Beratung

eDiscovery Automation: A solution to the Great Resignation in the Industry

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Since early 2021, the Great Resignation has been hitting all business sectors. Professionals have voluntarily resigned all over the world, and the eDiscovery industry hasn't been spared. In a profession where the job market is already dry, how do you retain your employees?

To quote an article from Jordan McQuown, published in Forbes(i): "I believe you can either be a victim of the Great Resignation or leverage it." He proposes inspiring solutions to bring company-scale changes to increase the satisfaction of all of your employees. We would like to address here the more practical and eDiscovery workflows-related improvements that are revolutionising the day-to-day tasks performed by technical specialists. Most senior eDiscovery specialists will agree that the most challenging aspects of our jobs are the high level of stress, the unpredictable working hours, and the repetitiveness of certain tasks. While those aspects are inherent to digital firefighting, people aspire to have more balance in their lives, and the industry is answering their call.

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Custom workflows and automation have been evolving over the past two decades to reach a current level of maturity that inspires respect. While most eDiscovery experts have themselves developed some automation in their workflows, impressive tools are now available on the market. They allow junior professionals to learn from their seniors and step directly into the automation path, instead of stumbling through the tedious lessons of data format diversity and data volume challenges. Those tools also offer seasoned professionals the means to reach an even higher level of maturity in their processes, with more automation, control, and flexibility. Several tools on the market support automating workflows, such as Nuix (ii) Automation or Milyli (iii) Delegate, and some such as Rampiva (iv) even allow for a transparent automation across different technologies and eDiscovery software.

While this won't change the nature of our work, it does take away the most repetitive aspects, which is a significant source of frustration for young professionals. As Daniel Boteanu, founder of Rampiva, states on their website, automation allows "people like me to do what they do best – be creative with data while relying on computers for reliability, speed, and auditing"(v). This frees up time to exchange thoughts about the specific needs of the case and tailor the service, increasing satisfaction for all parties. Technical staff often feel isolated, and this process provides the opportunity to integrate them better within the team while leveraging their skills and deep understanding of data.

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Automation can also assist in reducing the crushing pressure eDiscovery specialists suffer from. Whenever a request comes in, it's always due "yesterday". Data volumes are ever larger and deadlines ever tighter. Unfortunately, resources, whether human or technical, don't grow as fast as the demand, and days aren't getting any longer. Employee dissatisfaction and resignation isn't the biggest company risk this situation brings: burnout is a cancer that not only harms the individual, but also spreads to the company and society itself. In an article published in July (vi), Steven Lerner discloses how present this disease is in our industry. Too often eDiscovery specialists reconnect outside of working hours to start the next job, slaves of the technical resources rhythm. While optimisation of machine utilisation means that they operate 24/7, optimisation of your staff means allowing them to produce work of a high quality within reasonable working hours, with the opportunity to develop their own wellbeing and balance outside of work. That's when job scheduling comes into play, helping to restore the balance. Automation increases the machine output and decreases the hours worked.

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While our job remains as challenging as it is exciting, some of the most painful aspects can be mitigated with automation. A small investment in consulting services or an automation tool can help companies retain talent in this difficult market, decrease their human resource needs, and increase their productivity. eDiscovery is a beautiful and fascinating field, and it can bring high job satisfaction if provided with the right environment. I endeavour to spark this passion when teaching at university, and I wish for my students to experience the best that their future career can offer.

References

(i) https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil

(ii) https://www.nuix.com/

(iii) https://www.milyli.com/

(iv) https://rampiva.com/

(v) https://rampiva.com/about-us-team/

(vi) https://www.law360.com/pulse/articles

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