Tech-driven Internal Data Processes Deliver Significant eDiscovery Time and Cost Savings

For many organizations, the prospect of collecting and submitting data for pending litigation can prove daunting. Rapidly expanding caches of unstructured data, combined with remote work and increasing regulatory controls make information governance both critical and challenging. But enhancing internal data processes with the right technology brings eDiscovery time and cost savings.

Consider the scenario of an organization scrambling to respond to a data request without an understanding of what sensitive data exists and where to find it. They may incur penalties by missing key deadlines or skipping critical data. On the other hand, a clear picture of the data involved enables the legal team to make informed strategic decisions early on.

Structured and Unstructured Data

To gain control of internal data, data stewards first need to understand the difference between structured and unstructured data. Structured data involves data that lives in databases or structured tables. More simply, it includes data that one can gather by running a report. For example, the help desk might run a report to pull data about open support tickets.

For litigation, however, the bulk of data for eDiscovery involves unstructured data. This includes documents that teams store in file repositories such as SharePoint or OneDrive. Additionally, users and teams store thousands of emails, instant messages, and other data on multiple devices and in the cloud.

Critical Internal Data Processes that Streamline Litigation

Once the organization receives an eDiscovery request, they must first identify all relevant information and then collect it for processing. If they cast too wide a net, attorneys and eDiscovery vendors will spend valuable time and resources culling out the irrelevant and redundant data. This can prove costly and affect the legal process.

For instance, most legal departments do not have a full understanding of the data the organization holds and where it lives. They need to gain this understanding long before a data request arrives. A key step involves taking an inventory of data in the system, developing a map of the types of data, where they are stored and who owns them.

Then, in accordance with applicable regulations, the organization should create retention/destruction policies and encryption policies by data type. Properly indexed and classified data means that the legal department can quickly find necessary information. And these policies help ensure both the security and compliance of the data collected.

Early Data Assessments Deliver eDiscovery Time and Cost Savings

When companies understand the state of their data, they know where the data lives, the quality of the data, who owns it and how to access it. This allows them to mount an agile response to data requests, and it informs early case assessment. With the right data on hand, they can estimate the impact and the cost of full litigation and determine strategy appropriately.

Additionally, eDiscovery typically represents the most expensive and time-consuming part of litigation. But if the organization can easily eliminate data not applicable to the case, they significantly reduce the amount of information to process enhancing eDiscovery time and cost savings.

Data Management Challenges

While proper data management does streamline eDiscovery and deliver both time and cost savings, the evolving data landscape presents difficulties. For instance, data types continually change, making it difficult to stay current with policies. And most organizations use multiple methods of collaborating, from Microsoft Teams to Slack and more.

At the same time, the prevalence of remote and hybrid workgroups makes it challenging to inventory and secure data. Employees may create and store data on a variety of devices, from PCs and laptops to mobile devices.

Harness Technology and Involve Data Governance Experts

Designing and implementing a comprehensive data governance strategy delivers essential benefits for eDiscovery, compliance, and other business processes. But building the necessary culture and processes is a complex task. Fortunately, technology can help.

For example, determining who owns relevant data can be difficult. But tools such as Microsoft Purview ease the process of indexing and organizing unstructured data. This enables powerful search capabilities. Thus, instead of hunting for experts who in turn look for data, the legal team can search for the data and then use metadata to determine the data custodians.

Enlist the help of data governance experts to help you organize your data and take a proactive approach to eDiscovery. The consultants at Messaging Architects will help you determine your next steps and deploy the data management and eDiscovery technology that will move you toward your goal.