

DEAR JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS, BERYL'S GREAT, BUT IT'S A BIGGER JOB.

It's 4:35pm.

On a Thursday.

Last November.

In other words, it's recently.

You're in Waitrose, grabbing a quick sandwich. (Maybe you even were?)

Ham & Cheddar in the basket, you turn from the snack aisle...

and a very friendly staff member asks,

"Excuse me, do you have a moment? I assure you I'm not trying to sell anything."

The name tag reads: Beryl*.

The smile is warm and sincere. The charm real. The casting perfect. Beryl is as threatening as an over-cute kitten volunteering a cashmere cuddle.

"Of course," you say, returning Beryl's smile. "How can I help?"

Beryl begins, "I'm from John Lewis Group, and a lot of our customers used to really enjoy receiving emails from us. About discounts and offers and, y'know, about our free coffees.

Then, because of changes in data protection..."

"GDPR?," you offer.

"Yes, absolutely right!", says Beryl. "Because of GDPR we had to delete all those email addresses. Would you be interested in receiving emails from us in the future?"

You look down at Beryl's clip-board.

An unlined A4 page with a rather sorry-looking column of about 15 email addresses.

All scrawled by different hands and half-legible.

"Thank-you... but I'll pass if that's alright?"

"Yes, I completely understand", Beryl conspires. "It is a bit cringy, going around like this, asking for people's emails."

"Good luck with it anyway", you offer as you watch her head off past the Meal Deals.

*Name changed to protect the innocent.

GDPR came into effect on May 25th, 2018. The marketing community, like everyone else, had significant sight-line, years in fact, as May 25th came closer.

Very soon, we're talking 2 years of GDPR. And still, by way of pro-active response, businesses (even those that posted £10.2bn revenue in 2018) are endeavouring to rebuild their CRM database with Beryl and a clipboard. John Lewis are literally going customer-to-customer with a biro, asking if they wouldn't mind writing down their email address.

No more lip service. No more inaction. Fewer clip boards.

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