

Law Firm Discovers Shortcut to Savings on the E-mail Trail

“Searching through hundreds of thousands of e-mails costs time and money but with the document management technology from Hummingbird Enterprise, we can import e-mails and attachments into a powerful, searchable database in a short amount of time, and save thousands of dollars.”

— Jim Bergman, Director of Technology, Hennigan Bennett & Dorman, LLC

There’s a new twist to large legal cases, one that revolves around a simple technology — e-mail. Surprisingly, this common business tool can create complex problems for firms who aren’t digitally savvy.

The law firm of Hennigan, Bennett and Dorman has faced the e-mail problem head-on, since the company is regularly involved in big-name, multi-participant lawsuits, such as governmental bankruptcies or institutional shareholder fraud cases. While such cases have historically generated enough paperwork to fell forests, new requirements for electronic discovery can require a legal team to sift through thousands of electronic messages as they search for potential evidence.

“Complex litigation has always involved a large number of paper documents,” says Jim Bergman, director of technology for the Los Angeles-based Hennigan, Bennett and Dorman. “But now, we also have requirements that simply say, ‘give us all your e-mails.’ What we end up getting is backup tapes, with hundreds of thousands if not millions of e-mails. We needed a way to filter all that information down into something our attorneys can use.”

According to Bergman, the problem can’t be easily resolved by simply searching through Microsoft Outlook mailboxes, because Outlook wasn’t built to handle massive searches on attachments or multiple user mailboxes with any granularity.

Business Challenge: Finding Needles in a Haystack of Mail

“Electronic discovery is still relatively new and many people just don’t have any idea about how to handle it,” says Bergman. “Some firms take the ostrich approach — they stick their heads in the sand and pretend e-mail doesn’t exist, while other firms have simply chosen not to search through e-mail, which is scary if you’re their client.” According to Bergman, some firms have their IT department print every e-mail message and then try to scan in the ones that pertain to the case.

Service bureaus have sprung up to address this growing need, but Bergman points out that the fees usually range between 18 cents to 22 cents per page — a cost that quickly becomes prohibitive to clients in complex cases.

“One quote we received was for \$400,000 to process 500,000 e-mails. The firm would have had great difficulty charging that fee to the client and we could certainly not bear it ourselves.”



Industry:

Legal

Organization:

Hennigan

The Challenge:

- A cost-effective, scalable, comprehensive method to import hundreds of thousands of e-mail messages into a searchable, legal litigation support system

Hummingbird Solution:

Hummingbird Enterprise
Document Management

Key Benefits:

- Savings of nearly \$500,000 over outsourced services
- E-mails can be directly imported from Outlook and Exchange
- E-mails can be sorted and searched by author, origin and thread
- E-mail attachments can also be scanned

Even if law firms pay the bureau's fee, Bergman notes they will typically lose most of the powerful administrative data that accompanies e-mails — such as who sent what, when and to whom.

"Bureaus typically recommend converting e-mails to TIFF files which attorneys would then have to go through one by one. But then you lose the administrative metadata, along with the nuances of the original e-mail."

Hummingbird Solution: Hummingbird Enterprise Document Management

Bergman says Hennigan, Bennett and Dorman evaluated some proprietary electronic-document importing software, but found that many had a per-page or per-click charge of a half-cent or more. "They know what the bureaus charge, so they make their software just as pricey."

The firm needed a powerful, open-standards based software solution that would not only allow for native importing and searching through Outlook files, but would also easily scale to handle millions of e-mails, with the bonus of enterprise security and administrative tools built in. Bergman was able to meet the firm's requirements with Hummingbird DM. The enterprise-ready platform helps to facilitate the capture, manipulation and distribution of document-based knowledge embedded in their clients' e-mails. Additionally, Bergman was able to let lawyers sift through e-mails using all the important data parameters that are created when a user hits "send."

With Hummingbird DM, Bergman was able to bring across the four important fields that Outlook records in the background; the e-mail's unique identification number; the parent ID, which tracks forwards or replies; the thread number, to track where a message fits in a conversation; and an attachment number, to correlate e-mails with any included documents (which can also be searched via Hummingbird DM).

"Through the use of these four fields, we can recreate an entire e-mail conversation," says Bergman. "By using the parent number, I can easily sort by thread and jump to the top of the story. This system provides the attorneys with critical information in a rapid and cost-effective manner."

And because Hummingbird DM uses standard SQL databases on the back end, the law firm's IT infrastructure retains choice and flexibility as its business grows.

Results: Getting to the Point, for a Fraction of the Cost

By using Hummingbird DM, Hennigan, Bennett and Dorman's lawyers are now able to process e-mails in half the time and at a small fraction of the cost, compared to outsourcing the work to a service bureau.

"The attorneys love the savings in time and cost of our Hummingbird DM solution," says Bergman. "They also love the way it preserves the conversations from Outlook, which none of the bureaus can replicate."

So instead of sifting through piles of scanned, printed copies of e-mails, their lawyers can run powerful electronic searches using Hummingbird DM's advanced search capabilities, which include the ability to combine simultaneous searches against content indexes and SQL metadata, to provide a rich and easy way to find the documents they need, faster.

"When there are upwards of 500,000 e-mails, it's likely that 98 percent of the messages are irrelevant to the case at hand. But once the e-mails are in our system, the attorneys can easily locate and mark them up electronically and select only those messages that are important to the case."

Bergman reports that the document management technology found in Hummingbird Enterprise delivers seamless integration with other Hummingbird management solutions. He envisions integrating Hummingbird KM and Hummingbird Portal website tools into the firm's technology arsenal in the near future.

"I'm always keeping my eyes open for new technology and the Hummingbird KM and Portal products might be something we use as ways to speed up document review," says Bergman.



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