

How efficient is your document review?

5 key questions to consider

With the exponential increase in electronically stored information (ESI) – e-mail, database and application data and social media – the effective use of advanced review technologies can significantly reduce the burden, cost and inefficiencies of document review. Numerous features, including advanced search and analytical capabilities, now enable legal teams to quickly winnow down document populations, organize relevant material and code on the fly.

As many corporations and firms have learned, web-based review platforms generally offer the greatest promises for efficiency gains. The benefits of anytime, anywhere access, the elimination of CapEx, reduction of OpEx and commensurate resources required to support, maintain and update the review platform (and its users) are immense.

Do you have the basics covered?

While there are many factors that go into evaluating the review platform that will best meet your needs, it's essential that you have the basics covered. At a minimum, every review platform should deliver the following:

- Basic searching among folders, documents and attachments
- Reports on progress by reviewer, custodian and every relevant field
- Quick and simple coding
- Customization to meet the requirements of each matter
- Scalability with the volume of documents and reviewers
- 99 % (or higher) uptime
- Robust security protocols at the user, application and physical datacenter levels

Additional criteria to consider

With increasing volumes of ESI, minimum platform requirements may no longer be sufficient in ensuring an efficient and cost-effective review.

Below are key questions to consider.

1. Does your review tool contain advanced search capabilities?

It's no secret that the most expensive part of e-discovery is the time attorneys spend reviewing large volumes of ESI. Search tools can significantly cut down the volume of documents and organize results into a logical workflow to accelerate review. Full-text search lets reviewers locate documents based on document content, finding keywords and phrases across a document collection or instances of keywords appearing in close proximity to each other in the text of a document.

Advanced review platforms offer clustering, which automatically groups like documents together based on relationships in the text and concepts they contain. Concept search enables reviewers to identify potentially important key terms and phrases based on their correlation to a starting term or set of terms. Search analytics can also help you dig deeper into search results by providing methods for more intelligent and targeted searching.

Some review platforms, leveraging automated document classification technology, also present documents that are prioritized and grouped together by how likely they are to be relevant, enabling attorneys to get to the important documents faster and de-prioritize, or set aside altogether, those least likely to be relevant.

2. Can you complete all review tasks in one efficient workflow?

A number of review platforms have features that accelerate review like bulk tagging (i.e., categorizing all e-mails in an e-mail thread), but are ineffective when it comes time for production. They might lack redaction or bates-labeling capabilities, requiring the expenditure of additional time transferring data between systems.

More advanced review platforms not only have bulk tagging and redaction capabilities (including the ability to redact native files such as Excel), but also offer organizational tools, real-time reporting,

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review management capabilities and the ability to produce documents directly from the platform, all in a single workflow. Advanced workflow capabilities can have a great impact on your team's total workflow efficiency. Consider the entire process from beginning to end. You should be able to utilize these tools to establish a workflow process that automates the distribution of documents (and more importantly, information) as the project progresses.

3. Are you leveraging advanced analytical tools to streamline your review?

Advanced platforms will offer a range of analytical tools that can be used based on the specific needs of the review team. Corpus analysis features, for example, provide a breakdown of documents in the collection by type, so users can quickly visualize the makeup of a set of documents and make informed decisions on how to strategically approach the review.

E-mail analytics enable users to assess the who, what and when of e-mail communications to quickly identify key individuals, communication patterns and timelines. Other advanced analytical tools include e-mail threading, near duplicate identification (which allows reviewers to use bulk coding to ensure quick and consistent coding among similar documents) and document analytics, which shows all prior activity on a document related to reviews, productions, near-duplicates, e-mail threads, privilege status and other information that is useful when working with documents involved in several different matters.

4. If questioned by the court, is your review process and technology defensible?

No matter what review tool you use, it's imperative that you are able to produce a detailed audit trail of all review activities performed – and when – by each user who has access to the system. Access to customized document history reports and logs should be quickly and easily generated by your technology provider. Audit logs should

document all actions such as initial coding and coding changes, document views and document downloads and prints for the entire history of the organization across all matters.

If requested by the courts, this level of detail will be required to prove the defensibility of your document review process.

5. How effective and responsive is your client services team?

Imagine that you are having trouble logging in at 2 a.m. to meet a pending deadline. Or you need to execute a complex search to find key documents quickly, without a time-consuming "fishing expedition." Who do you call? How quick is the response? How effective is the team in resolving your issues?

Many review technologies are supported by 24x7 client services support to immediately address any issue, whether technical in nature or related to optimizing specific features. The last thing you need when approaching a pending deadline is to experience frustratingly long wait times to get assistance with your question, or worse yet, connecting with a call center representative that is likely several degrees away from the person who can best assist you.

The people who support you and your review team play an important role in helping you get your job done right and on time. Legal teams often do not realize the importance of the responsiveness, quality and experience of their client support team until they need it most. Focusing only on the technology or functionality of the platform as a sole criteria can present critical problems down the road.

Conclusion

Choosing the right review platform is critical to maximizing your review team's workflow efficiencies and results in a more defensible and streamlined review process. Though requirements for each matter are unique, in all cases, proper workflow tools help guide the review and can assist in keeping it on an efficient course.

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