# Data Mapping & Identification: 4 Steps to Success

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During discovery, you cannot properly analyze what you have collected, until you fully consider *why* and *how* it has been collected. Here's what you can do to increase your data recall and precision, well before you acquire your actual review set.

## STEP 1: Conduct a thorough investigation as to the location of stowed data.

Does the potentially responsive data reside locally, within some easily identifiable server or workstation, or, in the alternative; does data reside in the cloud, accessible via a web-based application? Getting an answer to this important question is just the beginning to proper infrastructure mapping – and depending on your answer, a certain approach to collection will have to be established. Once your team can assemble a map of data locations, shares, and user-access & permissions, you can determine the initial areas of interest, where responsive data most likely resides.

## STEP 2: Understand the established administrators, data-stewards, and those who have general modification access, to such data.

These individuals will be important for many reasons, including: good source for investigation as to the quality, substance and history of the data; potential deponents in the matter; and will assist in identifying other areas where data may reside and/or have been accessed, like personal devices. A complete understanding as to user-access will result in a more cost effective, proper collection.

## STEP 3: Consider data *retention*, *destruction* & *archiving* policies.

Most organizations (parties to a litigation) will have an established set of policies that depict the lifecycle of data, after the expiration of a certain period of time. It will be crucial to consider the policy terms, and be sure to implement or demand a litigation hold, as to avoid the destruction of potentially responsive data. Furthermore, data stowed locally will typically warrant separate procedures from that of the ESI stored on the cloud.

## STEP 4: Consider hard-copies, that may supplement or replace electronically stored information.

For instance, responsive documents may also reside, in whole or in part, within files cabinets, folders, binders, etc. Here, you will need to understand the relationship of data-to-documents, and if there is cross over and/or gaps between the two. This process requires deep investigation as to the professionals (IT, business and legal) that understand the locations, access, substance and potential privacy, of such data. Most litigation support vendors will be able to normalize the data/documents, and make all available on one useable platform.

Taking the time to map-out your data acquisition plan will prove to be a wise decision, and ultimately increase the value of your discovery plan and speed of analysis. Moreover, considering a litigation support team will only help to ensure the best outcome for whatever you are up against during the collection phase. Whether understanding the location of, access to, or format in which data is stored, a proper plan can make the difference between winning and losing a case. For data mapping, collections, or any other litigation support services, contact us on our website or by phone for a free consultation.

**James Cortopassi**

James Cortopassi brings nearly 20 years of eDiscovery experience to his practice as a leader in litigation support and eDiscovery coordination. Mr. Cortopassi has managed thousands of cases involving forensic collections, data processing & hosted solutions, managed document review, ESI productions, trial technology services, and workflow-innovation. Mr. Cortopassi is a member of the Association of Certified E-Discovery Specialists (ACEDS).