



iOS Data Deletion

A case study by Kate Muir



Inspiration

This case study is inspired by Jared M. Spool's ["The \\$300 Million Button,"](#) which proves the importance of precise language and how changing just one word can have a significant impact on business metrics.

At Cerebral, the stakes were even higher because unclear language in an iOS flow triggered regulatory risk, legal concerns, and user confusion.

The lesson: **words in UX are not decoration. They drive real outcomes for businesses and people.**

Background

At the time, roughly **6% of support requests** were coming from iPhone users attempting to cancel their subscription via their mobile app.

They were clicking a button labeled “Request account deletion,” expecting a cancellation flow.

Sessions and Account Updates

Receive email reminders for your Cerebral appointments and updates regarding your account and payment methods.

SMS Notifications

Receive important text reminders and updates about your treatment plan and services.

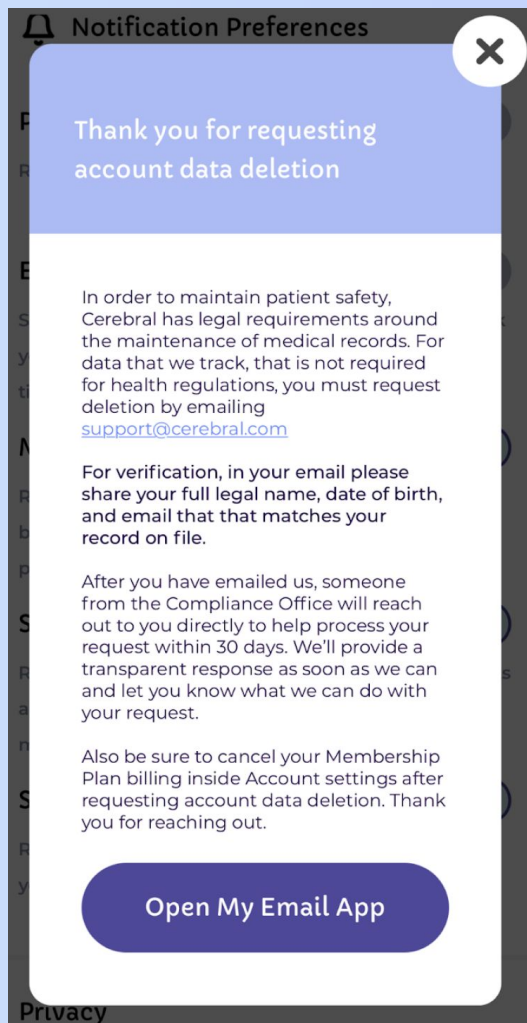
Privacy

[Request account deletion](#)

The CTA in question

Background

Instead, they were met with a pop-up filled with legal jargon about deleting their data, not their subscription.



Background

This misalignment created two significant problems.

1. **For users:** frustration, confusion, and additional steps to cancel their subscriptions.
2. **For our support team:** repeated efforts redirecting users to the “real” cancellation flow.

Background

When I dug deeper, I discovered that this experience was not a “broken” cancellation flow that needed to be removed. It was actually an Apple-mandated iOS requirement: **any app offering account creation must also provide a way to request account AND data deletion in-app.**

Account deletion within apps required starting January 31

October 6, 2021

The updates to App Store Review Guideline 5.1.1 last June provided users with greater control over their personal data, stating that all apps that allow for account creation must also allow users to initiate deletion of their account from within the app. This requirement applies to all app submissions starting January 31, 2022. We encourage you to review any laws that may require you to maintain certain types of data, and to make sure your app clearly explains what data your app collects, how it collects that data, all uses of that data, your data retention/deletion policies, and more as described in the guideline. Examples of this type of data include electronic health records, and sales and warranty records. Please also confirm that the app privacy information on your product page is accurate.

[View the guideline >](#)

This created complications for Cerebral, which, as a healthcare company, has to abide by HIPAA requirements to maintain some customer data for their records. **As such, not all customer data could be legally deleted.**

Roles and collaboration

My roles

Content
Designer and
Strategist

Collaborators

PM (Retention), Sr.
Director of Client
Support, Engineers,
Chief of
Compliance, Legal
team

Timeline

~1.5 weeks from
discovery to
launch

Results

93.3%
decrease in
support
emails
(6% -> 0.4%)

For this initiative, I owned the **content strategy and UX design for the updated flow**, with the goal of ensuring compliance, clarity, and usability.

Defining the challenge

Three key issues emerged:

1. The CTA misled users into thinking they were cancelling their subscriptions, not requesting data deletion.
2. The iOS deletion flow required users to cancel first, but the UX did not reflect that dependency.
3. HIPAA restrictions required nuanced language specifying that we could delete some data, but not medical records.

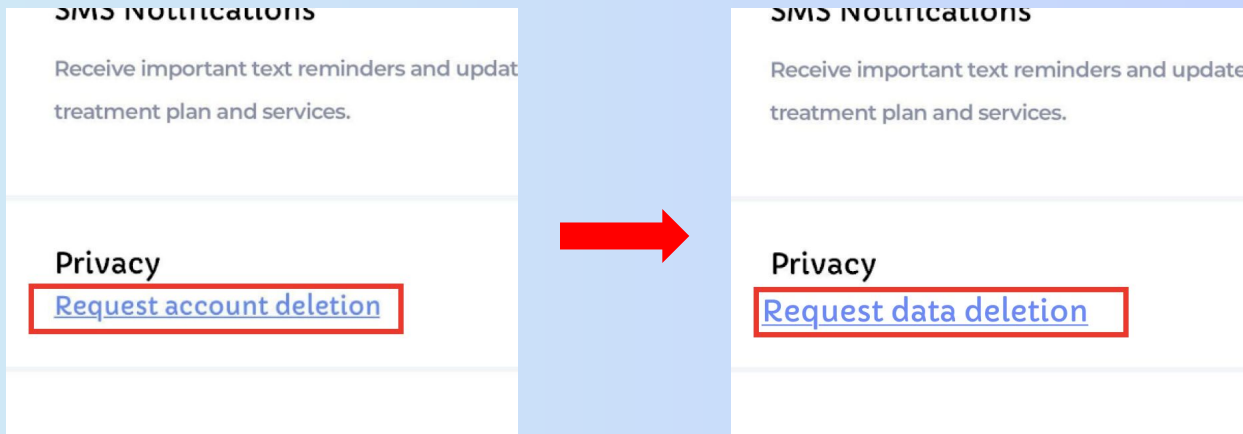
This meant the challenge was more than just “fixing a broken button.” **It needed a content strategy that balanced user clarity, compliance, and abided by Apple’s policy as much as we legally could.**



Solution - step 1

Together with compliance, support, and PM, I led a structured response.

First, I aimed to clarify the intent in the CTA. I changed the label from **“Request account deletion”** to **“Request data deletion.”** This distinguished it from subscription cancellation and aligned with Apple’s requirement.



Solution - step 2

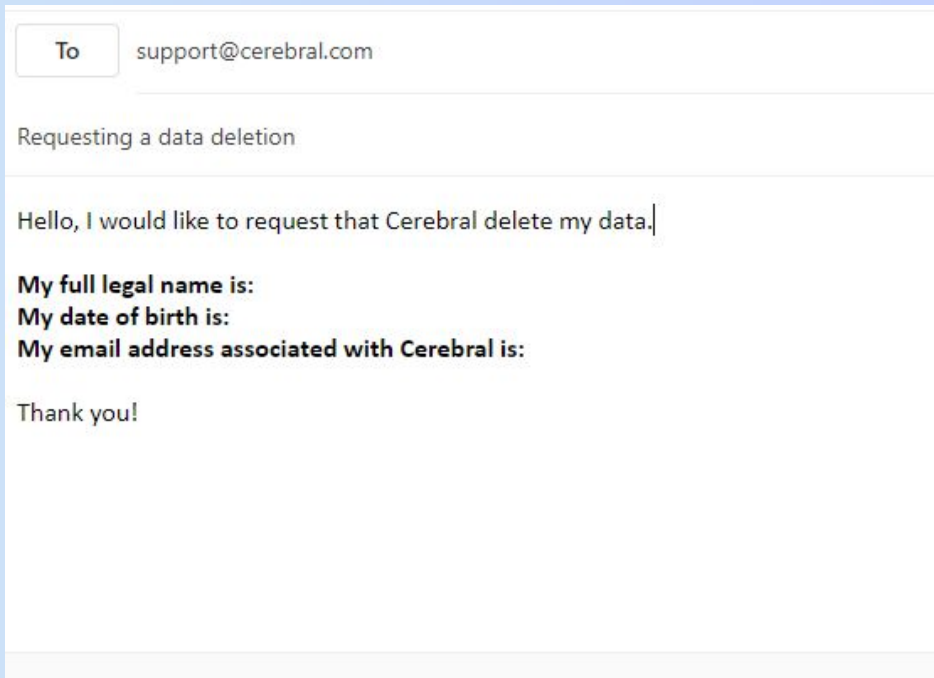
Next, I mapped flows for 3 identified user states. I defined distinct paths for:

1. **Active clients**
 - a. These users must cancel first, then request data deletion.
2. **Cancellation-in-progress clients**
 - a. These users may request data deletion, but with extended timelines.
3. **Cancelled clients**
 - a. These users are eligible for data deletion within 30 days.

Solution - step 3

Finally, I created a structured email template launched from the app.

This ensured users provided all required information without the back-and-forth with customer support.



The image shows a screenshot of an email template. At the top, there is a 'To' field with the email address 'support@cerebral.com'. Below this, the subject line reads 'Requesting a data deletion'. The main body of the email starts with 'Hello, I would like to request that Cerebral delete my data.' followed by a cursor. Below this, there are three bolded labels: 'My full legal name is:', 'My date of birth is:', and 'My email address associated with Cerebral is:'. At the bottom, it says 'Thank you!'.

To support@cerebral.com

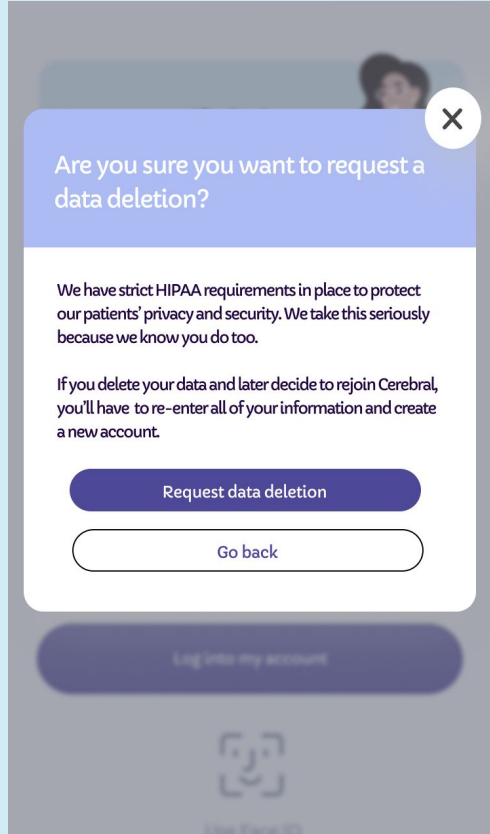
Requesting a data deletion

Hello, I would like to request that Cerebral delete my data.

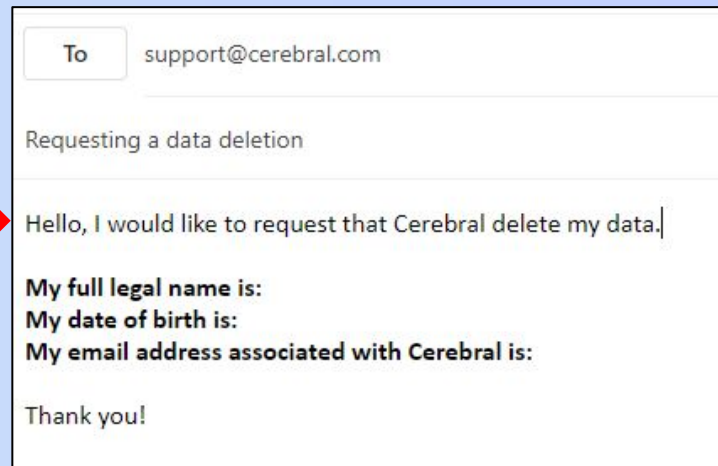
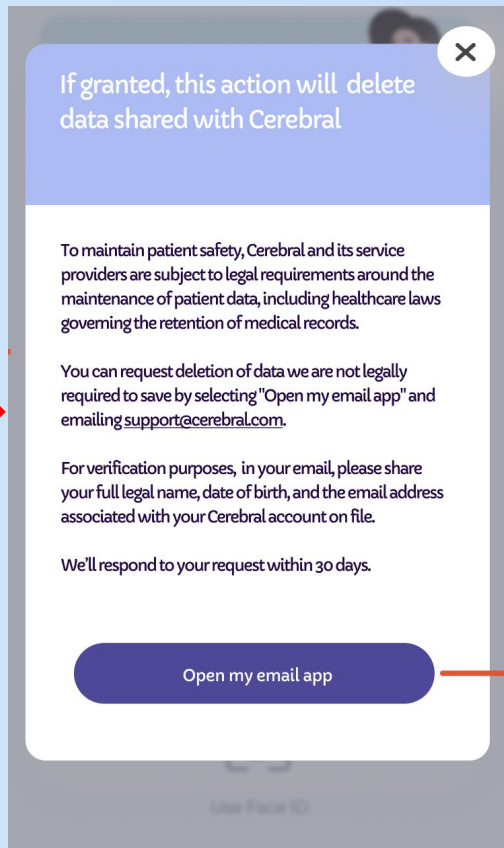
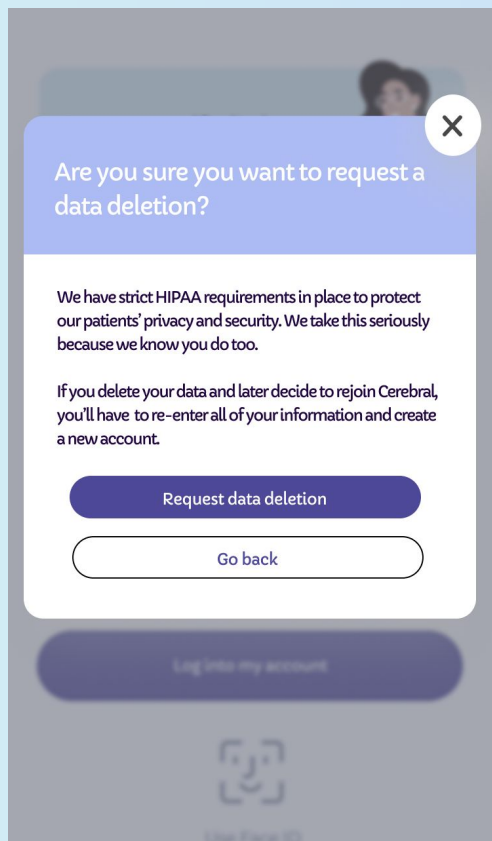
My full legal name is:
My date of birth is:
My email address associated with Cerebral is:

Thank you!

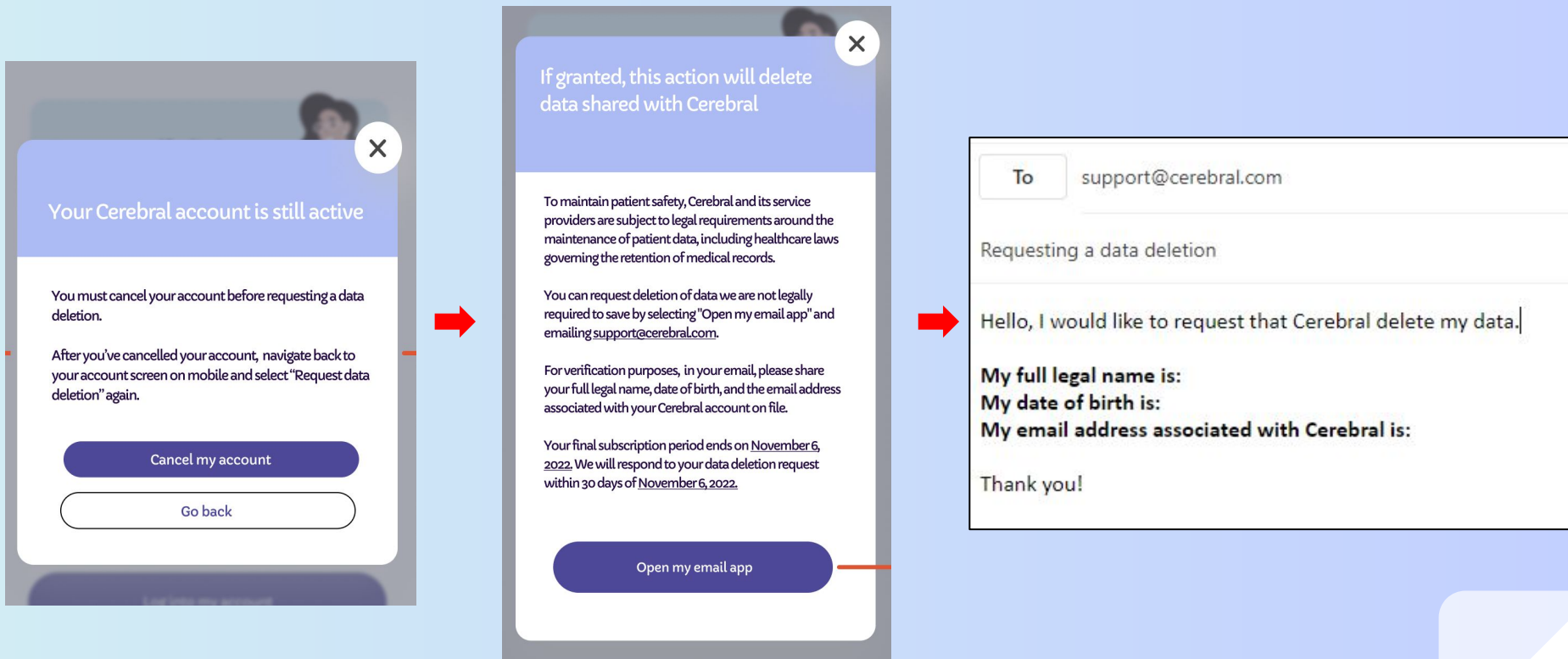
User states - Active subscription



User states - Cancellation complete

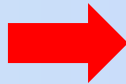


User states - Cancellation in progress



Execution and outcomes

- Partnered with legal to **establish language that clearly distinguished account cancellation from data deletion, while ensuring users were aware of HIPAA requirements.**
- Collaborated with PM to design the three user flows.
- Coordinated with support leadership to finalize the new templated email handoff.



- Support emails related to this issue dropped from **6% to 0.4%, an astounding 93.3% reduction!**
- No new records of confusion among iOS users post-launch.
- Compliance risk was mitigated by aligning Apple's requirements with HIPAA obligations.

Reflections

This project reinforced two lessons:

- **Regulatory constraints are content problems.**
 - Language must bridge what the law requires, what the platform demands, and what users understand.
- **Small wording changes scale.**
 - Adjusting a single CTA led to clearer flows, reduced support burden, and stronger compliance alignment.