

# High-risk shared drive ROT reduction: Legal and Finance

## Executive summary

We propose a focused initiative to audit and remediate unstructured data within shared drives used by the Legal and Finance teams, where sensitive materials — such as contracts, litigation prep, and financial records — are stored with outdated, duplicate, and abandoned files.

**This ROT (redundant, obsolete, and trivial) reduction effort will:**

- Lower our legal, regulatory, and data breach risk
- Improve our ability to locate documents and reduce clutter
- Serve as a controlled pilot for broader unstructured data governance initiatives

## Problem statement

Unstructured data stored in Legal and Finance shared drives has accumulated over years without consistent governance, largely due to the fast-paced, reactive nature of these functions. Staff often need to prioritize speed over structure, rapidly generating and storing documents without proper ownership models or retention enforcement.

As a result, sensitive materials such as contracts, tax filings, and litigation prep documents are now mixed with duplicates, outdated drafts, and abandoned working files. Without centralized oversight or governance processes, these repositories have become bloated, disorganized, and pose an increased risk.

**This creates several key risks and challenges for the business:**

**Audit and legal exposure:**

Over-retained or mismanaged data increases risk during investigations, eDiscovery, or regulatory audits, resulting in higher legal costs, reputational damage, or even penalties.

**Productivity drag:**

Staff spend extra time locating the correct version of documents, leading to delays, redundant work, or errors in critical legal and financial processes.

**Security and privacy risk:**

Sensitive content may be improperly shared, stored in unsecured folders, or accessible by unauthorized users.

**Increased storage and infrastructure costs:**

Retaining redundant and obsolete files consumes resources that could otherwise be optimized or reduced.

Left unaddressed, this ROT data not only drives up operational cost and complexity; it puts the business at risk. Tackling this issue in a focused, high-value area like Legal or Finance provides a measurable way to reduce risk, improve data confidence, and build the foundation for a sustainable governance program.



## Recommended approach

This initiative will focus on shared drives used by the Legal and Finance departments. The proposed steps include:

<b>Discovery and assessment:</b> Inventory shared drive contents, identify redundant, obsolete, and trivial (ROT) files, and surface high-risk or sensitive content.	<b>Stakeholder collaboration:</b> Engage Legal/Finance to validate findings, clarify retention requirements, and agree on acceptable cleanup thresholds.	<b>Remediation planning:</b> Define defensible rules for deletion, retention, or archiving based on content type, age, and business value.	<b>Execution and reporting:</b> Apply cleanup actions, track progress, and produce reports for auditability and lessons learned.
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## Business impact

<b>Risk reduction</b>	Reduce exposure to legal, audit, and privacy risk by eliminating unmanaged or over-retained content.
<b>Efficiency</b>	Improve employee productivity by eliminating clutter and making critical files easier to find and manage.
<b>Cost optimization</b>	Free up storage capacity and reduce overhead associated with managing legacy data.
<b>Compliance</b>	Support defensible deletion practices and align retention with legal and financial obligations.

## Pilot plan

Phase	Timeline	Activities
Phase 1: Discovery	Weeks 1–4	Assess content within Legal/Finance drives; identify ROT, duplicates, and high-risk content.
Phase 2: Planning	Week 5	Collaborate with department stakeholders to validate findings and define cleanup criteria.
Phase 3: Remediation	Weeks 6–12	Apply cleanup actions and classify data according to retention needs.
Phase 4: Wrap-Up	Weeks 13–16	Report on outcomes, share learnings, and recommend next steps for scaling to other high-risk departments.



## Targeted outcomes and metrics

The value of this pilot will be demonstrated through:

- Percent reduction in ROT and duplicate files
- Volume of high-risk content remediated or properly retained
- Time saved locating relevant documents
- Documented improvement in audit readiness and retention alignment
- Stakeholder satisfaction and readiness to support a broader governance initiative

**Similar initiatives have reduced ROT by over 65%, freeing up 4TB of storage and improving audit response times by 40%.**

## Requirements:

We are requesting:

- **Cross-functional support** from Legal, Finance, IT, and Risk/Compliance to guide the initiative
- **Access to shared drives** to perform discovery and cleanup activities
- **Initial funding and resourcing** to support discovery, remediation, and reporting
- **Executive sponsorship** to champion this pilot and position it as a foundation for enterprise-wide governance of high-risk and high-value unstructured data