Data explosion prompts agencies to look at advanced e-discovery platforms

How advances in cloud-based e-discovery are helping agencies collaborate and deliver improved services more effectively.

By StateScoop Staff

One of the priorities within the President's Management Agenda focuses on how to manage the business of government—and a big focus within that priority is data management. But capitalizing on that data has grown increasingly complicated as networks become more decentralized and data gets more dispersed.

Beyond the challenges of managing and storing data, leaders are also being asked to make agency data more accessible and actionable to internal users as well as the public. Organizational siloes and legacy infrastructure compound those challenges by hampering data management, inhibiting a modern government and providing less transparency to citizens.

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So as government agencies gather and generate more data, program leaders understand they need more effective ways to manage and analyze massive datasets. By tapping into the full potential of their data

and the latest advances in electronic discovery, they can put their data to more innovative use. That, in turn, can help agency leaders improve employee productivity and service delivery for all kinds of government work, from litigation and investigations to congressional inquiries and public Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

Minimizing the mountain of data

One of the first hurdles to overcome when working to manage data better is determining the best way to consolidate it into searchable content, according to Cowan —for example, converting the different document formats collected across various systems, including video conferencing and messaging tools that have become the standard across public and private like—like Zoom, Slack or Teams. That's become increasingly important as the range of digital file types keeps growing.

Agencies are not only faced with managing the sheer volume of data they have, but the size of data collected from the private sector for litigation, investigations or regulations is exploding in numbers. Government organizations with large systems must keep track of where data is stored and have access to retrieve it.

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But they also need more effective ways to process and manage information requests. Depending on the nature of the requests, it can take days or weeks to search large databases and locate the correct information requested by investigators.

More than ever, agencies need nimble capabilities to collect, view, search, and redact new and legacy file types. FOIA, litigation or investigation inquiries mean reviewing hundreds or thousands of digital files (including audio, video and messaging files) critical for understanding a single case. And often, agencies may not have the necessary technical resources.

Modern e-discovery solutions, with transparent AI assistance, allow for automated redaction processes, automated ingestion and the ability to locate relevant documents quickly and efficiently. But beyond the technology itself, it's incumbent on agency leaders and their legal staff to understand and transition to these newer tools to streamline and enhance the review and delivery process.

Increasing inter and intra-agency collaboration

The shift to remote-based work elevated the need for collaborative and flexible tools for managing e-discovery and document management. Having solutions that work seamlessly across agencies while maintaining security and control over data has taken on new importance for agencies.

The development of more advanced database management platforms enables agencies to improve and streamline workflows by allowing documents to be easily and securely shared between departments, agencies or individuals to collaborate in real time.

Instead of working out a case strategy over conference calls and email chains, leaders can discuss it together, in real time, alongside the documents they need to

Additionally, having AI-enabled search capabilities that can automate the analysis and isolation of all types of digital documents is critical. According to a blog post by Apoorv Agarwal, VP of artificial intelligence at Relativity and former CEO and founder of Text IQ, "AI systems save enterprises a significant amount of time and money but, more importantly, they cut down on risk. The human mind gets tired and cannot achieve high accuracy on voluminous, repetitive tasks."

Agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency— which responds to more than 10,000 FOIA requests per year—leveraged Relativity's e-discovery platform to "lower costs, reduce risks and speed up their processes."

Becoming better stewards of data

Five years ago, email was the standard everybody wanted to process in e-discovery. Now, communicating with ephemeral messaging tools, such as SMS messages, is the norm, and the ability to manage those in litigation, investigations, or FOIA is critical. Leaders used to work out of excel spreadsheets—but leaders now must have better ways to validate, audit and verify the legitimacy of their data.

The nature of the data they're working with has changed—and now includes video surveillance, social media, unstructured data and more. This requires a more robust AI/ML-assisted platform to manage the workflow of disparate data in different formats for easier ingestion and searchability.

"Half the game of data management is knowing what to look for," says Cowan. He explains how Relativity tackled modern data by creating a standard, readable format and template for short messages—chats, text messages—allowing leaders to sift through and isolate

information to find relevant, actionable data. Cowan also details the ability to refine searches at specific levels of data by slicing, which allows users to tailor content to their needs. He highlights additional capabilities within its FedRAMP-approved AI platform to automate personally identifiable or privileged information. And by leveraging a tool that is already built on Azure Government—alongside government-managed data—users can quickly cull through data, securely, with minimal upload and export time.

Empowering teams to seamlessly pull information from any domain and automatically cull down duplicate or irrelevant documents allows agency leaders and their legal staff to produce better results more efficiently, he says. Given the time that goes into investigations, the cost and the increase of digital data, a modern cloud-based e-discovery tool represents an important solution to simplify and streamline that workflow.

Learn more about how Relativity can help your agency modernize its e-discovery work

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make their case. They can make tactical decisions online using secure messaging, saving valuable in-person meetings for more important priorities.

Supporting the mission with modern solutions

Today's cloud-based e-discovery and data management tools, like those available from Relativity, can also deliver greater agile development, pushing system features and updates out to users.

"Cloud gives [IT leaders] the ability to procure and have access to an infinite resource pool that can scale as they need it. And that's what you need to supply high-end search technologies," says Relativity Senior Account Executive Gray Wallington. "Technology-assisted review, artificial intelligence, advanced searching, clustering, and concept

searching—are all driven by massive banks of advanced computing technology (e.g., GPUs) And the more of that you have access to, the more powerful we can make it. So, we've seen [increased cloud] adoption over the past few years because of that, and the future is bright with cloud. We can develop and deploy in cloud environments much more flexibility and security than we ever would have been able to in on-prem deployments," says Wallington.

Advanced, cloud-based solutions, like those offered by Relativity, are specifically designed to help simplify the portfolio of e-discovery tools and significantly enhance the speed and ability for legal teams to search, share and collaborate around critical information on a single platform.