

Product Development for an electronic discovery solution

Introduction

Provisioning for corporate litigation in the U.S. and global markets has become a necessary evil of doing business. Many public companies set aside millions of dollars annually to protect and defend themselves against possible lawsuits. In this environment, the U.S. federal and state legal agencies stipulate that companies store all possible information—including internal and external communication, as electronic data. Today, data proliferation has reached tera- and petabytes, and companies are increasingly facing higher costs to maintain data that can be easily indexed, searched, and provided to necessary authorities.

Our client, a Hawaii-based technology software and solutions company, provides legal hold and electronic discovery solutions to various businesses including law firms, consulting organizations and legal process outsourcing companies. This requires managing and maintaining large volumes of electronic evidence legally, accurately and cost-effectively.

The client's core business software solution was built using a packaged enterprise content management platform that turned out to be totally inappropriate to the solution, causing performance problems and delivery delays.

Client Requirements

The client was using an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) package-ware solution to address the full spectrum of e-discovery challenges that their prospect clients typically faced. At the trial stages, the product failed in many aspects—loading millions of pages of data, searching for contextual information and speed of use.

As a partner in the development process, we identified that the product required a complete overhaul to address—at the minimum, the following:

- Handling large volumes of data
- Managing and monitoring complex document collections
- Preserving terabytes of data for litigation purposes

A more sophisticated approach to data storage, management and backup and a scalable solution was required to meet the above-mentioned challenges.

Our Solution

The challenge was to develop a solution that not only met the immediate requirements but also accommodated the growing demands of e-discovery. We premised our approach on three important principles:

- All corporations are unique.
- Corporations should be able to manage the bottom-line and accurately predict their e-discovery costs.
- Corporations want flexibility and scalability in their e-discovery solution.

The BPA technology lead began the engagement by creating a product roadmap that removed its dependency on the current package-ware ECM. We identified the following requirements that the e-discovery product would need to fulfill:

- Preserve documents in a secure repository.
- De-duplicate and filter documents after upload.
- Prevent loss or damage of documents.
- Manage multiple matters, custodians, collections and legal holds across the enterprise.
- Allow efficient release of documents.
- Enable manual and automated document review.
- Create a platform for end-clients to plug-in different search and index tools as allowed by law to automate processes.

The BPA team then architected a best-of-breed solution framework, where we leveraged industry-strength enterprise and open-source solutions to build the e-discovery product.

- Oracle as the backend database
- DT search as the search engine
- Flat file system
- Alfresco content management framework

This allowed the software to be extremely agile, scalable, and a tool that could effectively upload, store, process and manage terabytes of data.

Today, the client product is sold both as a hosted solution, as well as an at-site implementation, so the end customers can provision it based on their compliancy restrictions.

Using a hybrid onsite and offshore development model, BPA has delivered a robust e-discovery product to the client, where we helped them:

- Leverage open-source technologies
- Build an agile and scalable product
- Shortened time-to-market by delivering the end solution in seven months
- Implemented trial versions at many end-customer sites
- Continually improve the product features based on customer feedback

Benefits

The new product delivered the following advantages:

Unified Platform

We delivered a unified legal hold and document review solution that stores documents in a central in-house repository. It allows users to manage e-discovery and monitor compliance cost-effectively.

Accommodates new requirements and initiatives

The product can now support new requirements and initiatives. For example, it enables users to take advantage of Safe Harbor provisions in the new federal e-discovery rules for companies that make good faith efforts to comply.

Time-effective

Now, counsel can make a far earlier assessment of case risk, decide on litigation strategy much more quickly, and avoid court sanctions and negative publicity.

High ROI

Corporations can leverage their existing technology and enjoy a high return on investment.

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