

Excellence Awards - 2024 Entry  
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Entry ID: 15131

### Third Party Authorization

*Are you entering on behalf of, or in association with, any third party?:* No

### Basic Information

*Category:* 21. Best Event

### Entry Information

*Entrant company name (To be used in all awards materials/ presentation):* Information Commissioner's Office

*Entry title:*

Data Protection Practitioners' Conference

*Entry Text:*

#### Background

The ICO's Data Protection Practitioners' Conference has always been a hot ticket, but in 2023 we hosted our best ever event attracting five times as many delegates at a fifth of the cost.

Our delegates are on the frontline of data protection – helping stop cyber-attacks, preventing personal information falling into the wrong hands and ensuring the organisations you trust are careful with your details.

Equipping these data protectors to do a good job is part of our job.

So, our in-house team built a trade conference that led to meaningful change. Where 82% learned something new and, within three months, 72% had taken action to put that knowledge into practice.

#### Objectives and budget

Pre-covid: in person conferences cost £157,000 for 800 delegates.

During covid: trialled virtual conferences costing an average £30,000 for an average

2,500 delegates. 2023: committed to digital-first approach. Invested in technology to do that well.

Delivered in-house:

Digital hosting platform: £28,433.75

Delegate forum: £3,660.00

Total: £33,093.75

Event-driven objective:

1. Educate, inform and inspire our audience

Create a programme that at least 60% of delegates find useful, inspiring and educational.

Comms-driven objectives:

1. Reach more data practitioners

Increase attendance from 2,581 in 2022 by 20% to 3,097.

Attract 25% of total audience from high-risk sectors of health, education and law enforcement.

2. Extend impact beyond conference day

Additional 30% views of on-demand content in three months after conference.

Create content that 50% of delegates use to improve practices in their organisations within three months.

Idea, research and planning

Our conference is free, but our audience is under-resourced and time poor.

Our offering has to be compelling and relevant for everyone regardless of their experience level, sector or specialism.

For each objective, we used research-led insights to inform our planning and ideas.

Educate, inform and inspire

Research:

Positive feedback on previous event content. (94% rated the 2022 agenda as good to excellent).

Fun or unexpected content rated highest.

Attendance stats revealed the most popular sessions at previous conferences.

Our advice and complaints lines highlighted areas of most concern.

Our own intel revealed emerging issues including an imminent new law, the rise of AI and the increasing impact of cyber-attacks.

Idea: Make the topics that matter most to data protection professionals accessible and engaging.

Reach more data practitioners

Research:

In-person conferences cost 5x more.

Attendance was capped and excluded those that could not travel or afford accommodation.

91% of delegates liked our trial virtual conferences but missed the chance to network.

The basic digital delivery platform used after covid was a short-term solution.

Idea: Commit to a permanent digital-first event investing in a new fit-for-purpose platform to include interaction and networking.

Research:

Stakeholder engagement showed that the sectors at highest risk of a significant data breach were health, education and law enforcement.

Converting strong registration numbers into attendance has been a challenge, limiting the reach of past events.

Idea: Focus pre-event promotion on the highest-risk sectors. Convert registrations to attendance by demonstrating the value of content, rather than simply stating what it is.

Extend impact beyond conference day

Research:

Previous measurement focused on format and content. In 2023 we sought to understand the broader impact of the event.

In 2022, delegates felt forced to choose between workshops running at the same time and missed out.

Idea: Focus measurement on how DPPC makes a difference. Provide recorded content quickly for those who didn't catch it live. Re-package it for specific sectors.

Strategy, creativity and innovation

Based on insights that fun, engaging content works best, we found creative ways to encourage people to sign up, turn up and stay tuned.

This included:

Using an affable ICO staffer as the 'face' of the event to make it accessible, approachable and light-hearted. His tongue-in-cheek description of DPPC as the 'Glastonbury of the data protection world' in one of a series of social videos led to 237 registrations alone. All creative posts accounted for 11% of total registrations.

Opting for a keynote speaker from outside the data protection community added wow factor. Eva Penzy-Moog – an expert on designing for safety – gave delegates a fresh perspective on privacy. Her speech was the highest-rated with an average score of 4.7/5.

Light-hearted, interactive social content – such as DPPC Pet of the Conference and

finding the delegate who had ‘travelled’ furthest (Australia) – helped maintain delegates’ interest all day.

Attendance remained above 68% throughout the seven-hour event.

Delivery/implementation of tactics

We split promotional activity into phases to target the right messages at the right time.

This helped achieve our comms-driven objectives to reach more people, and extend the conference’s impact.

1. We promoted exclusive content in our e-newsletter to drive registrations. There were spikes in registrations after each publication. In total, 31% of delegates registered through the e-newsletter.

2. We targeted high risk sectors through trade media (5 bylined articles) and social media posts linked to PR moments like 75 years of the NHS. Third party endorsement from industry and sector bodies included shared content through their socials and newsletters.

3. We converted registrations into attendance by focussing on how conference content would help delegates improve practices. In the month ahead of conference, social posts encouraging attendance were among our most engaged with content and inspired a further 500 sign ups.

4. Our 32 social posts encouraged interaction on conference day, created a buzz and kept people tuned in. (81,000 impressions)

5. After conference we promoted recorded content to our 28,000 newsletter subscribers and through LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. We re-packaged content for target audiences and made it evergreen content by removing conference branding.

To meet our event objective to educate, inform and inspire we:

Created relevant content based on insight and evidence.

Procured a new digital platform, introduced Slido to enhance delegate experience and launched a new networking forum to allow delegates to “meet”.

Chose an unconventional keynote to breathe life into what can be a dry subject – even for the most passionate of data professionals.

Measure, evaluation and impact

We over delivered on all of our KPIs:

- 91% of delegates found the event useful (KPI – 60%)
  - 82% (avg) of delegates learned something new (KPI – 60%)
  - 90% of delegates were inspired (KPI - 60%)
  - 52% increase in attendance from 2,581 in 2022 to 5,397 (KPI – 20%)
  - 25% of registered delegates were from high-risk sectors (KPI – 25%)
  - 2,376 people (44%) accessed post conference content in the following three months (KPI – 30%)
  - 72% of delegates implemented what they learned (or plan to) in three months after conference (KPI – 50%)
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## Supporting Information

*Additional supporting information (images, artwork, clippings and other media):*

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Provided

*Campaign image (if entering individual/team awards, upload headshot/team photo here):*

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Provided

*Company logo:*

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Provided

*Please write a 30 word entry summary in the third person:*

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The ICO built a trade conference that led to meaningful change. 82% learned something new. 72% took action to put that knowledge into practice. Ultimately, that means safer personal data.

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