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Building customer relationships through transparency:

The power of customizable preference centers





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Introduction

Digital interactions shape nearly every aspect of modern life. So, it is little wonder that we want to understand what each interaction means for us, our privacy, and our personal information. Consumers today want to be informed and empowered with options that give them full control over exactly how their personal information is used and have this explained to them in understandable terms. As marketers, this means that building, maintaining, and deepening customer relationships must start with a foundation of privacy, transparency, and user control that allows consumers to feel a part of the conversation.

For most businesses, a static consent banner – or consent management platform (CMP) – is the first foray into giving customers an informed choice over the use of their personal information. This is primarily driven by a need to comply with various privacy laws which stipulate specific rules regarding how your business informs customers about the use of personal information and the opportunity to have control over whether it uses it or not. However, when it comes to furthering your customer relationships and earning increased brand loyalty, preference centers become the go-to tool.

Preference centers step into the realms of offering customers a deeper level of choice and control over how they interact with your business. Where CMPs deliver a static privacy notice stating how personal information is being used, preference centers allow more personalized communications with customers. And where CMPs offer the choice to opt in or opt out of the use of personal information, preference centers offer the customer the choice to ‘opt down’, choosing exactly what types of information they want to share and for what purposes.



A look at privacy, transparency, and control in the context of preference centers

Across the spectrum of organizational maturity, businesses need to collect and use individuals' personal information. Regardless of how this information is collected—whether via a CMP or a preference center—three key driving forces hold significant importance on both sides of the business-customer relationship: privacy, transparency, and control.

The importance of upholding privacy requirements

Privacy may seem like a concern that has a greater impact on the individual rather than your business, but through the lens of the law, it is fundamentally important for your businesses to take it seriously. As of March 2024, more than a hundred countries had privacy and data protection laws in effect, highlighting the importance of compliance from an administrative and reputational viewpoint. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) exemplifies this convergence. Under GDPR, you must ensure that consent is informed, specific, and freely given; moreover, it mandates that withdrawing consent must be as easy as giving it. Therefore, choosing how you approach consent management and how you

configure the relevant tools becomes an important decision. By respecting boundaries and adhering to privacy regulations such as the GDPR, you signal to customers that your brand values their autonomy. This respect is often reciprocated with loyalty and deeper engagement.

In addition, customers have become increasingly privacy conscious, and the importance of privacy to the customer is fairly obvious. The definition of personal information generally covers instances of individuals' most private details, and high-profile breaches of privacy have routinely led to a loss of custom for affected businesses. When customers feel their data is mishandled, trust erodes swiftly. Implementing preference centers allows customers to dictate what data they share and how it is used, helping to foster a sense of security and trust. This empowerment not only might align with regulatory requirements but also enhances the customer experience, leading to sustained loyalty.

The importance of transparency

Transparency is your organization's opportunity to give customers a detailed view of your processes and providing clear, accessible options within a

preference center gives customers the autonomy to choose how they engage with your brand. It is an opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to respect the customer's right to privacy and control. Transparency openly places value on the customer relationship by demonstrating accountability to regulatory requirements—being held to the standard that the business claims to uphold by being transparent. This openness not only builds trust but also differentiates your brand in a crowded marketplace.

For customers, transparency represents an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of where their data is going. When businesses are open about data collection and usage practices, customers feel respected and valued. This clarity reduces uncertainty and builds confidence in the brand. A transparent preference center allows customers to understand and manage their data, leading to a more personalized and satisfying experience.

A look at privacy, transparency, and control in the context of preference centers

The importance of control

For the company, having control over data collection and usage is crucial. Modular, embedded preference centers can be integrated across various environments, building confidence in effective, consistent record collection. This enables businesses to manage customer data effectively, carry out their compliance efforts with more confidence, and tailor marketing strategies to meet customer preferences. Moreover, having comprehensive, accurate records obtained through preference centers allows organizations to have a greater level of governance and control over which business functions can use the data and ensures proper access controls are upheld.

The role of customer control is pivotal in creating an environment of trust. Customers want more than just transparency; they want to see that brands are being transparent for the right reasons. Providing individual choices leads to more authentic interactions, where customers feel comfortable sharing their data because they know it is being handled in a way that aligns with their expectations.



Enter the preference center: Implementation and best practices

Adopting preference centers into your approach to consent management can strike up a range of benefits for your organization – but what exactly is a preference center? And how does it differ from a basic CMP?

What is a preference center?

A preference center is a centralized, user-friendly portal that allows individuals to manage their consent and communication preferences, providing businesses with valuable insights for personalized marketing. Unlike traditional CMPs, preference centers combine regulatory management with a more engaging customer experience. For businesses, preference centers streamline data collection, offering a clear and transparent way to gather first-party data, which can then be used to enhance customer profiles and drive targeted content. By integrating consent and preference data across various marketing technologies, businesses can deliver personalized experiences at scale. For customers, preference centers provide greater control and visibility over their data, allowing them to easily adjust their preferences for communication and consent. This empowerment can foster trust, improve customer satisfaction, and encourage long-term loyalty to your brand.

The shift from consent management platforms to preference centers

In recent years businesses have started to transition from traditional CMPs to more sophisticated preference centers in growing numbers. This migration has been driven by a need to keep pace with a growing demand to create deeper customer relationships and meaningful brand engagement.

Transitioning to a preference center requires integrating systems that can handle dynamic user preferences across multiple channels. Here you should be thinking about your MarTech stack as well as your CRM and personal data maps to ensure seamless data flows to these platforms. This will involve the input of multiple teams and stakeholders such as marketing, IT, privacy, security, and more to make sure that you are delivering an efficient method for customers to consent to data collection.

While the benefits are substantial, the shift presents challenges. Ensuring data accuracy across platforms can be complex, highlighting the need to employ data governance and digital marketing frameworks, while ensuring they work in lockstep. Businesses must also navigate varying global privacy laws, tailoring

their preference centers to comply with regional regulations. However, the biggest challenge to overcome – and one that is vital to the effectiveness of a preference center – is designing user-friendly interfaces that encourage customers to feel empowered to actively manage their preferences without feeling overwhelmed. This is a delicate balance.

The benefits of preference centers

Implementing preference centers offers multifaceted advantages, including assisting your compliance efforts in a streamlined way, and optimizing first-party data strategies. Let's first look at compliance. Global privacy laws dictate a range of requirements for organizations to upload concerning consent. Centralizing how these records of consent are collected and providing clear audit trails helps to maintain accuracy and promotes accountability. This streamlined approach reduces the risk of non-compliance penalties by having full and maintained records integrated with broader data mapping activities and ensures that businesses can swiftly adapt to regulatory changes.

Enter the preference center: Implementation and best practices

Also, preference centers empower customers, giving them control over their data and allowing them to choose what data they share with you. This data collected directly from the individual is known as first-party data. By capturing first-party data through preference centers, businesses can deliver personalized experiences, leading to increased customer engagement and higher conversion rates. This targeted approach helps reduce marketing spend wastage and enhances return on investment by helping you target spending in the appropriate areas. Preference centers also centralize communications with the customer from privacy notices to changes in processing activities or even just simple company updates. Delivering these communications in a single portal while also allowing customers to opt in or out of these communications is vital to deepening customer engagement. This empowerment leads to more meaningful interactions, as customers receive content and offers aligned with their interests. Additionally, businesses gain deeper insights into customer behaviors and preferences, informing product development and marketing strategies.



How OneTrust helps

OneTrust Universal Consent and Preference Management (UCPM) empowers customers to shift from their existing CMPs to using one platform as a central system of record to manage consent, preferences, and other identifiers. The OneTrust platform covers the entire customer journey from data collection to channel activation, while offering a simple tool that can assist the customer in its compliance efforts. Acting as a centralized system for consent records, OneTrust integrates with thousands of applications to govern consented data and enforce consent from multiple touchpoints.

Universal Consent and Preference Management helps to define your consent program across three key stages: capturing, managing, and enforcing consent. Creating multi-touch digital experiences that collect and track person-based preferences and durable identifiers throughout the consumer journey allows you to empower your customers with what, how, and when they share personal information with you. Configuring data collection web forms and preference centers using dynamic and logic-based displays to capture durable identifiers and

preference choices and maintaining real-time consent and preference records helps demonstrate proof of compliance, enhance customer profiles and consistently honor real-time choices. And, through implementing data governance controls to ensure personal data is being controlled and actioned with privacy guardrails in place ensure that you are only using data how you said you would.

Speak to a OneTrust expert today to learn more about how the OneTrust Universal Consent and Preference Management solution can make your consent management processes a competitive advantage.



The OneTrust logo is displayed in a clean, white, lowercase sans-serif font. The background of the slide features a complex geometric pattern of overlapping triangles and quadrilaterals in various shades of orange and yellow, creating a sense of depth and movement. A large, semi-circular shape is formed by the intersection of these shapes on the right side of the slide.

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OneTrust's mission is to enable the responsible use of data and AI. Our platform simplifies the collection of data with consent and preferences, automates the governance of data with integrated risk management across privacy, security, IT/tech, third-party, and AI risk, and activates the responsible use of data by applying and enforcing data policies across the entire data estate and lifecycle. OneTrust supports seamless collaboration between data teams and risk teams to drive rapid and trusted innovation. Recognized as a market pioneer and leader, OneTrust boasts over 300 patents and serves more than 14,000 customers globally, ranging from industry giants to small businesses. For more information, visit www.onetrust.com.

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