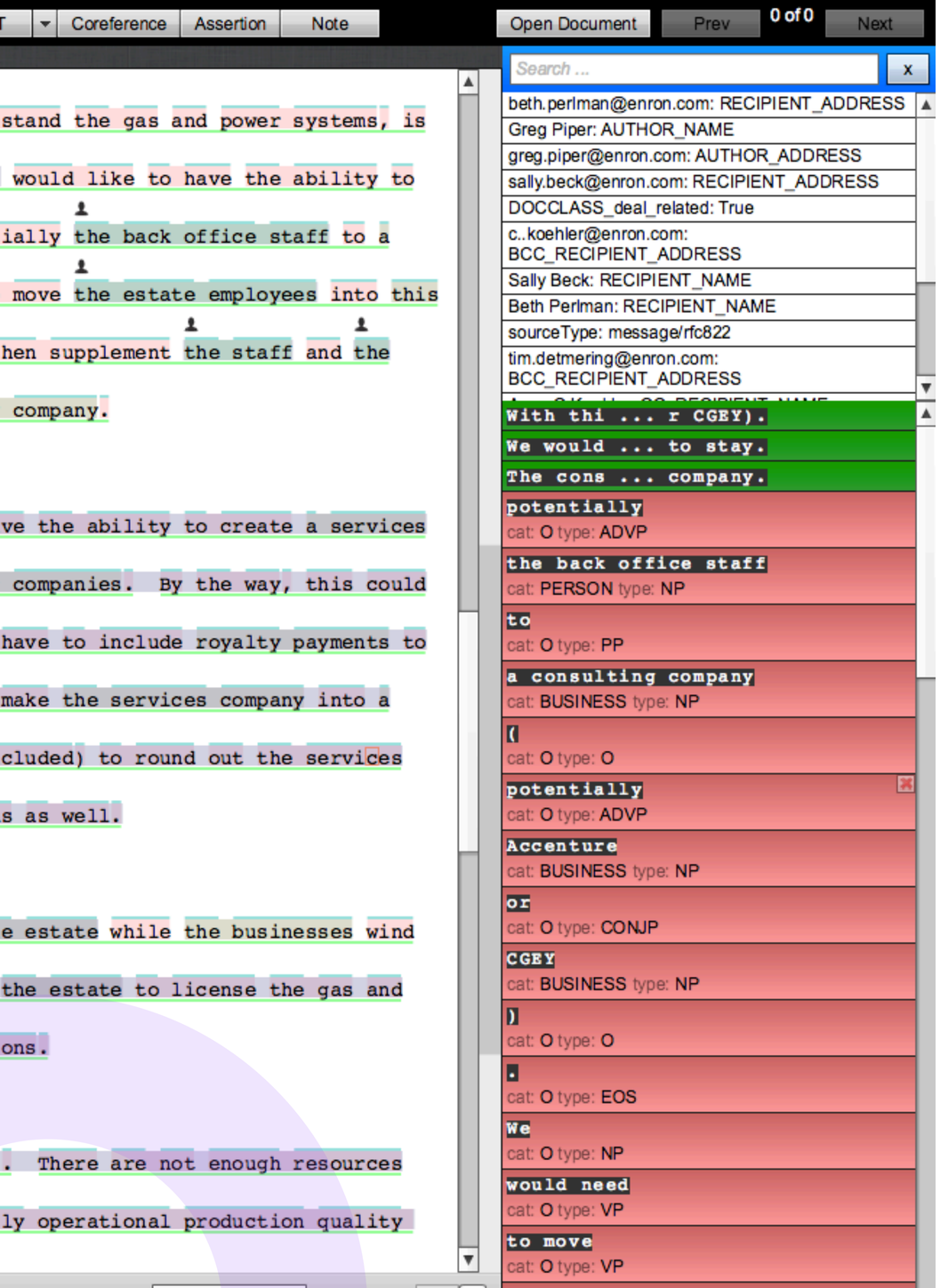

CONTEXT

# Design in the machine.

Digital Reasoning is a leading AI/ML startup based in Nashville, TN. Recognized by Forbes and Fast Company, the company's technology is used by the US government and Fortune 500 enterprises to **gain insights from large quantities of unstructured data**.

As Digital Reasoning's technology has matured, the company started building apps on its platform, but found that customers struggled with adopting them. The company needed a **hands-on UX leader with experience designing complex B2B products**, but this skillset proved difficult to find in the local market.

As a result, Digital Reasoning's CPO, who had previously worked with me at OpenText, reached out to me for help. I joined Digital Reasoning as its first Director of UX in October 2015, working remotely from Ottawa with frequent travel to the company’s offices and client sites in Nashville and New York City.




CHALLENGE

# Not designed for humans.

My first project at Digital Reasoning was the design of a new tool for data scientists to **annotate training datasets for machine learning models**.

Annotation is an essential part of a data scientist's workflow for developing new ML models for natural language processing. It involves meticulously applying layers of metadata ranging from tokens (words and punctuation) to phrases, sentences, and multi-sentence regions. **Accuracy and efficiency are both paramount.** Missing or incorrect annotations on a single training document can affect the accuracy of the whole model.

The company's existing annotation app was outdated and cumbersome to use even for skilled in-house data scientists. Among other UX issues, it forced users to continually switch their attention back and forth between content and annotation panes, as well as to scroll a great deal to find the right annotation to use.