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Systemising Your Business Processes

After GDPR

Systemising Your Business After GDPR

On 25th May 2018, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force, completely changing the way that companies are required to handle data relating to their clients.

The new regulation was specifically designed to bring data protection within the EU firmly up to date. Prior to the introduction of GDPR, both the EU and the UK were still using data protection regulations that were created in the 1990s, and therefore struggled to account for the vast changes that have occurred in the way that businesses collect and use consumer data.

Under the new guidelines, companies are expected to make a number of changes, ranging from deleting the data of any individual who requests them to, to disclosing what data they hold on any given individual, without charging for the disclosure.

But as well as ensuring that businesses handle their data responsibly, the introduction of GDPR has also caused a number of businesses to make a long overdue assessment of their own processes. Plenty of companies saw the incoming arrival of the new regulation as the perfect opportunity to address aspects of their business processes that they had been overlooking, and to make the changes that they had been previously putting off.

In particular, the necessity of implementing GDPR has given businesses the chance to take a look at how they can systemise their processes effectively, making their whole organisation more efficient and streamlined.

Your Business Processes – The Three Key Areas of GDPR

The introduction of GDPR required businesses to address three key areas in particular, each of which can provide ample opportunities for improving processes through systemisation.

1. Documenting Processes

The new regulation expects businesses to keep better tabs on all the data they hold, and how it is used, and for most businesses this will have required accurately documenting all of their processes – sometimes for the first time in years, and in some cases simply for the first time.

Often, businesses can carry on for years without taking the time to simply take stock of their processes, and as such it is easy for them to assume that no problems have arisen. In fact, the processes may have developed issues, gaps or complications over the years, or they may have simply become outdated and ineffective with the passage of time. It is only when business processes are documented that companies will discover that they are not operating nearly as efficiently as they believed.

2. Identifying Your Data Stores

One of the most common areas for improvement that businesses discover when they review and document their processes, is that their data is extremely disorganised. As a result of GDPR, businesses will now be identifying their existing data stores, and they may well find that they have data stored all over the place, rather than in a coherent and efficient system.

GDPR, then, is the perfect opportunity for businesses to look at rationalising their data stores, to ensure that everyone is working from the same data store, thereby cutting down on waste.

3. Eliminating Dead Data

If the previous two areas for improvement involve better management of the data that you have, then this third area is about deciding whether you actually need all of that data in the first place. In the course of documenting your processes and identifying your data stores, you may well find that you have a large amount of data clogging up your business.

This is not only detrimental to your efficiency, but in some cases, this will be dead and ineffectual data, that is actually adversely affecting your strategic thinking and decision making. For instance, when it comes to the number of customers you have, you should be focusing on current, up to date data, and eliminating that belonging to customers who have not had any dealings with you in a long time.

While it may seem counterintuitive to lose these customers, the outdated nature of your data makes it possible that a significant number of them are no longer active. By eliminating their data from your processes, you can narrow the focus of your approach, and make your marketing messages far more effective in their targeting. Each of these three areas provides opportunities for carrying out an overhaul or restructuring of your business processes, whether that takes the form of implementing new computer systems such as Xero accounting software, or bringing multiple offices together to better collate their data.

Systemisation with a Trusted Advisor

Reviewing, assessing and making any necessary changes to your processes in the wake of GDPR comes with many benefits, but taking full advantage of these benefits will be significantly easier with the help of a trusted advisor to rely on. Whether you are the leader of a business or a specialist in a specific area such as HR, you have the knowledge that is relevant to your role, but the majority of people simply aren't used to analysing data systems. Dealing with data processes and data storage therefore requires a lot of specialist knowledge. Without the right expertise overseeing your systemisation, your processes may well be documented, but they won't be changed and improved for the future.

With the proper specialist insight, it will become much easier to identify where the inefficiencies in your business processes are, and whether small or major changes are necessary to change the way you operate.

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