



Evaluating Five Hosting Models for Relativity

A six-month case study on Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP's efforts to optimize the firm's eDiscovery practice

August 2019

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Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP : Six-Month Case Study

August 2019

Abstract

This case study is an account of law firm Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP's analysis of available options for adopting Relativity as their primary eDiscovery hosting platform. DGS was facing the challenge of managing client data at scale, keeping data secure with increased regulatory burden, and using the correct technology to bring clients the best service while adhering to a budget. This took them on a thorough evaluation process of Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) providers, on-premise software deployments, and fully outsourced managed services with a vendor. DGS settled on a hybrid approach — continuing their tradition of keeping client and attorney services in-house and deploying a private cloud environment with Oasis.

Introduction

DGS recognized that the eDiscovery marketplace was shifting. Changes in technology, regulations, security practices, and pricing would require a re-evaluation of their entire system. DGS had established practices and workflows with familiar technology that provided best-in-class service for the firm and its clients. They recognized the landscape was ready for change and set out to evaluate all options on level ground.

The following case study documents the decision-making process used to evaluate the firm's options and follows the experience from investigation through implementation.

Priorities & Constraints

After defining the criteria against which they would measure solutions, DGS identified three primary objectives that would serve as a guidepost throughout the evaluation process.

1. Service – Project Management, Administration, and Data Management

Some firms of comparable size had already undertaken major changes to their eDiscovery operations model, with most choosing to enter “managed services agreements” with eDiscovery vendors. These agreements effectively outsourced all eDiscovery related responsibilities: hardware, platform administration, project management, document review, and more.

Attorneys at DGS were accustomed to an exceptionally high level of service from their in-house team of professionals; they did not believe a vendor could consistently provide the same level of service. The idea of committing all eDiscovery services to one vendor seemed particularly risky given the nature of the attorney workload. Ultimately, DGS wanted their highly capable in-house team to continue servicing the firm and its clients.

Priority 1: Keep the vast majority of service “in-house,” leaning on outside vendors for overflow support, training, and niche services.

2. Technology – Software Toolkit

DGS was committed to providing its team and its clients with cutting edge solutions that leveraged the power of technology to solve increasingly complex challenges. Being keenly aware of the significant differences between eDiscovery technology solutions from the beginning, DGS was encouraged to perform a detailed comparison of leading software providers.

The firm was using Ipro’s on-premise software but was approaching the end of its contract term. Although the DGS team was comfortable providing excellent services with the Ipro suite of technology, there was a growing demand, both internally and externally, to use the industry-leading Relativity platform.

DGS wanted Relativity to be at the core of its technology solution due to its renowned status within the eDiscovery industry. Many of the firm's attorneys were already familiar with the product and they knew they could leverage this status to hire experienced employees and certified contract reviewers. These findings led DGS to determine that Relativity provided an unmatched level of functionality and compatibility with third-party tools.

Priority 2: Implement Relativity as the core technology for eDiscovery.

3. Implementation – Infrastructure, Security, and System Administration

Having made the decision to move forward with Relativity as their primary platform, the next step was to evaluate the various implementation options.

DGS had been supporting client data with firm-owned servers to consistently meet IT demands but was interested in leveraging the advantages of cloud-based software (SaaS) or an Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) model. The motivation to move away from an on-premise deployment of technology involved accomplishing three broad goals: lowering IT costs, including both technical and human resources; enhancing the security posture of the firm; and increasing the firm's ability to scale both up and down, accommodating the uneven nature of its workload.

Priority 3: Leverage the expertise and resources of a third party to manage the burdens associated with security, scalability, system maintenance, and network administration.

Evaluation Criteria and Scorecard

The scorecard reflects the criteria identified by DGS as particularly relevant to the firm’s goals and constraints. Each option was evaluated based on the descriptions below and classified as positive (green), neutral (yellow), or negative (red).

Total Cost of Ownership – The cost of the solution. Includes the cost of software licenses, underlying IT infrastructure, and personnel to support and maintain the technology.

Agreement Terms – Terms and conditions associated with the agreement. Length of term, scalability of pricing (burst fees and tiers), and payment schedule.

Toolkit – The comprehensiveness of the solution. Given the types of projects the organization receives, does the solution offer a wide variety of tools to build custom workflows and address the anticipated set of challenges?

IT Burden – The level of responsibility required from the firm’s internal IT teams. Includes budgeting, provisioning, and maintaining hardware infrastructure, along with cybersecurity (including certifications), database administration and systems administration.

Administrative Control – The level of control that the firm’s administrators have over the “back end” of the solution. Includes administrator-level access to databases and underlying system resources for purposes such as maintenance plans, performance monitoring, and custom development.

Overflow Support – The availability of resources in situations outside the firm’s staffing or expertise.

Scalability – The flexibility of the solution in terms of scaling both up and down. Scalability considers whether the technology can scale (i.e., how convenient is it to add additional servers, licenses, etc.), as well as the business model (i.e., whether the pricing model is flexible, are there burst fees, etc.).

Cost of Ownership

Agreement Terms

Toolkit

IT Burden

Administrative Control

Overflow Support

Scalability

● Negative
● Neutral
● Positive

Top Five Solutions

1. Outsource to Legal Service Provider (LSP)

Summary of Solution:

Engage with an LSP in order to gain access to Relativity and relevant supplemental technology. DGS would require as much control as possible over the environment and may engage overflow services, such as processing or document review, provided by the LSP.

Advantages

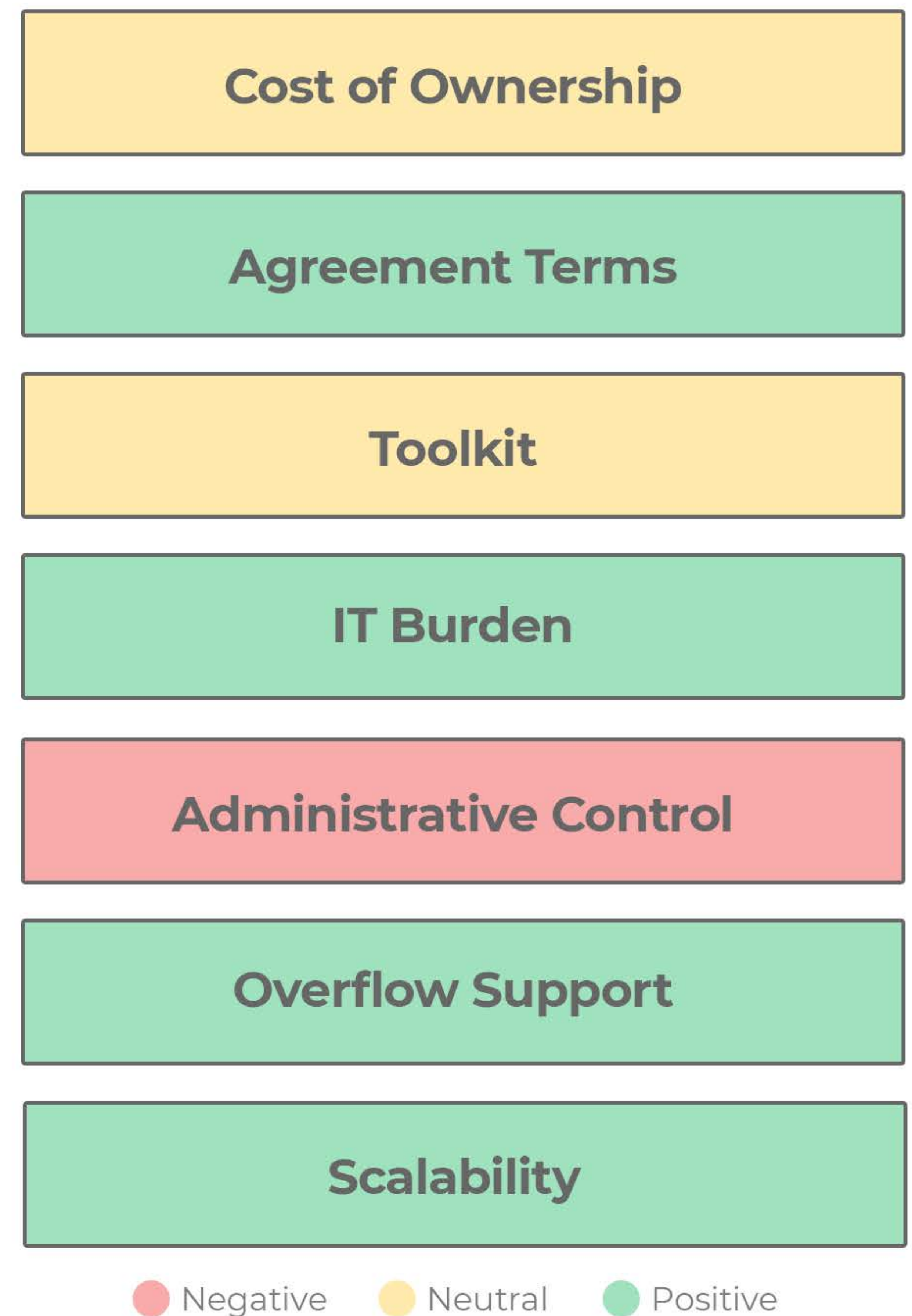
- *Agreement Terms.* Flexible billing options with multiple possible configurations.
- *Toolkit.* Many LSPs are technology agnostic, offering peripheral software for processing, analytics etc. (Compared with “all-in-one” cloud-based providers).
- *IT Burden.* Offloading of challenges associated with licensing, deploying, and maintaining software.
- *Overflow Support.* This is the primary advantage of this model. Competent LSPs are available 24/7 to assist.

Disadvantages

- *Administrative Control.* Often rigid limitations around the administrative privileges available to DGS.

Analysis

Using Relativity through a service provider had a (justifiably) higher cost of ownership, but the primary concern from DGS’ perspective was one of control. DGS placed a high value on being in control of decisions over administration, security, and ultimately the software toolkit they would implement.



2. On-Premise Relativity

Summary of Solution:
License an on-premise Relativity instance and deploy it on DGS servers. Provide technical support for the “back end” of deployed software, including troubleshooting, upgrades, and end-user support.

Advantages

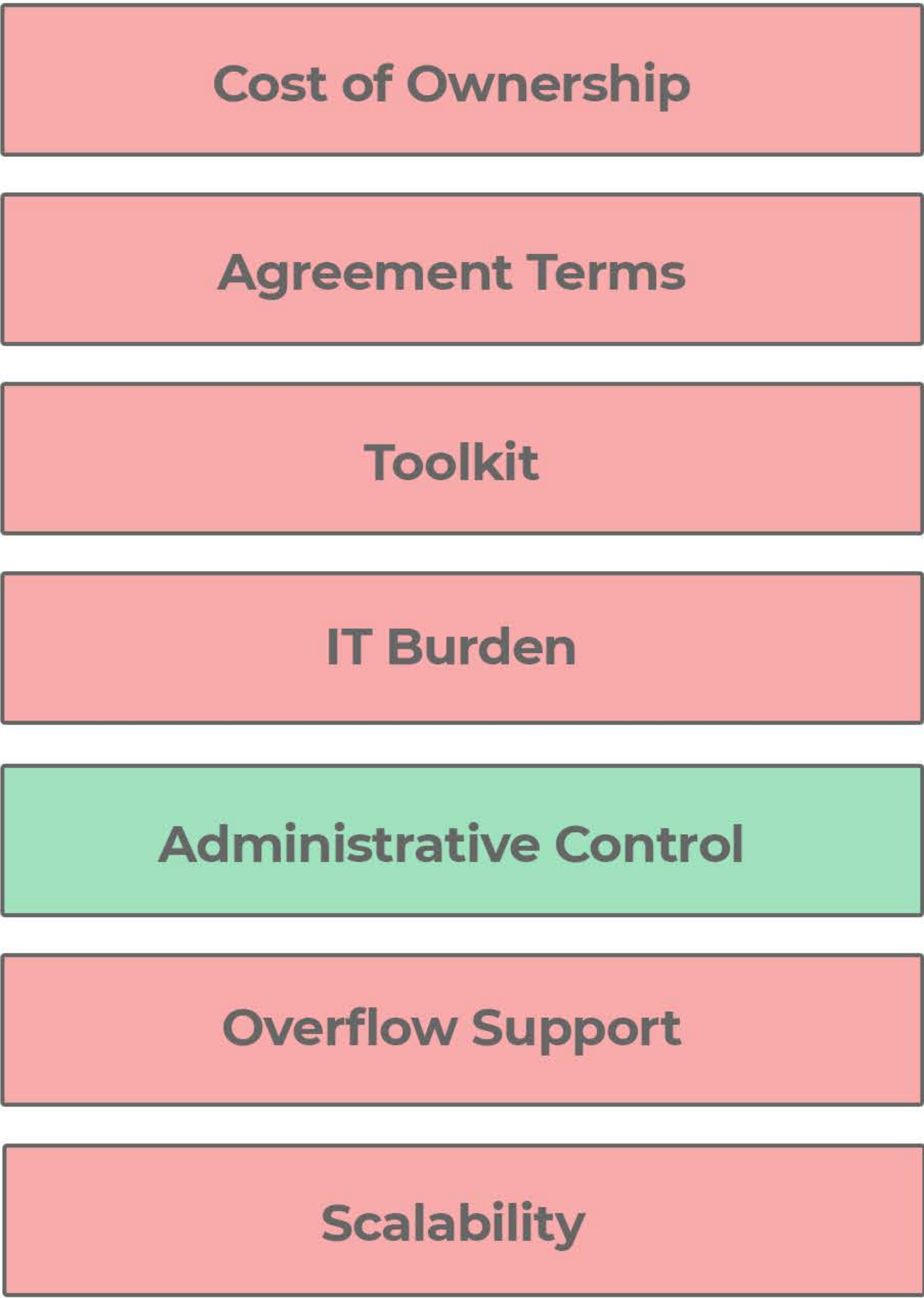
- *Administrative Control.* DGS would have full control (and responsibility) for the complete technology stack, allowing the firm to troubleshoot and optimize without involving a third party.

Disadvantages

- *Cost of Ownership.* In addition to the software license and infrastructure costs, personnel are required for system administration and maintenance (e.g., SQL administrator, RCA, RCIS, etc.).
- *Agreement Terms.* Term length is sub-optimal. Additionally, burst fees associated with temporary spikes in utilization can be expensive and easily exceed budgets.
- *Toolkit.* Bringing Relativity on-premise also commits the firm to bringing all other eDiscovery applications in-house, limiting their viability.
- *IT Burden.* Performing Relativity installation, maintenance, and upgrades requires extensive knowledge, continuing education, and constant attention.
- *Overflow Support.* None.
- *Scalability.* Infrastructure resources, such as storage, can be difficult to predict in a law firm environment, leading to both under- and over-provisioning.

Analysis

The costs for servers, hardware, personnel for installation, upgrades, and ongoing maintenance made this the highest cost option. Ultimately, the lack of flexibility associated with hardware provisioning, burst fees for users, and the increased cost associated with supplemental technologies rendered the model impractical.



● Negative ● Neutral ● Positive

3. Relativity in Azure (Not RelativityOne*)

Summary of Solution:

License and deploy an instance of Relativity in DGS' existing Azure environment. Essentially the same as the On-Premise solution but deployed on a virtual environment within Microsoft's cloud.

Advantages

- *Administrative Control.* This configuration would allow DGS to make all decisions regarding Relativity independently.
- *IT Burden.* Azure alleviates much of the pressure around hardware provisioning, staffing, provisioning/scaling, and security.
- *Scalability.* Hosting Relativity in an Azure cloud allows the hardware to be paid for based on actual usage rather than buying servers based on forecasted usage.

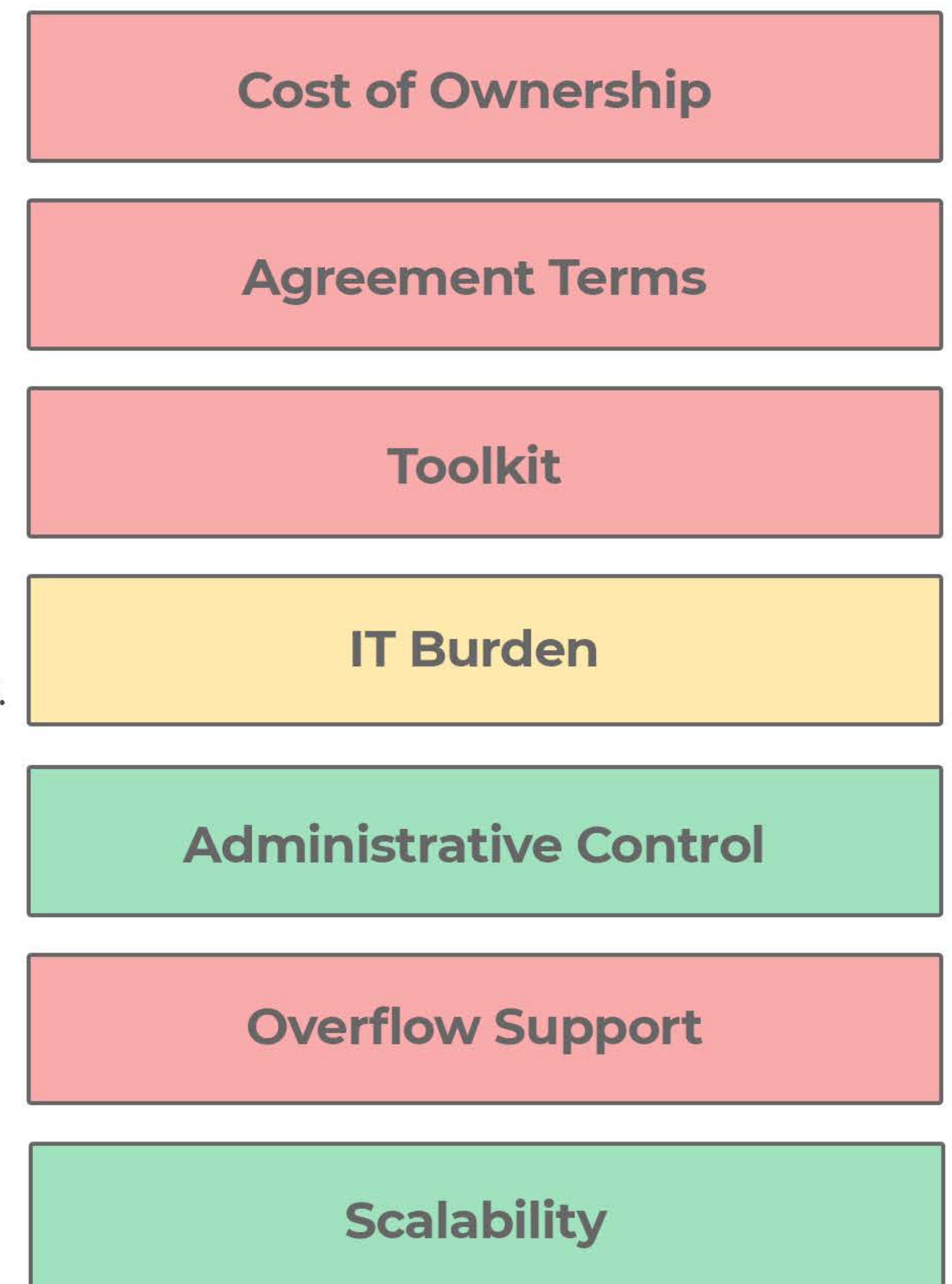
Disadvantages

- *Cost of Ownership*
 - Machines in a standard Relativity configuration have a relatively high idle time, which equates to wasted money in an Azure setup.
 - SQL performance tuning, installation, maintenance, and upgrade cycle would still require new personnel.
- *Toolkit.* Licensing Relativity and deploying in a public cloud severely limits the number of available supplemental technologies that could be employed.
- *Terms.* Term length is sub-optimal. Additionally, burst fees associated with temporary spikes in utilization can be expensive and easily exceed budgets.

Analysis

Estimates showed that licensing Relativity in Azure would be 10% lower at the base level than contracting with a service provider. Buying Relativity licenses for an Azure installation would be more cost efficient, but the licensing model was too rigid, not allowing for scaling up or down based on activity. This made it impractical.

* RelativityOne is the cloud-based version of the application that also runs on Microsoft's public cloud, Azure.



● Negative ● Neutral ● Positive

4. RelativityOne (SaaS)

Summary of Solution:

Engage with Relativity’s cloud-based solution, RelativityOne, effectively outsourcing the entire technology stack including both software and the supporting infrastructure. DGS Litigation Support would continue to support the firm.

Advantages

- *Cost of Ownership.* RelativityOne is a cost-effective way to procure Relativity, but burst fees can be expensive.
- *IT Burden.* Relativity is a trusted source of quality software and its security team is robust.
- *Scalability.* Azure-based RelativityOne scales effortlessly to accommodate large productions, review teams, processing projects, and more.

Disadvantages

- *Toolkit.* Only Relativity. Relativity would not necessarily provide access to any competing technologies, and with Relativity’s reach, all eDiscovery technologies are competing. Even if technology providers are able to offer RelativityOne compatible services, those licenses would have to be negotiated and paid for independently, increasing the burden on DGS to identify, test, and push adoption of technology.
- *Terms.* Commitment length and burst fees make it difficult to scale down as large matters come offline.
- *Support.* Relativity’s experts are well-equipped to support their product but little else.

Analysis

Although RelativityOne represents a significant savings over the on-premises counterpart, RelativityOne isn’t cheap. The downside to RelativityOne is its inability to provide product agnostic support. This, along with concerns about burst fees, made RelativityOne the least desirable option.

Cost of Ownership

Agreement Terms

Toolkit

IT Burden

Administrative Control

Overflow Support

Scalability

● Negative ● Neutral ● Positive

5. Oasis

Leverage the Oasis “Tenancy” model, gaining access to a suite of eDiscovery applications hosted in a fully managed, secure private cloud. Similar to SaaS solutions, like RelativityOne, but with access to multiple leading eDiscovery tools.

Advantages

- *Cost of Ownership.* Overall cost comparable to SaaS providers like Disco and Relativity.
- *Agreement Terms.* Flexible billing options include pay-as-you-go, monthly, annual, and multi-year options.
- *Toolkit.* There is no comparable solution available in the market. In addition to Relativity, Oasis supports Brainspace, NexLP, Blackout, Matter Analytics, CloudNine, Nuix, Law, and others. Oasis also offers administrative tools, such as SQL Server, Media Shuttle, and ReadySuite.
- *IT Burden.* Private cloud options give firm administrators the level of control they prefer.
- *Administrative Control.* Full control of virtually every administrative aspect of supported applications.*
- *Scalability.* Like other SaaS offerings, the technology will scale easily. Oasis also provides economic models that scale appropriately.

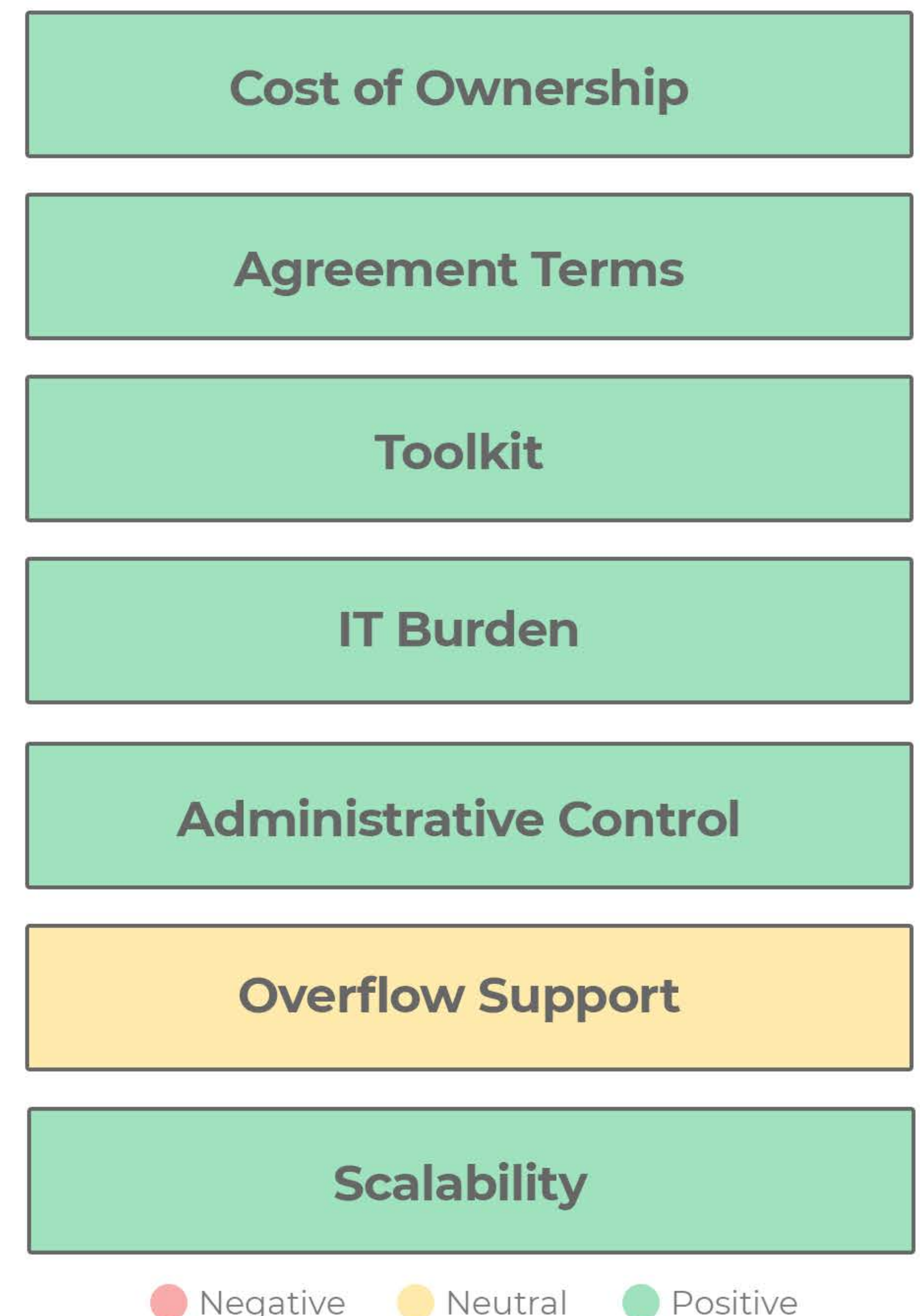
Disadvantages

- *Overflow support.* Although Oasis provides both training and subject matter expertise on the applications they support, they do not provide project management, consulting, document review, or similar “service” offerings.

Analysis

Oasis proved to be the best solution for DGS in light of the firm’s preference to maintain virtually all service aspects in-house while providing outsourced IT and low-cost ownership. Oasis allows DGS to remain focused on delivering high-quality solutions to the firm’s internal and external clients without incurring the extraordinary costs associated with licensing, deploying, and supporting their technology in-house.

** Limitations, typically due to security concerns, may apply.*



Analysis Summary (Graphic)

● Negative
 ● Neutral
 ● Positive

1: LSP	2: Rel on Premise	3: Rel in Azure	4: RelOne	5: Oasis
Cost of Ownership	Cost of Ownership	Cost of Ownership	Cost of Ownership	Cost of Ownership
Agreement Terms	Agreement Terms	Agreement Terms	Agreement Terms	Agreement Terms
Toolkit	Toolkit	Toolkit	Toolkit	Toolkit
IT Burden	IT Burden	IT Burden	IT Burden	IT Burden
Administrative Control	Administrative Control	Administrative Control	Administrative Control	Administrative Control
Overflow Support	Overflow Support	Overflow Support	Overflow Support	Overflow Support
Scalability	Scalability	Scalability	Scalability	Scalability

Results

After rigorous analysis, DGS determined that Oasis was the best solution for their firm’s specific goals.

The transition to Oasis took approximately one month, preceded by a few months of diligent planning. The migration was a joint project between DGS and Oasis, with Oasis providing a comprehensive roadmap for the process.

Immediately after implementation, DGS considered the transition a success and regarded the Oasis platform as an instant upgrade in terms of throughput, available functionality, and ease of use.

Follow-up (Six Months Later)

Comments collected from interviews conducted with DGS before, during, and six months after the transition to Oasis have been consolidated into a few key categories.

Analytics

Oasis currently supports six independent tools broadly categorized as “analytics.” These tools include solutions for email threading, predictive coding, near duplicate detection, sentiment analysis and dozens more. DGS was eager to leverage Brainspace and H5 Matter Analytics, previously unavailable to the team due to technical and budgetary constraints.

Professional Services

Onboarding a new platform like Relativity or Brainspace can be extremely time consuming and expensive. Not only do eDiscovery tools like these have a very high cost of entry (licensing, servers, migration, etc.), they also incur a high cost for adoption. They require a different type of knowledge compared to classic eDiscovery review and it takes time to work out how they can be implemented in existing workflows.

“For every tool in Oasis’ suite of technology, they have experts with the knowledge and experience required to demo, train, and effectively implement new solutions.”

- Chad Ergun, CIO at Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP

Cost

By partnering with Oasis, DGS was able to leverage Oasis’ existing licenses and expertise to utilize these tools with a significantly lowered cost of entry. Compared to the cost DGS would incur for licenses that would never be fully utilized, Oasis’ offering for consumption-based billing provided a substantial savings.

“In today’s eDiscovery field, I want to have the best flexibility. I want to be able to tell my clients and attorneys that we have the best tools in the market – that’s what we get with Oasis.”

- Chad Ergun

Marketing

DGS has capitalized on their relationship with Oasis to boost their firm’s reputation. DGS is able to confidently assert that they have adopted and use the industry’s best technology solutions, in the most secure data center in the country, adhering to the highest international standards for security, privacy, and compliance.

Scalability

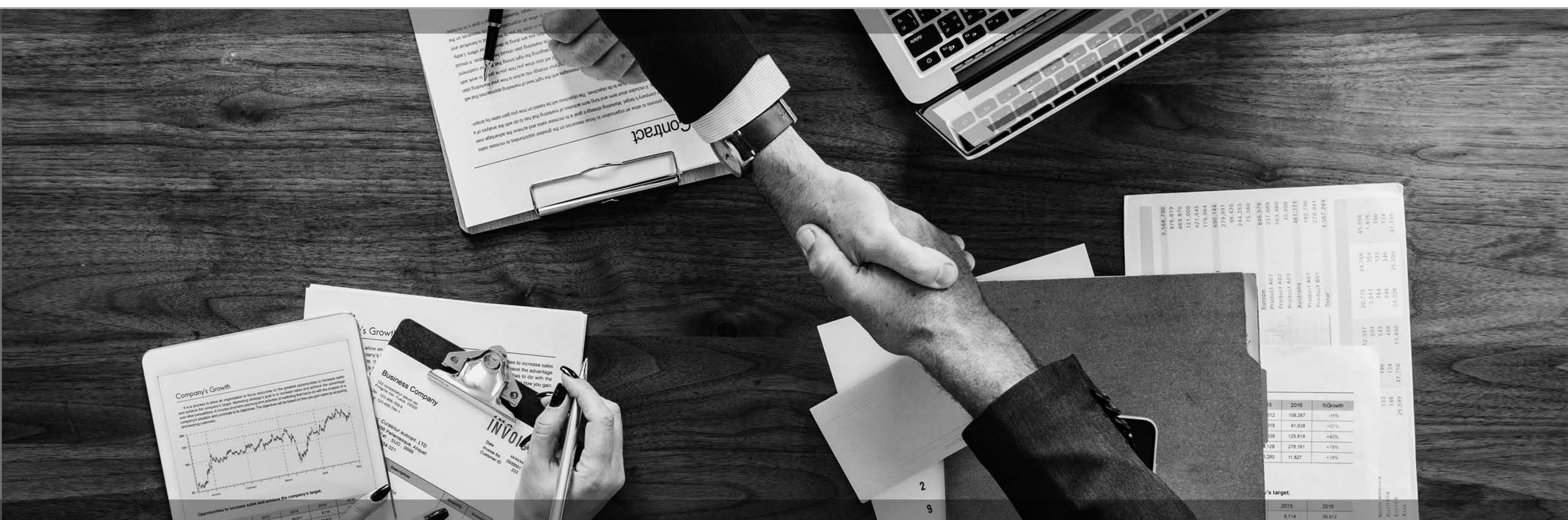
The benefits of Oasis' setup allowed DGS a degree of scalability that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive. For example, DGS commonly works on cases that spike, doubling or tripling their standard Relativity user count. If DGS were using an in-house solution, they would need to outsource these large cases to avoid burst fees and long-term license increases. This still incurs high cost as well as the frustration of working in multiple environments and the inconvenience of losing the level of control the eDiscovery team desired. By partnering with Oasis, DGS was able to scale up their uses and pay for the increased usage only while it was in effect, at the same time retaining full access and control over their data within the same environment.

Conclusion

The partnership between DGS and Oasis proved to be the right course of action as was predicted in the evaluation and analysis of eDiscovery service options. DGS' previous arrangement of internal hosting with Ipro and outsourcing select cases to traditional eDiscovery vendors was proving costly and too inflexible. Oasis provided the eDiscovery infrastructure, software, and expertise that allowed DGS to focus on the firm's specialties and continue to grow.

*“Instead of outsourcing our need,
we've established a partnership with Oasis.”*

- Chad Ergun



About Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP

Davis Graham & Stubbs LLP, one of the Rocky Mountain region's preeminent law firms, serves clients nationally and internationally, with a strong focus on corporate finance and governance, mergers and acquisitions, natural resources, environmental law, real estate, and complex litigation. Our lawyers have extensive experience working with companies in the energy, mining, technology, hospitality, private equity, manufacturing, asset management, and aviation industries. As the exclusive member firm in Colorado for Lex Mundi, the world's leading network of independent law firms, DGS has access to in-depth experience in 100+ countries worldwide. For more information about the firm, its practices, and lawyers, please visit dgslaw.com or contact Chief Information Officer Chad Ergun directly at (303) 892-7455.

About Oasis

Oasis provides secure, private cloud solutions specifically designed for electronic discovery. We provide the data center, server infrastructure, software administration and all the service layers in between. In addition to supporting the software licenses that clients bring to Oasis, our clients can supplement their technology on a "rental" basis, choosing from a suite of industry-leading applications. Please contact Oasis at sales@oasisdiscovery.com or visit www.oasisdiscovery.com for more information and to schedule a meeting.

