

CASE STUDY



The Devil Is In the Metadata

Importance of Specialization in Mid-Sized Law Firm's Needs

FOR: Attorneys

CLIENT: Mid-Size Law Firm

SERVICE: Consultation

"In the past, we initially would have picked a pricing sheet from a competitor that looked the most cost effective at the onset. Thankfully, in this case, we trusted Acorn. Their simple and transparent pricing structure ultimately saved us a lot of money. Everything about Acorn is set up to work with mid-law from pricing to service. We trust them and recommend Acorn for any mid-sized law firm who wants to work with them."

Situation

When Wilkinson Law was going through the selection process for an eDiscovery service provider, they focused on both expertise and cost. In their search, they found providers that offered better line-item pricing, on the surface. Wilkinson Law wanted to work with Acorn due to their knowledge and expertise but couldn't justify the perceived higher costs to their clients. So, Acorn matched their "lower rates" from competitors that were unbundled, as opposed to using Acorn's standard "Bundled" rates designed for mid-law.

In this case, Wilkinson Law was engaged in a federal white-collar matter and expected to receive a large production from the Department of Justice. This matter initially involved approximately 700GB of data from the production load file provided by the DOJ. The DOJ then provided a supplementary production load file consisting of an additional 700GB of data. This second production set of 700GB was not anticipated initially or budgeted for and both production sets lacked essential metadata fields and extracted text needed to effectively search the data.

Once this project had evolved from the initial scope and expectations, Wilkinson Law's initial unbundled pricing's additional line items kicked in, which would have resulted in high, unexpected costs.

Challenge

This project seemed to have a certain scope at the outset, but as commonly happens, the scope changed quickly once the data was in hand. The client needed metadata fields for the load files so they could adequately search and review the documents. They were expecting the DOJ to supply that information. With that change in scope, there was a significant difference in budgets and costs between the competitor-

matched "Unbundled" pricing and Acorn's "Bundled" model. The competitive "Unbundled" pricing would have resulted in an additional \$20k cost, approximately 30% of the total budget for the separate processing fees. In addition to the cost increase, having to update the end-client on this change in budget was going to distract the attorney from the important substantive work at hand.

Acorn's Solution

Acorn looked into technical solutions under the current pricing structure to eliminate the extra expense, such as:

- Designing a custom workflow to address excessive cost burdens from the initial competitive pricing structure.
- Negotiating with the DOJ to receive the proper production format in its entirety to address missing fields.

Ultimately, the solution was for Acorn to revert to its standard "Bundled" pricing. Everything about Acorn's service offerings is designed to support mid-sized clients, including our pricing structure, expert team, initial scoping calls and project estimate documents. With Wilkinson Law, we are seeing why that is the case. The scoping documents set the budget so that we could communicate with the client when we knew this new data was going to exceed the budget. This pricing is designed for clients to have access to the technology they need when they need it without distraction. In eDiscovery, there are always a lot of surprises and changes to scope, and there is not always consistency in how the data is delivered.

Our expert team identified this and advised the client on how to push back through legal channels and technology channels. Initially our simple pricing looked more expensive, but was ultimately more cost-effective. In addition, it created budget and cost certainty allowing clients to focus on what they needed without distraction.

Results

Acorn's pricing structure, omitting uncertain line items such as per GB processing, per page OCR, higher ECA hosting, etc. allows clients to mitigate unexpected costs which create budgetary burdens for our clients and in turn, the firm's client. It provides benefits to the law firm of not having to be distracted by budgetary issues with their clients, or in negotiating with the other side. Wilkinson Law was free to focus on the substance of their case, and their client saved money by not having to pay their lawyer to figure this out. Acorn successfully navigated this challenge and brought the firm back towards their initial budget, while accounting for the additional work to remedy the data and additional data volumes. This reduced their total project costs by approximately 30% through this simple, easy, and predictable pricing model.

About Acorn

Acorn is a legal data consulting firm that specializes in AI and Advanced Analytics for litigation application, while providing rigorous customer service to the eDiscovery industry. Although capable of serving AmLaw 100 Law Firms and Corporate Legal departments, Acorn primarily works with large regional, midsize national and boutique litigation firms. Acorn provides a high-touch, customized litigation support services with a heavy emphasis on seamless communications.