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# DISRUPTORS MAY HAVE GDPR HEAD START, LAWYERS SAY

**TOM WEBB | 3 JULY 2018**

Companies that specialise in innovative disruption could be in a better position to respond to GDPR challenges than larger established players, two lawyers have said. *Tom Webb in Cambridge*

Slaughter and May partner Rob Sumroy on 3 July said he and panellist Henry Bennett, head of doctor-on-demand service Babylon, believed that “those who are investing in the power of data to build businesses and to disrupt sectors actually have some clear benefits, or advantages”.

Sumroy noted the relative ease for such companies to implement GDPR-compliant processes at early stages, compared to difficulties faced by companies that have been operating for longer; and their presence often being in sectors where they must build trust with customers – “so the whole ethos and principle behind their business is consistent with the principles of the GDPR”.

Bennett noted that Babylon has existed for only four years, and knows its data generally comes from its end users. He said this simplified the process of data mapping and establishing how long the company had held its data.

He also said the company is used to working in “sprints”, with short periods between building and implementing technical changes. “That mindset really helps with GDPR – especially when making tech changes, because things which may take many many months in a big corporate could literally be implemented within a few weeks.”

Sumroy had earlier laid out some of the challenges that disruptive companies face in implementing GDPR principles – such as complications caused by data subject rights. But he later said the legislation is “not a barrier, and actually in a way can be a level playing field if you approach it from a positive perspective.”

Panel chair Colin Bennett, a professor at the University of Victoria, noted that the conventional wisdom is that innovators are a threat to privacy. “The image of the young guy in his garage creating the new Google software etc really doesn’t care about regulation ... are you saying that conventional wisdom has now changed? Was it never right?”

Sumroy answered that he didn’t believe that idea is now correct. “I think most of these organisations, to be successful, need funding, for a start. Most sophisticated investors will look for a good bet, which will include compliance.”

Bennett added that there are startups – “somebody in their garage with their dog and a computer” – who may not have data privacy at the forefront of their minds, but others seeking funding “can’t ignore it” as their compliance will be tested.

The conference concluded on 4 July.