GDPR six months on: Are businesses finally taking data protection seriously?

New General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into effect six months ago, but does that mean businesses are taking it seriously?

It would appear not. We recently conducted a study of over 1,000 office workers to find out if GDPR was being respected by employees and employers alike. We were shocked to find that almost 90% said they were more likely to be given a ticking off for failing to empty or load the office dishwasher, than slacking on data regulations.

What will concern businesses that are at risk from huge GDPR-related fines most is that over half of office workers across the UK said they had seen personal data they shouldn't have at in the office. While over a third openly admitted leaving confidential files in places they shouldn't. On top of that, just under half of those surveyed said they had sent a private email to the wrong person and over 60% said they had received an email not intended for them.

Despite the aforementioned data lapses, only 14% of workers had been challenged about careless handling of confidential data, leading us to believe that businesses aren't doing enough to take GDPR seriously. On that note, we've decided to put some simple tips together to safeguard data at work.

1. Conduct a data flow exercise to understand what data you currently hold, where has it come from, where is it stored, why you've got it, who has access to it and is it shared to any other party.

2. If you don't need personal data, or are holding more information than you need to about individuals, securely destroy any printed documents by shredding.

3. Ensure your business has a robust policy to deal with unneeded records, such as a compulsory requirement to delete expired digital documents.

4. GDPR gives individuals more rights than the current Data Protection Act (DPA) to access their personal data from a company. Companies must respond within one month to requests.

5. Inaccuracy in personal information is one of the subjects covered by the GDPR, so if you know a record is inaccurate, either delete it or securely shred it to minimise the risk of further inaccuracies, mistakes or negative consequences for the person it relates to.