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How BENlabs Avoids Seven-Figure eDiscovery Costs with Onna's "Prophylactic" Approach

BENlabs

BENlabs' entertainment industry expertise met modern legal realities when General Counsel Pra Chandrasoma recognized that rapid growth demanded a new approach to eDiscovery risk management in the age of Slack—transforming potential seven-figure litigation costs into predictable, manageable expenses.

"I think of Onna like I think of insurance: you buy it hoping you never need it but if something goes wrong it's going to reduce your exposure dramatically."



Pra Chandrasoma
General Counsel, BENlabs

The Problem: When Slack Becomes a Legal Liability

As BENlabs evolved from a stable entertainment business to an aggressively growing company at the forefront of AI-driven influencer marketing and product placement, General Counsel Pra Chandrasoma faced a sobering realization: the company's massive Slack environment had become a ticking time bomb.

"So much of our business happens on Slack," Chandrasoma explained. "I think that folks don't fully appreciate what that means from a discovery standpoint. They think it disappears into the ether. But no: very little of that stuff is privileged, all of that stuff is discoverable."

BENlabs' Slack environment told the story of their explosive growth. Years of business-critical conversations, strategic decisions, employee interactions, and day-to-day operations were all archived in channels and direct messages—creating an enormous trove of potentially discoverable material.

The entertainment industry's traditional reluctance toward litigation had previously provided some protection—or at least made it easier for Chandrasoma and team to sleep at night.

"We sort of operated under the assumption for a long time that lawsuits are really disfavored in the industry. And so we've sort of rested on that assumption for a long time that no one's going to sue us," Chandrasoma said.

But as BENlabs scaled and adopted "this really sort of aggressive trajectory to become a truly dominant player in the space," that assumption became tenuous.

The real risk wasn't external—it *was internal*.

"What about our employees? What about when you have a rapidly expanding employee base?" Chandrasoma asked, noting that employment lawsuits tend to spike in high-growth organizations that tend to over hire then right-size.

Drawing from his big law experience, Chandrasoma knew exactly what manual discovery looked like: "My very first matter at my big law firm was working on a huge discovery matter where I was reading every single email this guy wrote. I billed hundreds and hundreds of hours at an exorbitant hourly rate to this big matter."

The math was stark: without the right tools, any litigation involving their extensive Slack communications would result in crushing discovery costs.

“We would spend a million dollars in discovery if we ever got sued—no question—because just to sift through all of the stuff to find what was relevant, what was responsive... That first-line review would be massive, it would be absolutely enormous.”

The company simply couldn’t absorb those costs—to say nothing of the time commitment that manually reassembling reams of JSON code, Slack’s native file format, just to make it reviewable entails.

“We’re not a huge public utility. We couldn’t afford that.”

Yet the alternative—restricting Slack usage through policies—was equally problematic.

“I can put out a policy or send an email and people are like, ‘Okay, cool’, then move on with their lives. It’s not the 97% of people you care about—it’s the 3% of people who are going to say something loony, and those people are probably not sitting there poring over policies in their spare time.”

The Solution: Prophylactic Protection with Onna’s eDiscovery Platform

Chandrasoma’s approach was methodical. Having no prior experience with eDiscovery tools, he consulted litigation counsel across multiple firms. The recommendation was unanimous: “Onna was the name that kept coming up—that had the best reputation. It was really like that four out of five dentists recommended Trident.”

Key Challenges

Massive Data Volume:

Years of business-critical communications stored across multiple Slack channels and DMs

Discovery Exposure:

All Slack communications discoverable with minimal privilege protection

Cost Vulnerability:

Potential seven-figure discovery bills from manual document review

Growth Risk:

Expanding employee base exponentially increasing litigation probability

Resource Constraints:

Mid-size entertainment company unable to absorb big law discovery costs

Policy Ineffectiveness:

Traditional communication policies insufficient to control employee behavior

Time Pressure:

Discovery deadlines incompatible with manual review timelines

Technical Dependencies:

Legal team lacked direct access to data repositories, creating IT bottlenecks

BENlabs implemented Onna not reactively, but prophylactically—as a strategic safeguard against future discovery costs. “Our use case thus far has been entirely insurance,” Chandrasoma emphasized. “I bought the tool with the intention of never using it.”

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The platform’s direct integration with Slack and other cloud sources meant that if litigation ever arose, BENlabs could rapidly collect and cull relevant communications without the massive manual review costs that would otherwise ensue. Onna’s date culling and search capabilities would allow the legal team to pinpoint responsive documents efficiently, dramatically reducing the scope and cost of any review.

“I see Onna as a failsafe in case I can’t do my job right. My job is to get rid of risks cheaply, and the reality is that Onna makes it incredibly easy to do that. I think of Onna like I think of insurance.”

The Results: Cost Stabilization and Measurable ROI in an Unpredictable Environment

Five years later, Chandrasoma’s investment strategy has proven prescient. While BENlabs has never needed to conduct major discovery, the peace of mind and cost protection have delivered measurable value.

The ROI calculation for BENlabs’ Onna investment demonstrates compelling financial logic:

- **Annual Onna Investment over First 4 Years:** ~\$90,000/year
- **Potential Discovery Costs Avoided:** \$1,000,000+ per litigation matter
- **Estimated litigation matters/year:** 1–2
- **Annual cost avoidance:** \$910,000–\$1,910,000/year

“If we get sued this year, and we don’t have this tool expanded to the degree that I want it expanded, it’s a seven-figure bill. Easily,” Chandrasoma explained to his finance team. The math was straightforward: even a single employment lawsuit requiring extensive Slack discovery could cost 3–4 times BENlabs’ entire five-year Onna investment.

Cost Structure Transformation

Beyond raw cost avoidance, Onna fundamentally transformed at least a portion of BENlabs' legal cost structure from unpredictable to manageable, replacing variable discovery expenses with a fixed subscription. It also transferred the company's approach to risk, shifting litigation costs from reactive crisis management to proactive avoidance.

The strategic value became evident during company-wide cost reductions and Chandrasoma's meticulous budget pruning: "I cut everything I could cut. I deprecated vendors, I consolidated providers, I fired law firms that we've been working with for decades."

"I didn't expand anything except for Onna. The only thing I expanded was eDiscovery. It's the only tool."

The insurance model created value beyond direct cost avoidance. "It's not a cost reduction mechanism, it's a cost stabilization mechanism," Chandrasoma explained. "You're effectively saying, yes, I'm going to take on marginally higher fixed costs for the term of this agreement in exchange for downside risk protection."

This approach aligned perfectly with corporate finance expectations: "Legal teams are not going to get free cash easily. Your goal should be to ensure that the band of potential costs that you're going to incur is as narrow as possible."

Conclusion: Redefining Legal Cost Management for Growing Companies

For BENlabs, Onna represents more than eDiscovery software—it's a fundamental shift in legal cost management philosophy. Rather than hoping litigation won't happen, Chandrasoma built a system that makes litigation manageable and predictable in the event it occurs.

Chandrasoma's analysis cuts to the heart of modern legal operations: "Legal teams don't control their costs, right?"

"You have to control what you can control. And Onna is a mechanism for me to control the impact of those outside forces and the degree to which they visit horrors upon me."

When you are suing somebody or getting sued by somebody, it's almost never because of something the legal team did or could predict. You have to live in a world where your costs are expected to be contained and managed really tightly, but you don't control what the inputs are that would affect them."

This reality creates an impossible situation for most legal departments—until they implement tools that restore control. "You have to control what you can control. And Onna is a mechanism for me to control the impact of those outside forces and the degree to which they visit horrors upon me."

Chandrasoma emphasized that successful legal technology adoption requires more than just software capabilities. The vendor relationship proved crucial to long-term value realization: "I don't work with vendors I don't like, period. Part of the reason I'm loyal to the tool is because I have a great relationship with the teams that support my account. I always feel prioritized, and I always feel like I'm being treated well."

A Replicable Model

BENlabs' approach offers a replicable framework for other growing companies:

- **Recognize the Risk Early:** Don't wait for litigation to understand discovery costs
- **Invest Prophylactically:** Treat eDiscovery tools as insurance, not reactive expenses
- **Quantify the ROI:** Frame investments in terms of cost avoidance, not feature lists
- **Integrate Strategically:** Choose platforms that grow with organizational complexity
- **Maintain Vendor Relationships:** Prioritize partners who treat you as valued clients

The Future-Proofing Value

By treating eDiscovery as essential infrastructure rather than a reactive expense, BENlabs has future-proofed their legal operations. As Chandrasoma noted: “What I’m buying is—more control in a world where I don’t really get to control very much—and peace of mind. I sleep better because I have it.”

This peace of mind translates directly to business value—enabling BENlabs to pursue aggressive growth strategies without the constant threat of discovery disasters derailing their trajectory. The company can confidently expand their workforce, enter new markets, and communicate freely across digital channels, knowing that any resulting legal challenges can be managed efficiently and cost-effectively.

In an environment where communication volumes grow exponentially but legal budgets remain constrained, BENlabs’ prophylactic approach to eDiscovery represents the

evolution of sophisticated legal risk management—transforming unpredictable legal costs into manageable, budgetable protection that scales with business growth.

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Reveal Onna automates the collection, search and review of data from cloud-based communication platforms including Slack, Zoom, Salesforce, Google Workspace and many more. It has become essential to hundreds of corporate legal teams who rely on it to rapidly cull data discoverable to litigation and investigations, as well as to prevent costly outside legal and vendor bills.

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