

# Find facts fast: getting the legal team up to speed

## IndustryVIEW

The digital revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even printing, according to American engineer Douglas Engelbart. Whether he overstated his argument or not is debatable but it's certainly the case that the speed of technological change is dictating how we do business in the 21st century.

It's a revolution which has left its imprint everywhere, especially on the corporate world where investigations are now an unfortunate part of business life. And, when it comes to legal disputes, most of the information a firm will need to look at in terms of evidence is going to be stored on some sort of electronic device.

It might be in an email account, it might be on a smartphone, it might be on a tablet – wherever it is, because the volume of information held on all these devices

just keeps on growing, it would not be unusual for a company responding to a big investigation to have millions of documents to go through.

The legal world has never been noted for its speed of change but, as better technologies become available, meeting today's e-discovery challenges requires legal teams to explore new options. Traditionally, during a dispute or investigation, lawyers would go through tens or hundreds of thousands of pages, manually searching for evidence, which is then provided to the other party.

While the central role of lawyers has not changed, this part of their work can now be done with a mix of contract lawyers and advanced analytical technology.

"This combination of review expertise and sophisticated computer algorithms means we can provide the same high level of

expert service but more efficiently," explains Craig Earnshaw (left), senior managing director in FTI Consulting's Technology segment. "The collection, preservation and review of these electronic documents is the key part of the process and, as with any evolution, you need to ensure that you maintain quality."

Apart from providing documents to the other party, at the heart of every

e-discovery project is the search for key documents which contain the facts on which the outcome of a dispute or investigation might hinge. These key documents not only drive review strategies but, more importantly, case strategies: find the facts late and a case suffers; find them early and a company will be on the front foot.

"We call it Find Facts Fast," explains Earnshaw. "With Ringtail®, our

e-discovery software, you can dive into one or two million documents and, within a very short time, identify the core documents containing the key information, and are relevant to the case in hand, leaving the lawyers to focus on high-value strategic work in the matter."

Just as data mining and artificial intelligence are changing other areas, the technology analyses the documents, visually grouping and summarising content by people, topics and time. This enables swift understanding of large volumes of information, zeroing in on documents with the critical content.

"Essentially, we are using the technology to understand the data rapidly," concludes Earnshaw. "If you put the facts at the beginning of the process, you can develop a stronger strategy and highlight any weak areas there may be in your case."

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