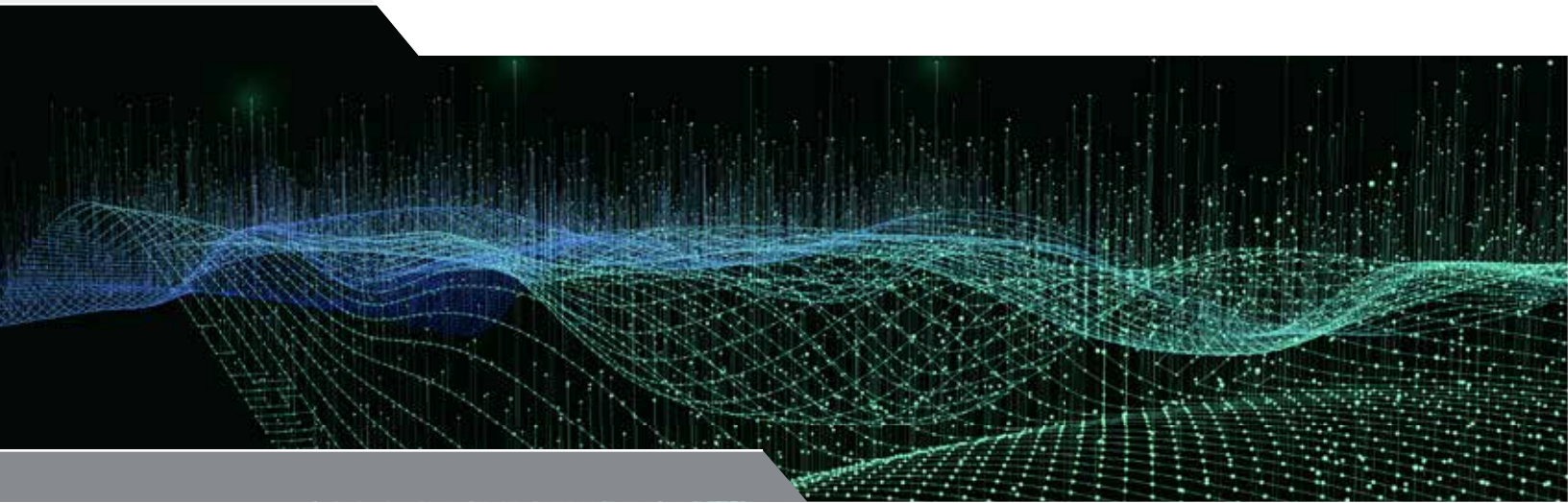Thought Leadership Article
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How to
Establish and Maintain
Profitable eDiscovery Operations

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Your data never sleeps. You should.

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How to Establish and Maintain Profitable eDiscovery Operations

It's time to face the facts: your eDiscovery operation is a vital, but unprofitable, part of your business. Staffing, managing, scaling, and supporting eDiscovery data systems is both complicated and expensive, filled with time and money sucks that sap efficiency and profitability. Whether you are a law firm, consulting practice, corporation, or government agency, we see the same issues affecting eDiscovery users around the world: how to work better/faster/cheaper without compromising growth potential, staff productivity, or quality of work.

Over fifteen years of eDiscovery platform consulting and problem solving, we've identified a set of common failures that drive customer organizations toward mismanagement, overspending, and inefficiency. Our real-world experience with a global customer base has led to the creation of proven processes and best practices that remedy these missteps and provide a confident foundation for strategic growth and profitable operations. We have been auditing real-world eDiscovery environments for fifteen years and have been able to deliver meaningful savings for customers worldwide, over $1M in many cases.

Why eDiscovery is Costing You Money

EDiscovery is a fluid industry that requires both flexibility and expertise to forge a cost-effective, successful operation. Business plans must be continually updated to optimize resources, expenditures, and infrastructure to match changing market needs and customer demands. What confounds many management teams is how to handle more matters and satisfy elevated customer expectations for speed, accuracy, and professionalism without incurring or passing on additional costs. Simply put, you need to provide more without charging more.

This makes cost-efficient operations paramount to success, as eDiscovery is necessary (legal teams cannot function until evidence is in-hand) but not profitable, forcing you to balance billable work with loss categories. Management often sees only one line item for tech expenses and does not understand the intricacies that drive those costs or how to best optimize the resources therein. As eDiscovery can represent up to 50% of the total cost of handling a matter, it is critical to have a plan for cost controls and resource allocation that embraces budget-positive industry trends.

Want some real-world proof? We recently performed a comprehensive review of line items and workflow for a major international consulting organization. Our review identified widespread waste and major inefficiencies, which once remediated, reduced their annual technology spend from $26M to $8M, an $18M annual windfall!

In this article, we will discuss the following tenets for building a sustainable and profitable eDiscovery operation:

1. **Rationalize and right-size tech expenditures**

2. **Move internal IT staff to profitable activities, increase utilization and ROI from assets**

3. **Build scalable/flexible platforms that can grow as needed**

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1. Rationalize & Right-Size Tech Expenditures

The Problem:

Technology exists and evolves to make our jobs faster, easier, and more efficient. The key is to reap the benefits of technology without paying for services, hardware, and features that are extraneous, inappropriate, or misguided. It's easy to suffer from "tech bloat," where you throw money at problems that may or may not exist, generating burdensome costs that stick in your future budgets. It is critical to scrutinize expenditures, needs, and outcomes (for today AND tomorrow) to forge a right-sized tech budget.

A common mistake is to let existing budgets dictate future spend, which often hinders an honest examination of costs and needs. YOY line-item budgeting is too often a direct reflection of a company's performance over the course of the year. The path of least resistance is to simply approve what is already on the books with a modest up/down bump, as you assume that existing line items are worthy expenditures. It's time to break this cycle and use your annual tech review as an opportunity to chart a more informed course of action.

GeorgeJon Solutions:

- Comprehensive advisory and consulting services to help you critically analyze your business investments and correlative expenses to optimize the strategy, technology, and operations supporting your eDiscovery platform(s). We'll separate the wheat from the chaff to streamline your operation and expenses, delivering a roadmap for short- and long-term success.
- Fifteen-plus years of best practice development and real-world, industry-specific experience provides us with a knowledge base that is unmatched in the industry. Affordable, on-demand expertise.
- As your internal IT staff lacks the specialized knowledge to efficiently manage eDiscovery platforms, move them to billable projects where their expertise is better suited and let GeorgeJon data experts manage/support your platform 24/7/365.
- Flat-rate pricing, both for infrastructure and services, provides predictable, cost-effective peace of mind.
- Our longstanding relationships with the leading industry hardware/software providers allows us to deliver technology for significantly less than you can achieve on your own (up to 50% below market cost).
- GJ Dossier, our turnkey data archiving solution for eDiscovery, is a software and management service that enables quick, efficient archiving of case data. Bloated datasets, especially in "hot" cloud environments, are both expensive and inefficient. We'll help you archive cold matters and increase ROI by rightsizing your caseload.
- Unbiased, software-agnostic advice regarding the best solutions for your needs.

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GeorgeJon reviews licensing to discourage overprovisioning of Microsoft SPLA and eDiscovery applications.
We saved one service provider $81K/year on SPLA licenses and another service provider $147K/year on wasted eDiscovery licenses.

GeorgeJon assesses customer platform and identifies system misconfigurations and ill-advised spending on expensive storage for Hyperconvergence.
We enabled a service provider to achieve a 50% decrease in their time to publish documents with Relativity Processing.

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2. Move Internal Staff to Profitable Activities, Increase Utilization and ROI from Assets

The Problem:

Staffing in-house IT professionals is costly and often ineffectual for eDiscovery, as traditional IT methodologies do not translate well to this complex, highly specialized realm. These expensive and ill-equipped resources are not billable, forcing you to pump big money into a loss category (just to keep the wheels turning) at a time when most companies are working to preserve precious capital. And worst of all, firms can usually only afford a small number of engineers who offer limited availability and are unable to support business growth, international locations, or after-hours needs.

It is critical to have a team in place that understands the nuanced needs of eDiscovery environments, as faulty oversight can yield costly issues and downtime from issues including:

- Knowledge gaps for unique app requirements
- Inability to plan for or effectively manage database growth
- Insufficient environmental policies/procedures
- Inability to quickly/effectively scale systems and handle large datasets
- Misunderstanding patching and upgrade methodologies

GeorgeJon Solutions:

- GeorgeJon provides 24/7/365 management and support for mission-critical systems, providing peace of mind and real-world expertise at less than half the cost of an internal team ($200K/year/person).
- Employing GeorgeJon for eDiscovery operations means that internal staff can be moved to profitable activities that better align with their skillsets.
- GeorgeJon's comprehensive platform support and management allows you to focus on your core business while we provide transparent oversight and solve problems behind the scenes.
- Our ad hoc support model is more cost-effective than having expensive staff sitting around 9-5 weekly. Plus, we can manage every international case/location you need, with coverage on six continents.
- GeorgeJon delivers business continuity by having a deep team of right-sized experts at your disposal versus the single point of failure represented by an internal asset. If a key staff member is out/leaves, will your eDiscovery operations continue, uninterrupted?
- GeorgeJon ensures that you are employing the best technologies and methodologies. We are partners with the leading hardware/software teams in the business, and our engineers hold certifications in all technologies deployed, ensuring that you always have the best systems at your disposal.
- We see common problems/failures across a wide variety of customers, which provides us with a problem/solution knowledge base that far surpasses the insights of your internal team.

Let's say you have three SQL servers, and GeorgeJon can manage these servers for $1.5K/mo/server. You just gained deep functional knowledge and perpetual expertise for $54K/year, representing 73% savings on staffing costs.

GeorgeJon's monthly managed service fee is typically the same cost as 1-2 FTEs, depending on the environment scale, and 3-4X less than a customer's usual spend. We saved a service provider $265,000 in annual environment management fees.

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3. Build Scalable/Flexible Platforms that can Grow as Needed

The Problem:

Needless to say, eDiscovery operations are data-intensive. As the number of matters you process grows, your databases expand and require a perpetual evolution of review and workflow strategies. The extraction of "text-heavy" documents can significantly increase document table sizes, resulting in exceptionally high input/output (IO) requirements for system performance. Traditional IT models cannot handle these demands, which require infrastructure capable of large-scale data processing. Organizations need to invest in scalable storage solutions, efficient indexing techniques, and specialized hardware.

Evolving systems also require installs, patches, and upgrades for a wide variety of specialized software systems that are vital to user workflow. These applications have unique requirements and require perpetual oversight and app-specific knowledge to ensure stability. For instance, patching and upgrading often requires extensive research and technical collaboration with software development teams. Unlike regular IT applications, eDiscovery solutions must align with the legal landscape, ensuring compliance with evolving regulations and standards.

GeorgeJon Solutions:

- GeorgeJon works with customers to plan, implement, and manage logical and scalable systems for every type of project, no matter the environment (on-prem, hybrid, cloud) or ownership (existing platform, GJ Kit, etc.). Employing our deep knowledge base and best practices, we help users avoid common mistakes and allow you to hit the ground running with optimized systems powering profitable operations.
- Every GeorgeJon platform is built with scalability in mind, allowing you to right-size operations for today while accommodating all future needs on demand. In this model, you only pay for what you are using today, instead of stockpiling expensive hardware today on the chance you may need it tomorrow.
- We work hand-in-hand with the leading eDiscovery software providers to establish deployment, configuration, and workflow best practices for each application. Evolve your systems with confidence.
- GJ Kits are synchronized platforms of hardware, software, and managed services, available in both on-premises and hosted environments, that are specifically designed to provide optimized eDiscovery functionality and performance. Every Kit is built to be scalable and flexible to meet every case need.
- Scale on demand without major capital outlays or recurring sunk costs when demand falls.

By 2025, over 50% of total IT spending will be allocated to cloud solutions. 69% of companies moving to cloud environments fail to realize positive ROI due to flawed processes and mismanagement.

Our longstanding relationship with Dell enables our architects to design eDiscovery-specific infrastructure solutions leveraging mid-range hardware as opposed to expensive, bleeding-edge tech that is traditionally cost-ineffective and unnecessary.
GeorgeJon Environment Scaling is typically 30%-60% less expensive than costly, off-the-shelf solutions.

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The GeorgeJon Advantage

GeorgeJon has a singular focus: to plan, design, manage, support, and secure the best eDiscovery platforms in the world. We've seen every mistake, solved every problem, and work tirelessly to help customers avoid common pitfalls, poor performance, and unnecessary expenses.

At the end of the day, successfully managing an eDiscovery platform is extraordinarily complicated and requires expertise that lies beyond the skillset of internal IT teams. Your data platforms are expensive, sensitive, and vital to daily operations, and thus require professional management based upon proven solutions. We make sure your data systems are performing and providing positive ROI 24/7/365. After all, your data never sleeps – but we think you should.

The tenets we've discussed in this article have saved our customers millions of dollars. Please leverage our expertise to identify, catalog, and rationalize your eDiscovery expenditures while gaining recommendations on cost-saving strategies, customized and right-sized to your business needs.

Proven Expertise
We are eDiscovery data experts, with fifteen-plus years of real-world experience and industry-defining best practices that ensure quick solutions and successful outcomes. We serve a demanding global customer base that requires nothing less than 100% satisfaction.

Professional Consulting
Our expert engineers provide consulting, advisory, and on-demand services that lay the groundwork for sustained success and enable confident management of complex tasks – at a price point well below the cost of internal staffing.

24/7/365 Platform Oversight
We offer 24/7 proactive management and support that eliminates issues before they ever affect customer data systems and ensures prompt resolution of issues when emergencies arise. Focus on your core business while we manage your platform.

GJ Kits for eDiscovery
We offer customers a collection of eDiscovery-specific Kits – synchronized platforms of hardware, software, and managed services, in both on-prem and hosted environments – that are custom-designed to provide optimized functionality and proven performance.

The Author

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CEO & FOUNDER, GEORGEJON

George is a world-class systems architect who has spent fifteen-plus years perfecting a performant, scalable, modular eDiscovery framework that can be replicated and managed on a universal scale. Recognizing a deficiency in technical expertise, storage capabilities, and cost-effective oversight within the eDiscovery industry, George methodically built a team to address this challenge. This includes forging partnerships with hardware manufacturers (Dell), software providers, and leading industry software providers to develop best practice methodologies for optimized infrastructure, specifically designed to meet the demanding needs of eDiscovery users.

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