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# FIVE STEPS TO ACCELERATING CONSUMER SECURITY **AND DATA USE TRUST DURING A PANDEMIC**

by **Julian Ranger**, Executive President, and Founder at Digi.me | Australian Data Exchange, A/NZ Representative of Digi.me

There is a long-held maxim about the virtues of simplicity. For years sectors and entities, from the navy to newspapers, to designers have adhered to the KISS principle: Keep It Simple, Stupid.

It reflects the premise that most systems work best if kept straightforward, rather than being made unnecessarily complex. And it holds true for technology as much as for anything else.

The desire to make products and services stand out from the crowd can too often translate, mistakenly, into making them the biggest and the best, and then putting a cherry on top.

But, designing something that actually does what it says on the tin, and delivers an outstanding user experience, is a far better route to success. And the more transparent a service is about what it does, what data it collects, and for what purpose, the more easily will trust in it be built, and the larger the user base will grow.



**digi.me**

As the world navigates through the COVID-19 pandemic, and as the lines between information and misinformation become ever more blurred, this has never been truer.

Happily, there are some core ways that technologists and evangelists advocating for a more personalised and data-driven future, one built on full user consent, can draw on their experience to help increase consumer trust. Let's explore some of their key insights.

**1) Do what you say.** This is the most important principle, and the simplest. Tell people what your app or service does, and then ensure it does nothing more, and nothing less. No dark patterns, nothing that is at all unclear, just the information required so

that explicit and informed consent, as required by the EU's GDPR data protection regulations and other laws around the world, can be given whenever users choose to share their data. Key to this is ensuring that everything is clear and transparent so users actually understand what they are agreeing to at every stage. Following this principle consistently and tracking back to it with every new feature or design tweak will ensure you don't go far wrong.

## 2) Be transparent about data provenance and data flows.

To build trust in data-sharing services it is essential to be transparent about how and where data is shared, and to enable individuals to retain control of the data they provide. Such transparency is crucial to enable the proper functioning of services such as Covid health passes. It is also important to have robust security measures in place to protect individuals' data, and to be transparent about these. Individuals need to be convinced they have nothing to fear, and worthwhile benefits to gain, by sharing their data.

**3) Build in positive actions.** It is possible to build into an app or service functionality that makes users feel they are in control of what the app does, and more connected to it. A swipe, for example, is a more considered action than a button push, but still simple and straightforward to initiate and to understand. Certain situations — such as needing proof of Covid vaccination or a negative PCR test to be able to board a flight — will push users in the direction of consent, but each individual must be able to withhold consent to the sharing of their data.

**4) Be human-centric.** In a nutshell, this means putting individuals at the centre of every aspect of their digital lives, including individual apps and services. In Australia, the government is already moving in this direction, with a tender out for a personal health data wallet that would enable individuals to hold their own data. Digi.me, for example, allows people to control and choose who they share it with, with explicit consent. This is critical. It keeps users connected to the service, and confident they are in control, which in turn builds trust and willingness to engage in data-sharing more broadly.

**5) Allow users to disappear.** Putting individuals at the centre of their data, and in control about what is shared and with whom allows them to be forgotten, if they so choose. This ability to withdraw consent at any time is a legislated requirement in some jurisdictions. While this isn't possible in every single situation — some legacy data must be kept by law — it is an important consideration and should be built in where possible.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID

Going back to what I said at the beginning, the common thread running through all these steps is simplicity, which builds transparency, which morphs into trust.

There are, of course, other steps that can be taken: data minimisation, not asking for data before it's relevant, not asking for data unless there is a benefit for the user will help grow consumer trust in the security of data and in data sharing.

But, fundamentally, it's about putting in place a solid foundation of trust and building onto those foundation relationships that bring benefits for both sides.

Getting the gathering, consent and flow of data right and keeping the associated processes simple and transparent will build consumer trust. So don't be stupid — it really is just about keeping it simple.

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