

## Using technology to level the playing field for law firms across APAC

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I started my first job with a leading law firm in Singapore during the turn of the millennium and was tasked with identifying new technologies for an efficient and “paperless” legal office. It was a very exciting and expensive proposition then, as we embarked on the implementation of document management systems, virtual data rooms and a case management solution with custom workflows amongst other legal technologies. Large law firms were able to capitalize on this new era with ease by investing heavily in technology, while smaller law firms often didn’t have the resources to keep up.

Fast forward 15 years and we are seeing an increase in the percentage of law firms investing in new technology to increase efficiencies and become more competitive, irrespective of size.

While “paper” or hardcopy documents are still relevant in the legal industry, firms are now faced with a new “big data” and “unstructured databases” dilemma. The exponential growth of electronically stored information (ESI) such as emails, office documents, messenger chats and social media postings can be both an opportunity and a risk depending on how it’s managed.

With that in mind, firms of all sizes leveraging the right technology will be able to compete on a level playing field.

### **Embrace the Cloud to enhance productivity**

The Cloud enables lawyers to work from multiple devices and provides secure access to the files that they need, whenever they need them. Lawyers can even share documents and collaborate with their colleagues and clients using the same Cloud-based platform.

Having access to the right technology is synonymous with productivity. Given that most traditional legal technologies with desktop interfaces such as practice management, content management, electronic discovery and transcript management are now available as a SaaS –small and large law firms alike can benefit.

### **Pushing the boundaries of eDiscovery by using technology assisted review**

In March 2012, I wrote an article on how eDiscovery can be a game changer for lawyers in Singapore. I predicted that eDiscovery solutions would evolve at a pace so rapidly, its functionality and features would surpass adoption rates. While this is now true, most local eDiscovery cases are still relying heavily on keyword searches and linear reviews, even though technology has evolved and can do so much more than that. A good example of such eDiscovery technology is the use of predictive coding or Technology Assisted Review (TAR).

TAR is a proven, methodical way of leveraging and extending professional judgment through technology. At its core, TAR is the process of using intelligent algorithms or analytics to distinguish between relevant and non-relevant documents, allowing the user to save time, reduce costs and gain reliable knowledge.

To illustrate the power of this technology, a Law In Order client from Australia recently used Relativity, our web-based document review platform to review approximately 157,000 documents. The technology returned 5,000 relevant documents, effectively saving our client over 1,500 review hours and \$285,000.00 AUD (see graph below).

	Relativity Assisted Review	Linear Review
Total documents in results set	157,000	157,000
Total documents reviewed	5,243	157,000
Percentage of documents reviewed for relevance	3%	100%
Document review rate	5,065/hour	100/hour
Attorney billing rate	\$500 AUD/hour	\$200 AUD/hour
Review cost	\$15,500 AUD	\$314,000
Analytics processing costs	\$13,500	\$0
<b>Review costs saving with Relativity Assisted Review = \$285,000 AUD</b>		

While the advantage of TAR is clear, one of the main challenges is its acceptance by lawyers, clients and the judiciary. In terms of adoption, TAR is in its infancy in Singapore, however if we look to the more mature eDiscovery markets such as the US and UK, we can see a dramatic uptake in Technology Assisted Review.

From practice management to content management and filing of court documents, law firms of all sizes are now expected to automate their processes and to provide 24/7, secure access to all files for collaboration between lawyers and clients. In this digital age, where most communications and data transfers are done through the internet, the ability to automate more processes, streamline workflows and increase efficiencies to reduce costs will win more business.

Law firms can now leverage technologies that are readily available, cost effective and scalable. When adopting these technologies, it is important for a law firm to choose the right features and functionality that will complement their workflows and achieve efficiencies. If required, there are options for lawyers to outsource some of the manual or back office support tasks such as document production and first pass review to reputable support service providers. As a result, lawyers can spend their time focusing on their clients and the matter at hand.

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