

8 Ways to Leverage GDPR for Your Agency

Plus tips on how marketing automation makes it easier



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About the Author

Carlo founded Phobos & Actor in 1990 to help clients across the B2B, B2C, and non-profit sectors with sales and communication strategies. Carlo believes the shortest way to profitable success is through creative communication and innovation. Phobos & Actor utilizes a helicopter perspective on strategy, marketing automation, and content creation to help clients grow their businesses.



Your guide to leveraging GDPR

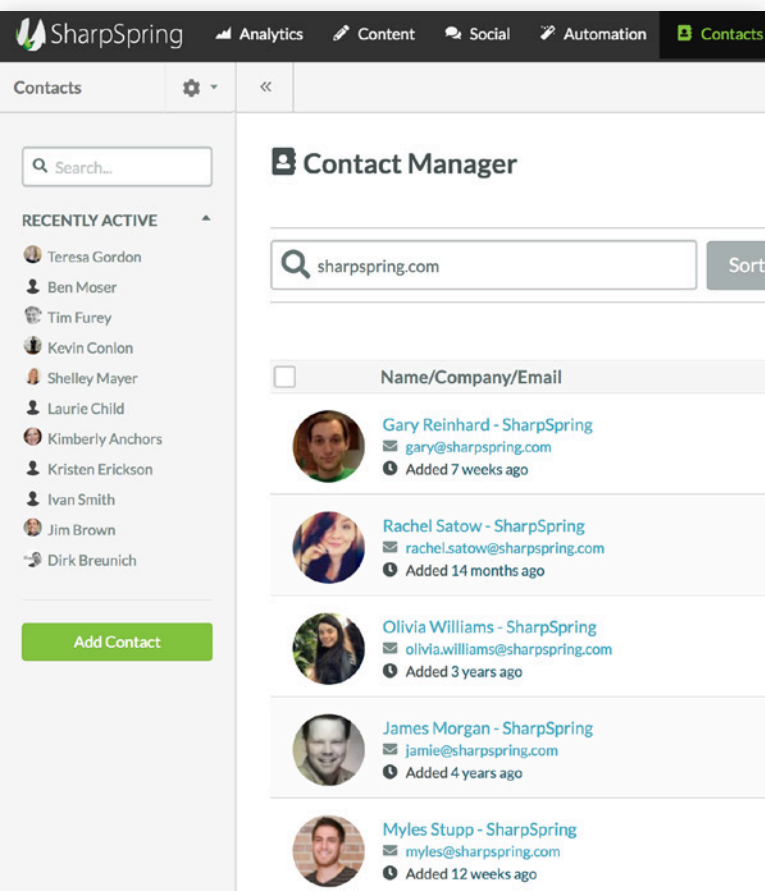
1. *One user-friendly database that's easy to control*
2. *Focus on engagement to keep people opted in*
3. *Managing the right to unsubscribe... and to resubscribe*
4. *The right to be forgotten*
5. *Cookie consent made easy*
6. *The customer's right to know what we know*
7. *Complying with the International Privacy Shield*
8. *Creating your own privacy policy*

There's no reason to sugarcoat it – GDPR can be a pretty daunting concept for small and medium-sized businesses, including marketing agencies like mine. That's why at Phobos & Actor, we've taken proactive steps to turn the tables on GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulation) and spin it into a positive opportunity.

A lot of organizations are concerned about the possibility of having to pay fines as high as €20 million. In parts of Europe, that fear is almost paralyzing the business market itself. **But GDPR is not about fines; it's about respecting markets and individuals.**

The key solution here is showing how these concerns can be turned into opportunities. How can we find new ways of interacting with consumers and clients in order to create long-term business? Digital marketing agencies have the power to swoop in and help clients manage their data, ultimately helping them on the road to GDPR compliance.

And the best way to achieve this is with a powerful tool like SharpSpring. Marketing automation streamlines data management, which in turn



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lessens the headache of GDPR – all the while strengthening retainer-based relationships with your clients.

Here are 8 ways that my team and I are re-framing GDPR to win over more clients and expand our existing relationships.

1. One user-friendly database that's easy to control

A huge part of GDPR is being able to show what data you have about your contacts and prove how you acquired it. But it's difficult to be compliant if that data is scattered across multiple martech apps. For example, a lot of salespeople keep their own contact records and don't share them with other team members. Marketers often create various, disjointed spreadsheets and lists filled with customer and lead data. Even HR teams make lists of current and potential employees.

With a marketing automation solution like SharpSpring, all of this information is collected and managed in one centralized hub. SharpSpring can connect with all leading applications on the market, which allows you to sync any CRM, bookkeeping, or other marketing systems you're using with your marketing automation platform. This provides a more holistic view of contact records, making it easier for you to prove where your data came from and also allowing you to more readily share knowledge across your company. If you have security



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concerns related to this, advanced user control lets you give different levels of access to different user profiles in your company, so you can control exactly who is managing what data.

SharpSpring also offers a suite of social media tools that allow you to manage your social accounts all from within SharpSpring. Many businesses are turning to social media as an additional medium for reaching their audiences, since the opt-in requirements of GDPR may make it harder to reach some prospects through email alone. With SharpSpring, you can rebuild a contact's engagement score by posting a personalized message on their Facebook or LinkedIn account, even if they haven't opted in to receive your emails. And all of these interactions are captured within SharpSpring, so you can keep track of which prospects are engaging with you and how they're engaging.

Across the board, SaaS (software as a service) solutions offer protective measures to you and your clients that you can't guarantee if you're using multiple disparate systems.

2. Focus on engagement to keep people opted in

Email is still one of the most powerful weapons for marketers, but it's been abused over the years by senders of unsolicited content

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and fraud. GDPR strives to help mitigate this problem by only allowing businesses to communicate with contacts who've consented to receiving emails, but the law can only go so far in controlling what businesses are ultimately doing.

Luckily, more effective solutions to prevent businesses from spamming their contact lists have been developed. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like Google, Microsoft, Apple and Yahoo have shifted focus toward engagement, and they reward reputable senders by getting more of their emails into the inbox instead of the spam folder. ISPs track domain names, IP addresses and even content to determine which businesses are prioritizing sending to engaged recipients, and which ones are simply spamming their contact lists.

Needless to say, this is a highly welcomed solution for the honest marketers out there, but even we can end up falling victim to these regulations if we don't take the right precautions. SharpSpring not only helps you get more consent from leads through your forms, but it also provides tools that allow you to suppress email sends to contacts that are at risk of becoming unengaged. This means you can choose to only send to contacts who are showing signs of wanting to receive your content, which helps you remain compliant with GDPR, protect your sender reputation with ISPs, and build trust with your customers and prospects.

3. Managing the right to unsubscribe... and to resubscribe

Customers have the right to unsubscribe from your newsletters, commercial communications, questionnaires, invitations, and more. But what if someone wants to unsubscribe from your newsletter, yet still be invited to your promotional events?

With SharpSpring, your leads and customers have the option to unsubscribe from specific communications, while remaining opted in to others. Since consent is such a central part of GDPR, giving people the option to unsubscribe is critical. Leads who have not opened emails, visited your website, or completed forms in a long time may no longer be willing to provide consent.

But don't forget – the best communication is personal. Just because you've received initial consent to email a contact, or permission to re-engage them, doesn't mean you should bombard them with generic content. The more personalized your communications are, the less likely people will be to unsubscribe at all.

SharpSpring offers a variety of tools to help you personalize your emails and landing pages based on your contacts' behaviors or characteristics. You can create highly detailed personas based on lead data, and set up automated campaigns based around those



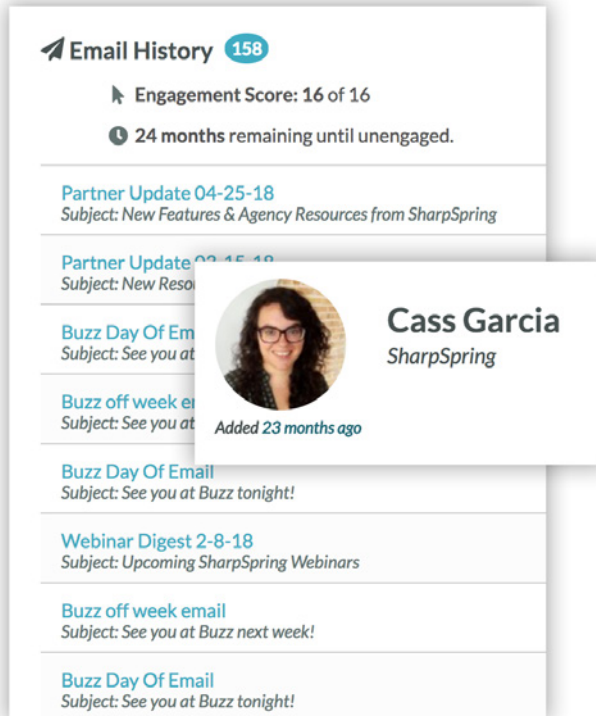
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personas. This results in a much more engaging user experience and keep your contacts from unsubscribing, all of which helps you remain GDPR compliant.

4. The right to be forgotten

Your leads and customers also have the “right to be forgotten.” This means that if they request it, you must delete all personal information you have about them. SharpSpring has an easy-to-use function for deleting a contact and all of their information from your database. All you have to do is maintain a list of who asked to be deleted, when they requested it, and when you deleted their information.

GDPR forces marketers to minimize their databases, so once someone asks to be deleted or unsubscribes from your mailing list, you cannot legally re-subscribe them. However, when it comes to your remaining contacts, the power is in your hands to keep them engaged and prevent them from unsubscribing. By using the engagement score in SharpSpring, you can “freeze” unengaged contacts for a period of time and only re-engage them once they’ve shown renewed interest by interacting with you. That’s the power of keeping people subscribed even if you’re not sending them anything.



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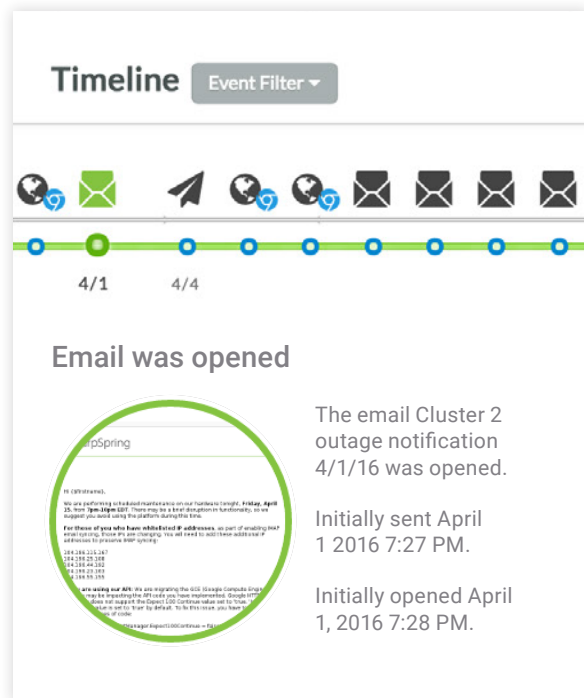
5. Cookie consent made easy

Proving how customers came into your database and how they're interacting with your brand is now more critical than ever. If you're building multiple websites or web pages for a client, you always have to get permission to place cookies on those pages, so SharpSpring is developing a great new feature to help with compliance. The feature allows you to configure a "Cookie Disclosure" element on SharpSpring landing pages, which allows you to easily link to a cookie policy, privacy policy or other document where you disclose what cookies you're using and for what purpose.

While the choice to enable this feature in SharpSpring is optional for users, I highly recommend it as a way to simplify web cookie opt-in so you can remain GDPR compliant.

6. The customer's right to know what we know

Under GDPR, your leads and customers have the right to request a file containing all of the information you have about them. If a lead or customer does this, GDPR obligates you to hand that data over within a reasonable timeframe, especially if you can use the data for profiling reasons.



SharpSpring's Life of the Lead helps you easily comply with data requests from leads and customers.

SharpSpring will help you comply more easily with such requests. SharpSpring tracks all contact interactions in its *Life of the Lead* feature, and you'll have access to all of that data on a specific contact, so you can then pass the data along and meet compliance.

7. Complying with the International Privacy Shield

With GDPR in place, any service providers you work with need to prove that they work in compliance with the new laws. SharpSpring has applied to EU-US and Swiss-US Privacy Shield, a framework for exchanging personal data for commercial purposes between the United States and the European Union, to confirm its quality of service and privacy. This enables US companies like SharpSpring to receive personal data about contacts residing in the EU, while still abiding by EU privacy laws. SharpSpring has proven it intends to adequately protect its data and its customers' data in order to be fully compliant with GDPR.

8. Creating your own privacy policy

Most of your clients are working with a ton of different websites, platforms, landing pages, apps, and other services that have an

So remember, it's not enough to rely on the privacy policies of SharpSpring or other vendors you work with. You need to have your own privacy policy in place with all of your clients too.

impact on your privacy statement. Even the login on your local WiFi network asks for the approval of a privacy statement.

So remember, it's not enough to rely on the privacy policies of SharpSpring or other vendors you work with. You need to have your own privacy policy in place with all of your clients too. You should be sure to disclose your use of cookies and cover your overall usage of SharpSpring in your policy.

To help out with this, you can easily create a privacy statement landing page in SharpSpring that can be centrally controlled by the head of your agency. This makes it easier to keep privacy, cookie and legal documents up to date and in a central location.

Turning GDPR into an Opportunity

All of this is to say that your reaction to GDPR shouldn't be fear and frustration. Rather, you should think of it as a chance to do business in a new way. Besides having new processes in place to standardize and protect your and your clients' data, we also get to be part of a new era of marketing, where we have countless new opportunities to truly engage leads and customers.

I believe strongly that marketing automation is the solution here, and that SharpSpring is the most ideal software choice based on features, support, privacy, and budget.

Want to read more on topics like this?

Check out our other *Agency Perspectives* articles.

Likewise, if you're an SMB that wants to grow, find new leads, and create customers... your European Platinum SharpSpring Partner Phobos & Actor is the right choice. Call us for more information, and learn how together we can turn GDPR into an opportunity for your business.

Disclaimer: This document is not legal advice. It is only meant to provide general information on selected aspects of the GDPR. While this document addresses some legal aspects of the GDPR, it is not intended to provide legal advice. SharpSpring recommends that you consult your attorney on how best to comply with the GDPR.



See how adding marketing automation to your agency's services can drive revenue from existing clients and help you add new ones. Schedule a demo with a partnerships specialist to chat about your specific needs.

Get a Demo



SharpSpring is the marketing automation platform of choice for more than 1,400 digital marketing agencies and their 6,000+ clients. Since 2014, SharpSpring has provided its powerful marketing automation solution to businesses around the globe. In the short time since its inception, the company has gained significant market share from industry leaders with its competitive pricing, agency-focused business model, and robust platform.

Visit www.sharpspring.com for more information.



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As a full-service agency, Phobos & Actor has been delivering results since 1990 across a range of services in marketing and design. With a team of 14 specialists, the agency customizes communication and marketing strategies for the modern entrepreneur. All services are driven by one central claim: Phobos & Actor creates profitability through creativity.

Visit www.phobosenactor.be for more information.