



Creating a clear digital path.

Creating success after acquisition for Mendeley.

After being acquired by Elsevier in 2013, Mendeley found itself experiencing some of the challenges that might be expected by any company transitioning from start-up to a more established business.



It asked Equal Experts to analyse and assess its organisational and technical architecture – and propose solutions.

By conducting interviews with staff, Mendeley's technical landscape was pieced together, giving a comprehensive view of its overall digital architecture, including all current projects and the processes being used.

Equal Experts presented a list of recommendations to enable the business to make better decisions about technology choices both now, and in the future.

6 weeks

to identify all organisational problems in full.

Overview

a complete picture of the digital and technological landscape.



About Mendeley.

Part of the Elsevier group of companies, Mendeley provides products and services for academic researchers. It is best known for its reference manager, which customers use to manage and share research papers and create bibliographies for scholarly articles.

INDUSTRY



Academic research and publishing

ORGANISATION SIZE



104 employees

LOCATION



London, UK

SERVICES



Problem-solving and consultancy

Understanding the business needs of a large organisation, technical needs of a startup, and bridging the gap between them.

Mendeley's free-to-use reference manager and academic social network allow users to easily manage their research, connect and collaborate with more than five million researchers worldwide. It serves customers via three platforms: desktop, web and mobile – with apps for both iOS and Android.

Following the acquisition by Elsevier in 2013, Mendeley found itself experiencing challenges. These were the kinds of challenges that can be expected by a company transitioning from a start-up to a more established business – and they are all accompanied by an increased degree of complexity and inconsistency of data.

Mendeley approached Equal Experts to identify any organisational problems that existed – and to propose solutions. This included:

- Investigating assumptions around the (perceived) status quo of the current Mendeley infrastructure and codebase.
- Production of technical diagrams and documentation to show the actual current state.
- Presenting recommendations that would enable Mendeley to move forwards more efficiently and effectively.



Effectively gathering data – or how ‘brain dumps’ light the way.

To begin we conducted interviews with staff across all of Mendeley’s technological areas. These conversations, or ‘brain dumps,’ allowed Equal Experts to gather together a complete knowledge of Mendeley’s technical landscape, offering a view of all current projects, their purposes, tools and processes being used, issues and successes as well as any associated code repositories.

This analysis highlighted an unnecessarily high level of customisation and use of niche tools, a lack of governance around whether products were fit for purpose, the ‘definition of done,’ and products being driven by developers , with no accountability or control, rather than by customer need.

A list of observations was drawn up, including the following:

- Make technology more visible, with the product/team backlogs covering all work that that team has to deliver together.
- Prioritise the decommissioning of legacy systems, to remove delivery uncertainty surrounding new initiatives, projects, features and bug fixing. The time/cost of delivery is hard to define when a dependency on a legacy system is identified.
- Simplify and stabilise the deployment pipeline. Continuous deployment is a great goal to aim for, but it shouldn’t come at the cost of a loss in productivity, or the ability to change.
- Adopt a consistent approach to similar problems. While we support team autonomy, working in total isolation is undesirable.

A clear path for better future decision making.

This was not a software delivery project. Instead Equal Experts used expertise in technology and process to solve a different type of business problem.


Before, Mendeley had an incomplete view of its overall digital architecture. Now, it has a complete understanding. **This means the business can make better decisions about technology choices now and in the future.**



*The comprehensive review of the technical architecture was a 'valuable exercise'. Equal Experts adapted brilliantly to **focus on the things that were most important to us** and were very good listeners when it came to interviewing members of staff... they objectively recorded the current state and made a number of sensible recommendations. Their work was high quality, and we would definitely engage them again.*

David Ingram, Head of Platform at Mendeley





Want to know more?

Are you interested in this project?

Or do you have one just like it?

[Get in touch](#). We'd love to tell you more about it.