

Meeting the moment: How strategic automation accelerated a high-stakes breach response

Deloitte helped a national retailer to respond to a ransomware incident with speed and precision

BACKGROUND

When a national retailer experienced a ransomware incident that potentially exposed personal data, the organization needed to move fast, without sacrificing rigor. With stores in multiple states, the organization faced varying regulatory notification and reporting requirements—requiring speed and accuracy under tight deadlines. The immediate priority was to determine what personal data was exposed and which individuals were affected.

To help the retailer respond with confidence, Deloitte put a breach-response playbook into action—mobilizing people, process, and technology, enabled by RelativityOne and Relativity Data Breach, to rapidly identify impacted individuals and support regulatory-ready reporting.

THE CHALLENGE: RAPIDLY IDENTIFYING IMPACTED INDIVIDUALS—UNDER SCRUTINY

The retailer needed to analyze hundreds of thousands of files, primarily complex spreadsheets, to identify individuals whose **personally identifiable information (PII)** may have been impacted. Beyond speed, the workflow needed to be **audit-ready**—able to withstand regulatory scrutiny with transparent methods, consistent application of criteria, and documented quality controls.

OUR APPROACH: A TWO-STEP WORKFLOW BUILT FOR SPEED AND SCALE, AND DEFENSIBILITY

Deloitte implemented a two-step review approach designed to deliver rapid identification and a defensible record of how determinations were made. The workflow emphasized repeatability (consistent searches and analytics), traceability (clear documentation of how PII was detected and extracted), and validation (statistically grounded checks to support confidence in the results). This aligns to how we help clients reduce risk and drive compliance through defensible data evaluation and modernized, AI-enabled workflows.

Step 1: Automated review (scale)

- Automated detection to flag documents with potential PII and extract key fields (e.g., individual names and associated PII).
- Applied searches and analytics to group like files, accelerating downstream review while keeping methods consistent and repeatable.
- Leveraged Relativity's spreadsheet QC capability to focus review on high-likelihood columns—critical given the unusually large number of complex spreadsheets.

Step 2: Targeted quality control (precision + auditability)

- Conducted targeted manual validation using **statistically valid sampling** to confirm extraction accuracy and document confidence levels.
- Consolidated extracted PII and applied quality checks to support a client-ready reporting package designed to stand up to review.

MAKING IT WORK END-TO-END

Relativity's open architecture and flexible workflows helped Deloitte tailor the solution to the specific breach scenario and data realities—especially spreadsheet-heavy populations—while keeping the process cohesive end-to-end.

This moved the team beyond simple keyword searching and avoided full manual review of large spreadsheets by using analytics and structured QC to prioritize and validate results.

It also reduced reliance on disconnected tools and handoffs by integrating tasks, decisions, and quality checkpoints into a single workflow—strengthening traceability and auditability while still moving at speed.

THE IMPACT



Estimated 50–60% improvement in review efficiency versus a traditional manual-first approach, reducing turnaround time and resource demand.



Meaningful cost savings during a time-sensitive, high-stakes response.



Faster multi-state reporting, helping the retailer meet regulatory timelines ahead of schedule.

What's next?

Deloitte continually enhances its automation capabilities and strengthens quality controls to help future clients respond to data breaches faster and more cost-effectively—while maintaining a defensible, repeatable approach that supports compliance expectations.

This document contains general information only and Deloitte is not, by means of this document, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This document is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your business, you should consult a qualified professional advisor. Deloitte shall not be responsible for any loss sustained by any person who relies on this document.

As used in this document, "Deloitte" means Deloitte Transactions and Business Analytics LLP, a subsidiary of Deloitte LLP. Please see www.deloitte.com/us/about for a detailed description of our legal structure. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting.

Copyright © 2026 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.