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How Public Bodies in Ireland Can Respond More Effectively to the Explosive Growth of eDiscovery and FOIA Requests

They're calling it the "worst year on record"

In March, The Irish Times reported that public bodies and government departments in Ireland show an "unacceptably high level of failure" to respond in time to the growing number of requests for information made since the new Freedom of Information Act was introduced in 2014.

Close to 34,000 requests were made in 2017, an increase of 67% since 2014, according to an annual report by Information Commissioner Peter Tyndall.

Tyndall said the struggles in meeting the public's requests "seem to me to be a strong indicator that public authorities are not devoting adequate resources to processing requests."

His statement is not too surprising, really, when you consider most public bodies and government departments still lack basic functions such as the ability to search audio and video files without first transcribing them into searchable text. That means the need to locate and extract Information from sources such as videotaped council meetings significantly delays responses to requests as well as adds additional expense.

Additionally, the widespread use of email, text, instant messaging, and social media creates oceans of unstructured data to sort and sift through. Simply collecting these files often requires third-party assistance, which also adds additional time and expense along with unnecessary security risks.

The Solution is Affordable and Readily Available

The underlying cause of Ireland's abysmal eDiscovery and FOIA response rates is already being addressed, and proven solutions are at work now in law firms, courtrooms, and city, state and federal governments across the UK, the US, and the world.

ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery, an easy-to-use, affordable software solution, allows public institutions to manage, access, review, and produce information quickly, thoroughly, and accurately. Pubic bodies in Ireland are already using it to collect and process data that is:

- Stored within varying types of non-text-based file formats,
- Often scattered across multiple locations and geographies, and
- Subject to various data protection and privacy laws such as the GDPR.

Informa uses ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery to manage the explosion of data in today's hyper-connected, always-on world.

Informa, an information management firm based in Ireland, helps public bodies in Ireland and across the UK meet today's information management challenges and fulfil eDiscovery and FOIA requests timely and efficiently using ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery.

"We've had a lot of success dealing with government clients such as the Department of Health using the original ZyLAB information access platform for 10 to 12 years," Tom Gilsenan, Owner & Director of Informa, said. "Now we've moved them on to ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery to help them meet a mix of eDiscovery, FOIA, and knowledge management challenges."

Informa's Clients Say Goodbye to Formidable Redaction Challenges

"Probably the biggest thing we hear about are challenges in managing functions such as redaction while still getting through response requirements quickly and thoroughly," Gilsenan said.

With ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery, public authorities easily minimize the risks of inadvertently disclosing privileged information by establishing rules for redaction and applying them to all data sets at the same time. For example, you can replace a name with a descriptor of your choosing (such as "Subject 1") in millions of pages of documents in about 15 seconds.

Informa's clients love these features about ZyLAB-ONE's powerful redaction functions:

- The ability to perform entity extractions for auto-redaction and apply the rule across all data sets
- The ability to easily review redactions, the reasons for each, and the automatically generated accompanying citations.
- The ability to automatically generate a report explaining which documents are redacted and why, which is often mandatory when responding to FOIA requests.

Easy to Use and Organize

Many public bodies and government departments want to respond to requests more efficiently but are simply overwhelmed and undermanned.

It's like adding a hyper-organized super-employee to the personnel list when Informa team members set up the ZYLAB-ONE platform for their public clients. Clients are catered to throughout the entire customization process, including training with documentation.

Informa's specialists use their wealth of experience to quickly get clients up and running by:

- Customizing the software's tags according to client specifications,
- Establishing workflows and review processes, and
- Determining procedures for producing responsive information.

Searching for information relevant to a request is fast and easy when done through a friendly interface where data is organized and accessible by individual facets such as file type, origination source, file owner, exemption potential, email domain, subject matter … the list goes on.

Unprecedented Search Power and Filtering Capabilities

Informa's clients experience 15-20% faster review times with ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery than with manual review and 10-20% more accurate search results.

That's because search results made by users poorly armed with only Boolean search abilities are unreliable. The quality of results depends largely on the user's search skills and their knowledge of the specific subject matter or case.

But machine learning gets smarter and more accurate as it receives feedback from the user, allowing even those without savvy search skills to discover more relevant documents. Employees at public institutions that partner with Informa get superior search results without ever needing to develop special skills or an intimate knowledge of the matter at hand.

And, at long last, public agencies can search audio and video recordings in their native formats. This saves money and time by narrowing targets significantly so you transcribe only the relevant portions of the recording in response to the request.

A Reliable and Defensible Approach to Technology Assisted Review

Informa's clients benefit significantly by developing a repeatable process to manage, access, review and produce information in response to FOIA requests on an ongoing basis.

ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery's collection, auditing, logging and data management processes use eDiscovery technologies developed over decades under the stringent, high-quality standards required and accepted by Ireland, UK, and US federal courts.

A Single, End-to-End Information Management Solution

Starting with collection, Informa's clients keep all collection, processing, review, and production procedures under their own roof. A full audit trail tracking all actions determining privilege and exemptions offers a clear window into the efforts and decisions made to thoroughly respond to requests.

And the time and effort savings multiply into the future. Public agencies that create a searchable, online database of previous disclosures and offer it to the public online reduce the number of new requests they receive. Members of the public go to their websites first to see if the information they seek is already available. This greatly reduces the need for public bodies to individually respond to duplicate requests.

Perfect for Law firms, Enterprises and Public Bodies of All Sizes

The majority of Informa's clients in Ireland and UK start using ZYLAB ONE eDiscovery as a subscription service through a highly adaptable per-GB price structure.

Applying the technology to small sets of data, Informa's clients take time to get acquainted and comfortable with how the technology works before investing higher amounts of capital into the solution.

Start Toward a More Efficient Future

Informa's clients respond successfully and efficiently to hundreds of FOIA requests every year. Many find ZYLAB ONE eDiscovery's interface completely intuitive and jump right in to using it. Though Informa's specialists are always available to help, the company's philosophy is that any first time user should be confidently using ZyLAB ONE eDiscovery on their own within 30 minutes of training.

Imagine: 30 minutes to lay the foundation that equips public bodies with the resources they so desperately need to quickly and accurately meet the public's ever-increasing demands for information. By partnering with Informa to get "in the ZYLAB ONE eDiscovery," public bodies and government departments look forward to their next years as their best years.