

ABOVE THE LAW

TECHNOLOGY

Third-Party Subpoenas Cost Companies Big Money... This Helps Them Carve Some Of That Back

Startup Safari takes on persistent legal department headache.

By JOE PATRICE

August 18, 2021 at 3:15 PM



Everyone knows how expensive eDiscovery can get. But most folks rarely think about the institutions out there — often, but not always, third-parties — getting routinely harassed for mundane documents. We’re talking about the banks subpoenaed for customer bank records or the large employer asked to produce employment information in a divorce case. These aren’t requests that require outside counsel, but they’re also time-consuming projects for small legal departments to constantly deal with.

And worst of all, many legal departments don’t even get reimbursed for their effort because collecting on every low-value request can be more trouble than it’s worth. Consider the case of Red Robin... which just forced me to audibly say “[yummmm](#)” because jingles are powerful:

For individual team members, every step was manual, including drafting routine correspondence and declarations. Doing their work and tracking it also duplicated effort, as they recorded progress in spreadsheets, stored response documents in network drive folders, and kept paper copies of productions. For each response, they prepped and shipped a FedEx package. They focused on getting accurate responses out the door, with no time to invoice and pursue cost recovery.

It's a legal challenge that gets overlooked while we fret about Biglaw responsiveness reviews of terabytes of data, but every photocopying effort and FedEx envelope adds up. If each response costs a mere \$100, that turns into millions for Fortune 25 entities fielding hundreds of thousands of these a year.

But legal tech abhors a vacuum, and now there's a company focusing on this problem.

[Safari](#), founded, as the name sort of suggests, by core team members behind the “aughts” ebilling powerhouse Serengeti (later acquired by Thomson Reuters), aims to help legal departments streamline the response process and — ideally — recoup their money along the way.

Rob Thomas, VP of Strategic Development and not, in this case, lead singer of Matchbox Twenty, told me the team saw a need in the sheer volume of the problem. “A small bank may get 500 of these requests in a year — for divorce cases, bankruptcy, law enforcement requests, collection actions, personal injury. A bigger company, say a Fortune 25 company, they could be getting 125,000 requests a year. It's like a leak in a plumbing system, by not recouping costs on every little request it becomes a constant drain.”

Meanwhile, Safari automates the process, offering clients an opportunity to intake subpoenas via a registered agent feed, providing templates for all stages of the process while tracking the lifecycle of the subpoena in a central location, and then delivering the data through a secure online data portal. It's the last part that solves the fee issue, as the parties seeking the data have to clear a paywall to access the portal, guaranteeing no lawyer can skip out on the obligation to reimburse.

Safari estimates that its process saves customers [30-45 minutes per request](#) and [recovering \\$100 each time](#). Beyond that, by bringing the whole process under one roof, it

provides law departments with key data about what requests it's getting and which areas of the company are getting them — data that can be deployed to streamline other processes.

To go back to the plumbing analogy, it's good to see someone finally taking that leak seriously.

[Safari](#) [Safarisop.com]



Joe Patrice is a senior editor at Above the Law and co-host of [Thinking Like A Lawyer](#). Feel free to [email](#) any tips, questions, or comments. Follow him on [Twitter](#) if you're interested in law, politics, and a healthy dose of college sports news. Joe also serves as a [Managing Director at RPN Executive Search](#).

TOPICS

In-House Counsel, Safari, Technology
