

# Public Records Requests Technology: Your Personal Benefits Analysis

When we meet with government agency leaders, we love to show them a personalized analysis that provides a closer look at the benefits their agency gains by choosing the ZyLAB ONE platform to process their public records requests.

We use the agency's own numbers for factors like the number of requests received, employee salaries, and so on. So it shows in detail how their investment creates real savings of time and money for their agency.

It is such a fun exercise that I want to share the experience with our blog readers. Below is an exemplary analysis for an agency we'll call "Your Agency" (strictly for the sake of convenience).

Watch the savings build as we run through our Return on Investment exercise with Your Agency.

## **Costs of Manually Processing FOIA and Public Records Requests**

Our analysis assumes Your Agency processes 10 requests each month and pays Laura, the city clerk a salary of \$80,000 per year. Because Laura isn't assisted by modern technology tools, she spends the majority of her days, approximately 10 hours per each request, addressing records requests rather than her other city clerk duties.

## **Handling Requests Manually is Time-Consuming and Inefficient**

Laura spends a great deal of time manually searching for responsive records throughout Your Agency and alerting any other agencies affected by the request.

She locates a plethora of responsive emails, Word docs, PDFs, photos, voicemails, video, and other records, which she then must organize and review by hand to pull out duplicates and records that contain excluded and exempted information.

Next, she uses black markers, redaction tape or difficult to use software to manually redact private and confidential information from each record. Finally, she manages to get them all in a portable format and mails the disclosure.

***RESULT: No wonder that with 200 working days per year, it winds up costing Your Agency \$400 per workday just to deal with 10 requests a month.***

## Handling PRRs with ZyLAB ONE is Fast and Efficient

Laura's days are a completely different story when she's assisted by ZyLAB ONE. The platform helps her collect all types of data from across the agency, conduct effective searches, de-duplicates, and redacts responsive records in a fraction of the time.

For example, just one way ZyLAB ONE speeds and eases the process is with auto-classification of potentially sensitive information.

Now, Laura finalizes records requests in 75% less time. Using best practices with ZyLAB ONE results in at least a 50% reduction in processing time and sometimes as much as 90%.

***RESULT: For Your Agency, the total cost savings from eliminating manual processes add up to \$45,000 per year.***

Manual Effort Saving Benefit	Value	Explanation
Current Average Effort per PRR (hr)	10	How many hours of effort does it currently cost per PRR, start to finish
Cost of Manual Labor per Year (\$/yr)	\$ 80,000	Average labor cost per Year (\$ /yr)
Number of working days per year	200	Approximate number of working days / yr to come up with a cost per working day
Percentage Time Saving (%)	75%	Manual effort reduction through use of automation. Best practices say at least 50%, sometimes as much as 90%
<b>Total Cost Saving (\$/yr)</b>	<b>\$ (45,000)</b>	

## Reduction of Backlog

It takes a lot of time to manually process requests. Records are often scattered across Your Agency in impossible-to-search locations like an official's hard drive, smartphone, or private email account. Records may consist of voicemails, blueprints, social media posts, online chats, and body cam videos.

Using manual processes and tools, it is likely that about 95% of Your Agency's public records disclosures fail to meet the regulatory response deadline.

Again, the story is different with ZyLAB ONE. The potential for delays is reduced by 90% because sophisticated software drastically reduces the time it takes to gather, process, and disclose records.

## Reduction of Legal Risk

With so many varied locations to search, Laura may fail to locate all the records relevant to a request. And with so many records that must be manually reviewed, she may accidentally disclose confidential or protected information to the public.

At Your Agency, 10% of requests wind up in litigation due to faulty disclosure or some other issue. Imagine the soaring costs when you factor in \$10,000 in legal fees and another \$10,000 awards and settlement fees for each litigated matter. And in reality, the costs are often much higher.

Here again, ZyLAB ONE turns a tragedy into a success story. Your Agency can count on avoiding at least 75% of litigation matters when using the software to complete records disclosures from start to finish. ZyLAB ONE drastically reduces the risk of improper disclosures because reliable automation and machine learning processes find responsive records, automatically remove exempted records, and redact protected information. The accuracy and thoroughness with which it performs these activities could never be matched by Laura's manual efforts, no matter how long or hard she tried.

***TOTAL RESULT: By totaling the costs of reducing manual efforts and risk of litigation, Your Agency's total savings ring in at \$180,000 per year.***

Reduction of Legal Risk	Value	
Risk of Litigation	10%	What percentage of PRRs gets litigated due to faulty disclosure or someother issue
Cost of Litigation - Legal Fees	\$ 10,000	Estimation of legal fees
Average Awards & Settlement Fees	\$ 10,000	Estimation of cost of litigation (outcomes)
Percentage of Litigations avoided	75%	Percentage of litigation avoided because using software drastically reduces risk of improper disclosure response time and increases accuracy
<b>Total Cost Saving (\$/yr)</b>	<b>\$(180,000)</b>	

But there are other non-quantifiable benefits to be had, too.

## The non-quantifiable Benefits of Public Records Request Technology

With ZyLAB ONE assisting Laura, Your Agency enjoys a much-improved public perception. Journalists and other public requesters know Your Agency delivers thorough, reliable responses quickly. Your Agency has even been held up as the new gold standard for government agency public records disclosures.

And Laura? She is much more satisfied and able to perform all her city clerk duties while consistently processing requests in a timely fashion. She even has time left over to help co-workers with their workloads and learn new skills.

And of course, the ROI continues to accrue when ZyLAB ONE is used by Your Agency to enhance internal investigations, respond to subpoenas or litigation related discovery requests, and facilitate other document-intensive processes.

The benefits of using modern technology like ZyLAB ONE are clear. Especially with a SaaS model that reduces the costs of your initial investment, offers superior scalability and flexibility in handling varying numbers of incoming requests, and continues to evolve to meet your needs in a quickly changing world.

## **Get Your Own Personalized ROI Analysis**

You've seen how quickly and easily Your Agency earns a substantial return on investment into ZyLAB ONE. Wouldn't you like to see how the real numbers add up for your own agency? Get your own [personalized ROI analysis](#) or read more about the [business case for adopting technology](#) in our whitepaper.