

A Case Study in Metadata Removal
For
MILLS & REEVE

Client profile

Mills & Reeve is a top 50 UK law firm with offices in Birmingham, Cambridge, Leeds, London, Manchester and Norwich. The firm offers a full range of commercial legal advice including market-leading practices in health, education and for private clients. It is also recognised for its real estate, corporate, technology and insurance capability.

The culture of Mills & Reeve has been carefully nurtured so that its people are encouraged to want the best for their clients. This distinct philosophy, called “infectious ambition”, is about going the extra mile in the service provided.

Acquiring knowledge and expertise is encouraged and new ideas are fostered in an environment where teamwork is highly prized. Clients benefit from a happy and enthusiastic workplace where people spark off each other to achieve more.

The firm’s philosophy and talent base is supported by a focus on value. A cost effective business structure means that quality advice can be delivered at an affordable and transparent price.

Business situation

The firm recognised that a risk to itself and its clients could be mitigated if metadata that appears in files is removed before being sent to external third parties and to certain internal recipients.

Additionally, feedback from fee earners included the fact that there is a requirement to create PDF versions of files and it would be very convenient if software automatically gave the option to convert at the time of sending.

It has been known for many years that whilst it is possible to remove most metadata and create PDFs manually, this is best achieved by way of a third-party application. With this in mind, the firm had been using such an application for over 10 years, but following a major upgrade to its infrastructure decided to review the market to see if there were any better alternative products or whether a new application was a better fit.

The firm’s IT team is regularly busy and did not have the time available to carry out a detailed review of the marketplace. Further to the receipt of a proposal, Hoffbrand Consulting was successfully contracted to carry out the work.

Work/Solution provided

Hoffbrand Consulting employed its standard working practice used in such situations and Lead Consultant, Paul Hoffbrand chaired an initial meeting with the Iain Cushion and Graeme Low to review the needs of the firm and to agree the suppliers that would be approached.

Paul used his considerable knowledge of the marketplace to ascertain the information required in order to feed information back to the client. At each stage of the information gathering exercise, the relevant data gathered was provided in order to allow Mills & Reeve to remain fully informed and change the direction of the work if necessary.

The work entailed making contact with each of the agreed three suppliers to review their products at a high level, view a demonstration and prepare a checklist to ensure that every relevant aspect was seen operationally. Throughout each demonstration careful notes were kept, all of which were included in an updated document supplied, with a comparison document against the previous version, at the end of each day of the instruction.

The pricing of each application was normalised into an easy to follow table format for comparison.

With the information provided both regularly and in full, at the end of the information gathering exercise, the decision on how to proceed was made quickly and easily.

On the conclusion of the instruction, a CD ROM bible containing all email correspondence and all versions of the document was sent to the client.

Benefits

The benefits supplied by Hoffbrand Consulting can be summarised as follows:

- time and effort saved
- easy to follow document
- pressure reduced
- value for money

With the information provided by Hoffbrand Consulting, Mills & Reeve was in the best position to make an informed decision on a number of fronts:

- 1 whether the existing application was of value to the firm
- 2 the overall cost of each application reviewed
- 3 enough detail to be able to determine which tool was right for the firm, its users and its clients.

The conclusion reached by the firm further to the work carried out by Hoffbrand Consulting was that the existing application would be replaced. Additionally, in conjunction with Graeme Low, the negotiating skills provided by Paul Hoffbrand brought the new product in to the firm within budget.

Recommendation

We already reviewed the principle of metadata removal with our risk management team and knew that we needed to put effort into reviewing our current capabilities. We were also approaching the roll out of a new desktop so both time and manpower availability were very much against us.

We had worked with Paul Hoffbrand over many years, knew him to have integrity and be reliable so was the obvious choice when it came to the review of our needs. Paul was able to fill a hole that otherwise would not have been filled in the timescale needed as we had to concentrate on other aspects of the business.

Paul took on the challenge with enthusiasm and demonstrated flexibility in his approach to our needs

Paul put a great deal of effort into the incredibly detailed work needed. He reported back regularly (as promised) with an updated report so that we could see progress being made. The delivery of the CD bible demonstrated the professionalism, attention to detail and service provided by the consultancy.


Throughout the engagement both pre- and post-contract all communications have been timely and clear. Even after the final decision was made, Paul continued to check on progress to ensure everything was going to plan.

We are delighted with the way the Hoffbrand Consulting dealt with our needs, providing great value for money and we look forward to working with the firm again in the future.

Graeme Low

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