Department for International Trade

Data Consent Service

Department for International Trade

Established in 2016 following the EU Exit referendum, the Department of International Trade (DIT) secures UK and global prosperity by promoting and financing international trade and investment, and championing free trade.

The Department helps UK businesses to find new export markets and expand existing ones and supports international businesses to invest successfully in the UK. This is vital for the UK economy post EU Exit. Headquartered in the UK, the Department has staff in over 100 countries.

CHALLENGE

The DIT aids development and growth of international trade by managing customer data and supporting marketing activity. Customer data and its effective management is key to DIT in meeting customer expectations and maintaining compliance, especially since the advent of more stringent privacy regulation and legislation, e.g. GDPR

The Department recognises that customers expect to engage and transact with organisations that respect their privacy; and increasingly that those organisations are 'joined up' and able to manage data centrally. It is continuously looking at how services can be improved to exceed customer requirements. With this in mind, and to comply with strengthened data consent and privacy regulations, the DIT identified the requirement for a new consent service to capture and allow consent preferences to be updated.

Centralised and consistent storage

To deliver this capability, centralised and consistent storage of consent data would need to be implemented, with secure access enabled to key consent data sources for systems, with restricted links.

EXPECTED PROJECT OUTCOMES INCLUDE:

- meeting GDPR requirements
- creating a centralised service that is responsive, efficient and accessible internally
- manage all consent securely with simplified update capability
- streamline engagement with customers
- support requirements for audit and investigation
- improve customer satisfaction by improving confidence in DIT's management of consent data

NOT UNDERTAKING THIS WORK WOULD RESULT IN:

- maintenance burden of holding separate consent data stores in multiple systems with limited inter-operability
- likelihood of holding obsolete consent data
- risk of not complying with GDPR and other rules, with consequent possibility of reputation damage and legal sanctions
- greater complexity in checking consent for marketing purposes

Their prime aim was to meet GDPR requirements and break down 'walled gardens' around consent data. The service also improves support for Marketing by simplifying their engagement with the customer accessing services from their preferred channel.

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WHY DID THEY SELECT METHODS?

DIT required outside expertise, as well as their own skilled resources to deliver the solution. Methods successfully bid for the project under CCS' DOS framework. The proposal was well aligned with their tech and data strategy and Methods was competitive in terms of cost and value for money

SOLUTION

Methods proposed an application development, data and API solution, hosted on the established and supported Government PaaS services, backed by AWS. We aimed to deliver value quickly and minimise system and data disruption whilst enhancing operations using Agile methodologies in line with GDS standards. We designed a microservices and PaaS orientated architecture to rapidly build and iterate on components of the service in line with researched user and business needs.

This approach enabled the delivery within the time frame and budget available, ensuring technical debt was minimised whilst building a supportable, scalable, resilient and secure service.

Methods' team included:

▸ Delivery Manager
▸ Technical Architect
▸ Developer
▸ Business Analyst

along with some User Research time, working with DIT stakeholders including their Product Owner and technical architecture community.

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RESULTS

Delivery timescales were tight, requiring a Beta product launched before April 2020 to meet compliance needs. Mobilising, agreeing a detailed delivery scope, and creating a robust backlog was challenging in such a short timeframe, however, with great teamwork and collaboration with right DIT contacts, this was done, and the Alpha delivered on-time and within budget.

Following successful completion of the Alpha phase, the project has now moved into Beta, with the delivery roadmap agreed, and development in progress.

The service:

RECEIVES AND STORES DATA	▶ about form submissions from DIT's web application on great.gov.uk, covering all forms where email and/or telephone marketing consent is captured
	▶ about contacts on DIT's Customer Relationship Management Tool - Data Hub service, specifically whether they accept DIT email marketing
	▶ from DIT's email marketing software about contacts who have unsubscribed from email marketing
ALLOWS AN AUTHENTICATED ADMIN USER TO	▶ view and search for data stored within the service
	▶ update a contact's email or telephone marketing consent (where, for example, a request is received by telephone or letter to the department)
IS INTEGRATED	▶ with the DIT Data Hub such that Data Hub users can view a contact's current consent status for email marketing, both individually and in bulk
	▶ with the DIT Staff Single Sign On (SSO) service, so that an admin user can authenticate using staff SSO
PROVIDES REGULARLY UPDATED	▶ consent data to the DIT Data Workspace service, so that consent information can be accessed and analysed using Data Workspace tools

BENEFITS

Benefits are a mix of compliance (avoiding breach of GDPR regulations, and possible investigation or sanction by ICO as well as reputation damage to DIT) and practical (e.g. centralising consent data, improving inter-operability with wider DIT systems and workflows, and ability to view and audit consent data)

Methods' experience of working with a diverse range of technical platforms (including AWS where we are an Advanced Tier Consulting Partner) helped us recommend a solution that aligned perfectly with DIT's technology strategy and platforms

NEXT STEPS

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Beta is underway, and we are in dialogue about potential extensions to the service post completion, as well as supporting onboarding of other systems

We are in dialogue with DIT to understand and support their wider delivery portfolio, including data and cyber security

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