methods to capture email consent from traditional hard copy forms to a mix of hard copy forms and electronic consent capture methods as well as incorporating them into one-to-one conversations.

Making email consent a firm-wide activity creates a culture that tells clients: "You can trust us. We take data protection seriously". With processes, behaviours and the right mindset in place, that can only be a positive differentiator at the end of the day.

Top Tips for Smart firms...

1. It's not about compliance - continue to see GDPR as an opportunity to have good clean data, great email deliverability and stronger client relationships.

2. Make sure you are using the full capabilities of your email marketing platform solution to regularly sweep your marketing lists and implement a client- focused preference management system.

3. Use workflows that are GDPR compliant and designed around how professional services firms operate.

For more information about Concep's **GDPR Bundle, Preference Manager or List Cleaning** solution visit www.concep.com