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Scaling Staffing Contracts – A Mitchell Martin and Zeal Whitepaper

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the tools that fuel operations. Over the years, organizations have evolved from using paper filing cabinets to digital contract repositories, yet many still struggle to answer basic business questions without manual effort. What is the average margin across placements at Client X? Which contracts require specific insurance coverage? Where are active agreements geographically concentrated?

The data exists inside thousands of contracts. But for most staffing operations, extracting that intelligence would require, as one executive put it, "an army of people, and by the time we finish, the data would probably be old." This is the paradox of modern contract management. The organizations have solved storage, but not intelligence.

Context: Mitchell Martin's Challenge

Mitchell Martin, one of the largest employee-owned staffing firms in the U.S. and founded in 1984, understands this challenge firsthand. Managing approximately 3,000 client contracts and thousands of candidate placement agreements across IT, healthcare, and professional services, the firm had already implemented contract lifecycle management (CLM) solutions. Contracts were digitized and searchable.

> *Extracting intelligence would require, as one executive put it, "an army of people, and by the time we finish, the data would probably be old."*

Yet three critical gaps remained:

- **The Integration Gap:** The existing CLM operated separately from JobDiva, Mitchell Martin's applicant tracking system (ATS). Sales and recruiting teams rarely left their primary workflow to search for contracts, stalling adoption. Routine questions such as "Do we have a contract with ABC Company?" triggered email back-and-forth and manual searches by legal or operations staff.

- **Contract Capacity Challenges:** Like most staffing firms, Mitchell Martin manages two distinct contract types: client agreements and individual candidate placement contracts, each with very different volume and speed requirements.

- **The Data Extraction Problem:** Even when contracts were accessible, the strategic data inside them was not actionable. Questions about margins, insurance thresholds, or portfolio exposure required hours of manual review across hundreds of documents.

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Purpose

Beyond Storage to Strategic Intelligence This whitepaper explores how Mitchell Martin transformed contract management from a compliance function into a source of strategic intelligence by integrating Zeal's CLM platform directly into their existing workflow. Rather than focusing on technology alone, it examines the operational shifts that mattered most:

- How integration solved the adoption problem that undermines most CLM initiatives

- How unified contract management connected client and candidate agreements

- How real-time visibility streamlined processes from recruiting to onboarding

- How AI-powered intelligence (currently in development) enables data-driven decisions at scale

Who should read this: Operations leaders, technology directors, and sales executives at mid-to-large staffing firms ($50M+ revenue) who recognize that their contracts contain untapped business intelligence.

What you'll learn: Why integration-first CLM succeeds where standalone systems fail, and what becomes possible when contract data is truly actionable.

A Note on AI and Staffing Operations The staffing industry has been flooded with AI promises, from automated matching to predictive analytics. Some deliver value, many overpromise. This whitepaper addresses a more fundamental question: before using AI to predict future actions, can firms use it to understand past and current obligations? Mitchell Martin's approach, making contract data accessible first and intelligent second, offers an appropriate roadmap. As one executive explained: "We're not just building a filing cabinet. We're building a foundation for business intelligence that doesn't require an army of people to extract insights from it." That is where Mitchell Martin and Zeal's story begins.

The Staffing Industry's Operational Pressures

The U.S. staffing industry represents a $188.7 billion market, placing over 60 million people into jobs globally each year. At this scale, contract management efficiency has shifted from an administrative concern to a strategic differentiator.

While technology adoption is often cited as a challenge, the deeper issue is fragmentation. Disconnected systems prevent firms from scaling efficiently or responding quickly to market demands. Common deficiencies include:

- **Silos:** Disconnection between legal, sales, and recruiting teams reduces visibility, slows placements, and delays revenue. These issues are often attributed to individuals rather than structural gaps. Real-time coordination across functions has become essential as competition intensifies.
- **Manual Work:** Legal teams face increasing administrative burdens that do not scale. Modern agreements require detail and oversight that manual processes cannot sustain. Generic tools often add friction instead of reducing it, failing to account for staffing-specific needs.

- **Visibility :** Contracts contain critical business intelligence, yet this data often goes unexamined. What was once accepted as time-consuming reporting is now a competitive liability. Profitability increasingly depends on extracting insights from contractual terms.
- **Speed-to-Placement**: These challenges converge during placements. Each hour of contract delay reduces the likelihood of securing a candidate, who may accept competing offers. In staffing, delays directly jeopardize revenue.

Contract Capacity Changes

Staffing firms face a complexity uncommon in most industries: every placement requires contracts on both sides of the transaction.

Two Parallel Contract Streams Client-side agreements include master services agreements, statements of work, and rate cards defining pricing, compliance, insurance, and engagement terms. Candidate-side contracts are generated for each placement, defining compensation, duration, and responsibilities. These agreements represent the actual revenue events.

The Complexity at Scale Unlike industries managing a single contract per transaction, staffing firms manage parallel streams. A single client agreement may govern dozens or hundreds of candidate contracts.

Client contracts require careful negotiation. Candidate contracts demand speed. Managing both effectively requires systems that support high-volume execution while maintaining compliance and visibility. When these streams are disconnected, firms lose insight into their full contractual position. Questions about active placements, average margins, or upcoming renewals become difficult to answer. Generic CLM platforms rarely account for this dual reality, limiting their effectiveness in staffing environments.

The ATS and The Operational Backbone

In staffing, the ATS is the operational backbone. It manages client relationships, candidate profiles, placements, rates, durations, and billing details.

Sales and recruiting teams spend their workdays in the ATS. When contract information lives elsewhere, accessing it requires context switching. While minor in isolation, this friction compounds across daily interactions.

This disconnect leads to predictable adoption failures. Users need contract information immediately and in context.

When accessing it requires leaving the ATS, they avoid the system altogether. Contract data exists but is inaccessible at decision-making moments.

Industry-Wide Pattern

Leading ATS platforms are designed for fast-paced staffing workflows. For CLM solutions to succeed, they must integrate directly into these systems, which platforms like JobDiva do. Without native integration, even advanced CLM platforms remain underutilized.

Why Generic CLM Fails Staffing

Staffing contract challenges reflect systemic pressures that generic CLM solutions rarely address.

The Integration Gap Standalone CLM platforms assume users will adopt another system. In staffing, work happens in the ATS. When contracts live elsewhere, users rely on emails and manual searches. CLM becomes an administrative tool rather than an operational resource.

Volume and Workflow Mismatch Generic CLMs assume linear workflows and moderate volumes. Staffing requires managing thousands of contracts simultaneously, with different workflows for client and candidate agreements that must remain connected.

Intelligence Extraction Barriers While generic CLMs support storage and retrieval, they rarely enable large-scale data extraction. Strategic questions about margins, insurance exposure, or pricing trends remain difficult to answer, leaving valuable data locked in documents.

The Compounding Effect Poor integration limits adoption. Low adoption drives manual workarounds. Manual processes prevent analysis. The result is sophisticated repositories that deliver limited strategic value. These challenges were not theoretical for Mitchell Martin. They shaped daily operations and informed the need for a fundamentally different approach.

Analysis of 61 contracts revealed that the Approval/Finance Review stage alone consumed over one-third (35%) of the total contract lifecycle, and three stages combined accounted for nearly three-quarters (74%)[4] of total cycle time. The longest stage averaged 16 days per contract, largely due to unclear ownership and competing priorities. By contrast, initial creation and final signature steps were relatively fast (3-5 days).

Context on Diagnosis

Before exploring the Zeal-Mitchell Martin partnership, it's important to highlight that this collaboration is a rare example of contract excellence. According to our CX and support teams, Mitchell Martin already had a strong, nearly flawless contract process prior to working with Zeal, limited only by the shortcomings of generic, non-staffing-specific tools.

This level of preparedness was highly unusual for Zeal. Both anecdotal evidence and data suggest it is rare within the staffing industry. As a result, Mitchell Martin was able to leverage a platform tailored to their contract management needs without first having to build extensive infrastructure or fix underlying structural issues. This enabled much faster adoption and onboarding. Mitchell Martin had already solved digital storage, contracts were centralized, digitized, and searchable. However, clear issues still prevented the firm from extracting strategic value from its agreements.

The Integration Gap

The organization primarily used JobDiva as its ATS, but users had to leave the platform to handle any contract-related tasks. Adoption of the previous CLM system was also low across departments. "We realized how much more efficient we could be if salespeople didn't have to access multiple systems for client related information," explained Joe Nullmeyer, VP & General Counsel at Mitchell Martin.

Most contract-related communication occurred over email, and finding a document could take up to 10 minutes. Since candidates often require multiple documents, these sourcing challenges were compounded. The impact was felt throughout the placement pipeline, affecting both operations and revenue.

As the General Counsel observed, the previous contract management tools were functional but disconnected from core systems and the team's daily workflows. This challenge is common among staffing organizations relying on tools that aren't built for their specific requirements (see Section 2).

Impact Calculation If a recruiter manages several active contracts each day, a "10-minute search tax" per document quickly leads to considerable delays.

Visibility and Data Insights The previous platform also lacked analytical capabilities. As a result, the legal department had no actionable insights into rates, placements, or contract performance metrics unless these were manually analyzed (a time-consuming process). These insights are crucial for the organization's financial health, extending beyond daily operations and compliance.

Questions about margins, pricing models, and insurance thresholds frequently required manual review. "There's a ton of information locked inside our contracts," explained Anthony Giardina, CTO at Mitchell Martin.

Manual extraction was impractical and unsustainable; by the time an analysis was complete, the data was already outdated. Given these challenges, the Mitchell Martin team searched for a tool that could solve these problems and deliver staffing-specific analytics.

These varied challenges prompted the organization to seek a specialized solution that fit their workflows and industry requirements while unlocking the data hidden in their contracts. "We looked for a solution that unlocks it without needing an army of resources," Giardina noted.

Integration as Intelligence Infrastructure

Zeal identified that the solution required system integration, not additional barriers. They proposed a JobDiva integration that embeds contract management directly within a dedicated tab, granting users access to contract creation, clause libraries, approval workflows, and document repositories, without leaving the ATS environment.

This approach was designed to break down interdepartmental silos through practical functionality rather than rhetoric. Recruiters could generate pre-filled contracts while managing placements, sales teams could advance deals with real-time legal updates, and finance teams could track milestones without the need for manual exports.

Synchronization between Zeal and JobDiva automates the flow of data entry, client information, rate structures, and placement details directly into contract templates. This reduces the time spent searching for documents from ten minutes to seconds and eliminates transcription errors associated with manual processes.

Tangible Changes

The integration delivered immediate operational efficiency: faster contract cycles, fewer errors, improved compliance, and seamless interdepartmental collaboration, all supported by Zeal specialists who drive adoption across teams. However, its strategic foundation is even more significant.

By centralizing contract data in a structured repository, Mitchell Martin built the foundation for contract intelligence, enabling pattern analysis, insight extraction, and strategic decision-making regarding rate optimization, client behavior, and operational performance. This shift, from contract management to extracting actionable intelligence, was the evolution that Mitchell Martin's leadership saw as essential to maintaining a competitive edge in an increasingly sophisticated staffing market. It was a necessary step in modernizing their legal operations.

Connecting Contract Data to Sales Departments

Zeal's value extended beyond contract access to strategic business intelligence. Mitchell Martin uses Apollo, a go-to-market platform, to identify prospects and manage their sales pipeline. With contract data flowing from Zeal into their broader tech stack, they could now connect contractual relationships to prospecting activities.

"Zeal starts the ball rolling in answering that question: Who are our clients?" Anthony explained. "Now that we know definitively who we have contracts with and when those contracts expire, we can create a list in our go-to-market tool that then says, well, these are the most likely contacts."

Integration as Intelligence Infrastructure

Real-Time Contract Visibility

Contract status became visible in real-time, alongside the placement record. The same system showing those placements showcased the candidates' current status: sent, viewed, signed, or completed.

Previously, recruiters had limited visibility into contract status. The workflow typically involved:

1. Recruiter submits candidate information to onboarding liaison
2. Onboarding liaison initiates contract process
3. Recruiter periodically checks with liaison: "Is the contract signed yet?"
4. Liaison manually checks status and reports back

"Now that contract lives next to the candidate record," Anthony explained, "we set up reminders to follow up with people and whatnot, but people can go back and reference the details that you agreed to, that you literally signed off on."

Context on Diagnosis

Operational Efficiency Gains The integration delivered measurable improvements across multiple dimensions.

Adoption and Access Adoption among the sales team reached nearly 100%, with no identified holdouts. The rollout was deliberately phased, starting with a small pilot group before expanding to the wider sales team. Once users gained access, adoption was immediate. The contrast with their previous CLM system, which struggled to achieve meaningful adoption, demonstrated that integration solved the fundamental barrier.

Metric	Before Zeal	After Zeal
Locating documents (Best Case)	10 minutes	Seconds
Email communications (Typical)	Hours to Days	Seconds
User Type	Interrupt-driven	Self-service
Interruptions to Ops	Dozens per week	Zero
Sales Team Adoption	Low	~100%

Contract access transformed from hours or days to seconds. Sales teams could now verify contract status, download agreements, and reference terms without leaving JobDiva. This eliminated the 10-minute search tax and the days-long email chains that previously characterized contract lookups.

Before the Zeal integration, contract lookups took 10 minutes in the best case, but typically required hours to days as requests bounced between team members via email. After integration, contract access became self-service through JobDiva, taking seconds with approximately 100% sales team adoption. The shift eliminated dozens of weekly interruptions to operations staff.

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Integration as Intelligence Infrastructure

Contract Volume Growth The unified system enabled Mitchell Martin to process contracts at significantly higher volumes. In 2024 (six months of data), Mitchell Martin processed 208 client contracts and 204 candidate contracts. Annualized, this represented approximately 416 client contracts and 408 candidate contracts per year.

By 2025, annual processing increased to 465 client contracts and 1,194 candidate contracts. This reflected a 12% increase in client contract processing and an 193% increase in candidate contract processing.

The dramatic increase in candidate contract processing reflects Mitchell Martin's ability to bring the other half of their contract portfolio into systematic management. With both contract types unified in a single system accessible through their primary workflow, the operational friction that previously limited candidate contract processing was eliminated.

Unified Visibility With both client and candidate contracts in a single system, Mitchell Martin gained complete visibility into their contractual position. Their portfolio comprises 2,071 total contracts: 673 client contracts and 1,398 candidate contracts. Questions that previously required manual review across disconnected systems became answerable through system queries.

> *Mitchell Martin processed 465 client contracts and 1,194 candidate contracts in 2025, compared to annualized 2024 rates of 416 and 408 respectively. Candidate contract processing increased 193% after unifying both contract types in Zeal. Client contract processing grew 12% year-over-year.*

Contract Processing Volume Growth Post-Integration

Client Contracts — Candidate Contracts
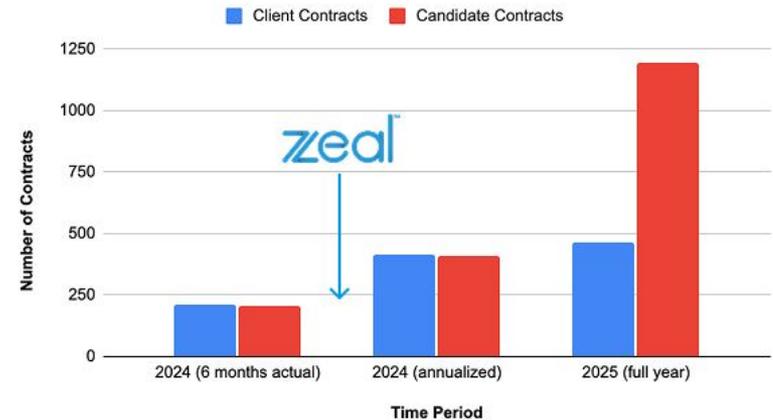
Integration as Intelligence Infrastructure

Contract Volume Growth Mitchell Martin's portfolio comprises 2,071 total contracts: 673 client contracts (32%) and 1,398 candidate contracts (68%). Candidate contracts represent the majority of the portfolio and the actual revenue-generating events. Prior to Zeal, this larger portion remained largely unmanaged in their CLM system.

Tech Stack Integration Contract data flowing from Zeal into Mitchell Martin's broader technology infrastructure enabled new capabilities. Integration with Apollo, their go-to-market platform, allowed them to definitively identify clients, track contract expirations, and align sales prospecting with contractual relationships.

Foundation for Intelligence

By centralizing contract data in a structured repository, Mitchell Martin built the foundation for contract intelligence. The infrastructure now exists to enable pattern analysis, insight extraction, and strategic decision-making regarding rate optimization, client behavior, and operational performance.

This evolution was essential to maintaining a competitive edge in an increasingly sophisticated staffing market. It was a necessary step in modernizing their legal operations from storage systems to intelligence infrastructure.

Mitchell Martin's Contract Distribution

Total Portfolio: 2,071 Contracts

Client Contracts
32.5%

673 (32.5%)

1,398 (67.5%)

Candidate Contracts
67.5%
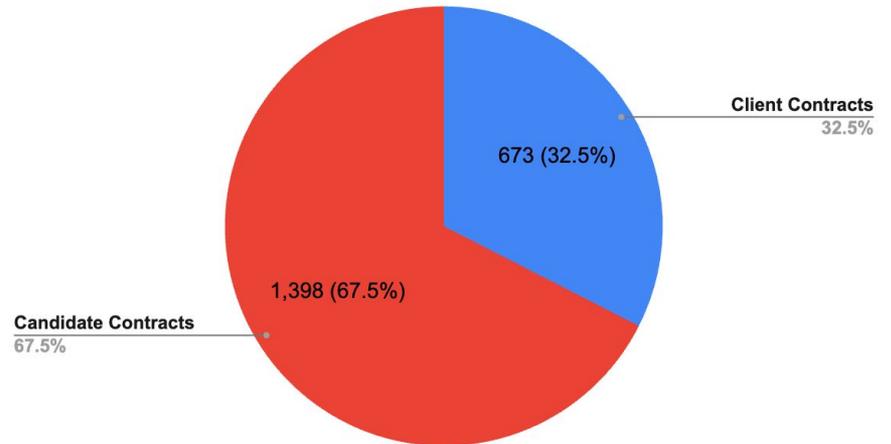
Conclusion and Looking Ahead

Mitchell Martin's transformation demonstrates that effective contract management in staffing requires more than digitization. It requires integration into existing workflows, unified visibility across both contract streams, and infrastructure that transforms documents into actionable intelligence.

By embedding Zeal's CLM platform directly within JobDiva, Mitchell Martin eliminated the adoption barriers that had limited their previous system, achieved nearly 100% sales team engagement, and enabled self-service access that freed legal and operations staff from interrupt-driven support. The 193% increase in candidate contract processing reflects not just operational efficiency, but the strategic shift from managing half their portfolio to managing their complete contractual position.

The foundation Mitchell Martin built extends beyond current operational gains. With contract data centralized in a structured repository and integrated across their technology stack, they positioned themselves to extract intelligence at scale. Questions about margin patterns, insurance requirements, pricing trends, and geographic concentrations no longer require manual review across hundreds of documents.

Infrastructure now exists to enable pattern recognition, predictive insights, and data-driven decision-making that was previously impractical. As Anthony Giardina noted, the goal was never just building a filing cabinet, but rather building a foundation for business intelligence that doesn't require an army of resources to extract.

For staffing firms facing similar challenges, Mitchell Martin's experience offers a clear roadmap:

1. Start with integration, rather than features.
2. Unify both sides of the contract portfolio, rather than managing client agreements in isolation.
3. Build systems that meet users where they work, rather than asking them to adopt separate platforms.

The shift from storage to intelligence isn't instantaneous, it requires laying the proper foundation first. Mitchell Martin's journey from functional contract management to strategic contract intelligence demonstrates what becomes possible when firms move beyond compliance thinking and recognize contracts as the strategic assets they are.

About Zeal

Zeal is a contract lifecycle management company founded in 2019 with specialized expertise in staffing and recruiting operations. Unlike general-purpose CLM systems, Zeal's platform is purpose-built for the unique workflows of staffing firms, recruiting agencies, and talent solution providers, incorporating the compliance controls, client-vendor structures, and high-volume agreement processes these organizations require.

Our approach combines technology with hands-on legal operations expertise. Beyond providing software, the company partners with clients through contract operations advisors who help map workflows, diagnose bottlenecks, and implement best practices tailored to staffing contract management—whether that's managing MSAs, SOWs, amendments, rate cards, or vendor agreements. This platform-plus-expertise model recognizes that effective contract visibility requires both the right tools and the operational alignment to ensure contracts move quickly, accurately, and compliantly across sales, recruiting, finance, and legal teams.

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About Mitchell Martin

At Mitchell Martin, everything starts with people. We connect talented individuals with meaningful work and help organizations build teams that move them forward. We bring this to life through our "Tech & Trust" approach—where smart technology meets human insight to create talent solutions that matter.

From technology to healthcare and beyond, we support hiring across a wide range of industries and roles. With offices across the U.S., India, and the Philippines, we build strong relationships and create connections that make a difference.

Mitchell Martin was built on the belief that helping people is the key to success. That people-first mindset still drives us today. We use smart tools to help us find talent, but it's our human insight that makes the difference. We don't just fill roles—we build relationships, support careers, and help organizations grow stronger.

From IT to healthcare and beyond, Mitchell Martin continues to expand by staying true to our roots: putting people first, always.

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