



## BTI Client Service A-Team 2021

Survey of Law Firm Client Service Performance  
Executive Summary

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## Introduction

Client service soared.

Not just went up, but soared, during the pandemic. It also turned client service on its head.

Top legal decision makers changed their expectations each day the pandemic crept in. They relied on a select group of mission-critical client service activities to select the law firms to help. And help they did.

More clients report receiving excellent client service than ever before. Bravo to the law firms who delivered. And this was no ordinary client service — it's a whole new thing. Clients virtually doubled the number of core activities they use to separate excellent client service from the good. The most important client service activities during the pandemic are:

- Mobilizes Resources Quickly — **new this year**
- Fielding the Absolute Best Team — **new this year**
- Quickly Assessing the Situation — **new this year**
- Commitment to Help
- Delivering Value for the Dollar
- Client Focus
- Understanding Your Client's Business

Clients face a continuing stream of workforce issues, regulations, data privacy/cybersecurity, and a litigation backlog. They want to make deals again and want to settle their outstanding matters. Their needs are wider, require more rapid response, and many are new. And clients want law firms who know how to help — and act instead of asking what to do.

In addition, clients experienced the largest influx of new GCs ever recorded, at 30%. These new top legal decision makers had an acute need to understand things quickly — driving the expectations for quick assessments, mobilization, and fielding the best team.

A savvy group of 282 law firms jumped all over these new mandates. It was instinct. These firms knew exactly how to help their clients and acted quickly — without being asked. Some were already best in class performers and others got a shot of client service adrenaline — they moved from very good to excellent.

Of this group of 282 law firms, clients point to 70 showing more improved performance than all others. They used the new client demands and expectations to their advantage.

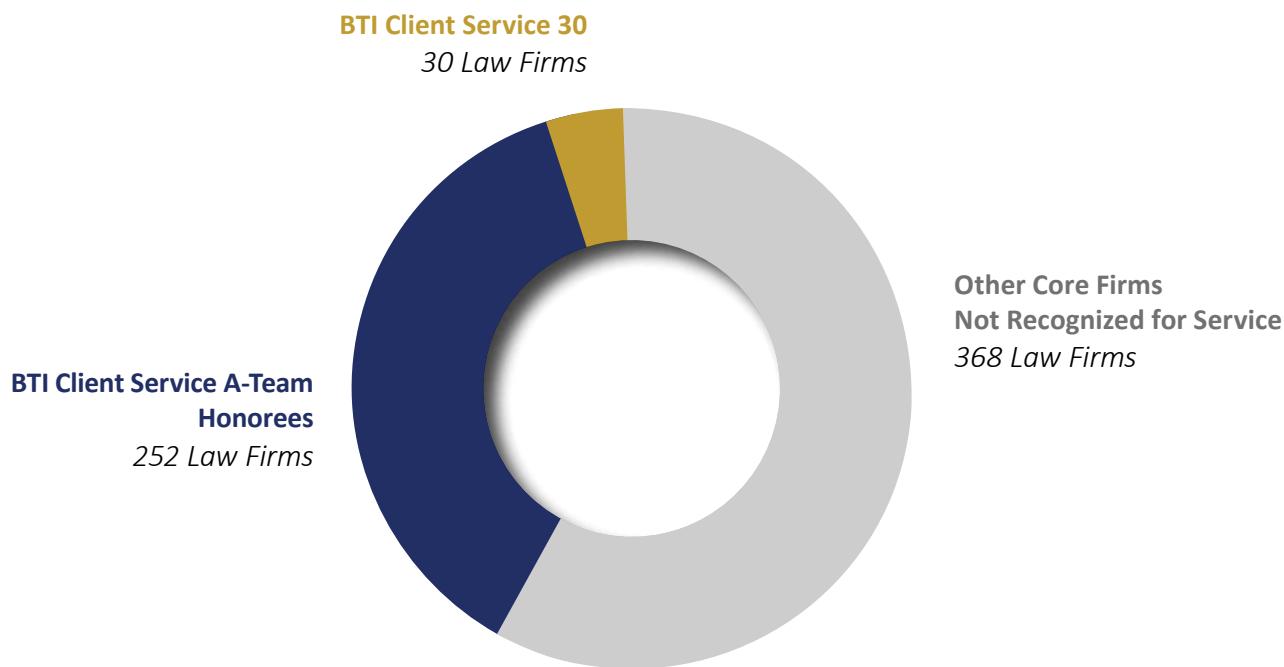
The pandemic created the most compelling need for superior client service as clients had no time to deal with anything less. Look for the client service needs to change and evolve — but the best performers will have the best access to clients and be able to spot the new expectations first. Unless other firms get their client service adrenaline up and take the lead.

Clients now have the highest expectations of law firms they have ever had. Combine this with new activities clients use to define excellent client service and you have client service volatility.

## The BTI Client Service A-Team Rankings

### 282 Law Firms Named by Corporate Counsel

According to BTI's research, 650 core law firms serve large and Fortune 1000 clients. However, only 282 law firms, down from 340 last year, are singled out — by name — by legal decision makers for their prowess in at least 1 of the 17 activities driving superior client relationships.



### The Best, the Strong, and the Missing in Action: Clients Rank Law Firm Client Service Performance

The BTI Client Service 30 perform 9 to 15 times better than all others. They account for just less than 5% of all law firms competing for business at larger companies. We take a deeper dive into these top 30 firms beginning on page 12.

Clients recognize another 38.7% of law firms chasing the heels of the leaders. This group is strong on key aspects of client service delivery and positioning themselves to give the other firms a run for their money. We present the details of how these firms rank — both overall — and according to 17 activities driving client service.

Fully 56.7% of all law firms serving this market are missing in action. The increased volatility offers more opportunity for these firms to get into the client service leadership groups. Success demands a clear plan and clean execution — it's been done and we have helped law firms do it.

## The BTI 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships

BTI's research with more than 17,000 buyers of professional services isolates the 17 activities essential to delivering superior client service and driving the best professional relationships. Corporate counsel then assess each activity on 2 dimensions — importance and differentiation — to identify the activities most important and most influential when evaluating legal providers.

### How to Read BTI's 17 Activities Quadrant Map

**BTI's 17 Activities Quadrant Map measures the components of client service along 2 key dimensions:**



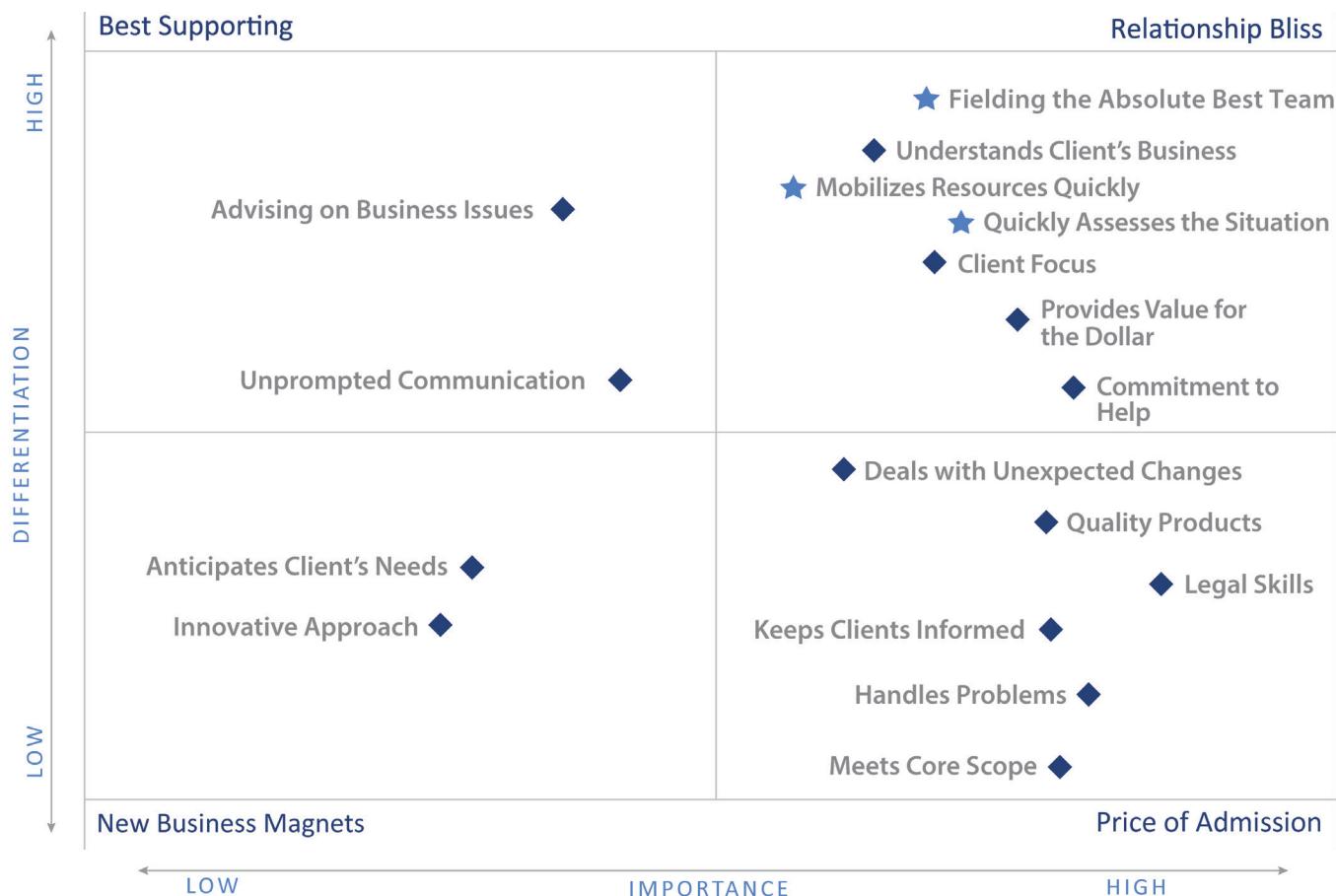
The horizontal axis of this chart represents relative importance of each activity. Activities on the right side of the chart are more important to legal decision makers than activities on the left side.



The vertical axis of this chart represents the strength of each activity's ability to differentiate a law firm. Activities on the top half of the chart are harder for legal decision makers to find in a law firm — making them strong differentiators.

BTI's ongoing research with corporate counsel shows how each quadrant in the chart exhibits distinct characteristics and plays an important role in developing and maintaining superior relationships with legal decision makers.

## 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships



Source: *Clientelligence: How Superior Client Relationships Fuel Growth and Profits* by Michael B. Rynowecer

## How Clients Define Client Service — Specifically: BTI's Client Service Quadrants

### What are BTI's 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships?

#### Quadrant 1: Relationship Bliss

**The activities driving relationship bliss, the best client relationships, are divided into 2 groups:**

4 activities are most important to corporate counsel and provide the highest levels of differentiation for law firms. Corporate counsel see these activities as scarce; yet, they drive hiring decisions on a continuing basis. Law firms can draw on these primary activities to reap substantially more business from existing clients and draw in new clients.

#### 3 New Overly Influential Activities: BTI Client Service Wild Cards Arise from the Pandemic

**The pace of change in a corporate counsel's office is nothing short of lightning speed. Clients see 3 new activities as mission critical and highly differentiating:**

- Mobilizes Resources
- Fielding the Absolute Best Team
- Quickly Assessing Your Situation

These 3 activities land squarely within Quadrant 1. We expect continual rapid change in the client service wild cards — giving advantage to the firms who can read the market.

#### Quadrant 2: Price of Admission

Corporate counsel see 6 activities as the minimum requirements expected from a law firm. These activities are of high importance but also are widely available. Clients expect you to deliver these activities in order to win work, but they do not differentiate you enough to be the sole decision criteria.

#### Quadrant 3: Best Supporting Activities

The high-value differentiators proven to motivate a client to seek you out. The best clients — those paying higher rates and having complex needs — value these activities the most.

#### Quadrant 4: New Business Magnets

2 activities stand out as providing high differentiation to the law firms able to deliver them. However, these activities are of lower importance to corporate counsel. On their own, these activities are nice to find in a law firm, but they won't drive a relationship over the long term.

## Clients Rank Law Firms by Performance Levels

**Nominated law firms receive 1 of 4 honors correlating to their level of achievement in each of the 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships:**



### **Best of the Best**

The Best of the Best, these firms perform 9 to 15 times better than typical law firms. Clients see these firms at the pinnacle of performance in the BTI Client Service A-Team; they set the standard for other firms to match.



### **Leaders**

Clients rank these firms as nipping at the heels of the Best of the Best. Part of a select group of firms, Leaders are on the cusp of the Best of the Best and stand ahead of most law firms in the market.



### **Distinguished**

The Distinguished client service performers are in the upper ranks of all law firms. They put tremendous distance between themselves and most other firms.



### **Standouts**

The law firms who stand out for their performance in the BTI Client Service A-Team, these firms are already ranked higher than almost half the market — placing them in a distinct group clients see as providing the superior levels of client service required to truly differentiate these Standout firms.

### **Missing in Action**

Clients managed to overlook the 368 law firms not included in the BTI Client Service A-Team. In many cases, client service is at minimally acceptable levels — which neither meet nor exceed client expectations. Many of these firms have sporadic efforts to boost client service or have partners who deliver excellent client service — but don't deliver firmwide. These firms can change their performance with the right programs and management backing.

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## Methodology and Approach

## Methodology and Approach

### 2021 Survey Participant Demographics

*BTI Client Service A-Team 2021* draws on data collected in BTI's ongoing Annual Survey of General Counsel. This study includes between 50% and 55% of companies participating in prior years. This approach provides for accurate analysis of longitudinal trends while simultaneously allowing for insights into new, changing, and coming shifts in the legal market.

**INTERVIEWS:** **350** in-depth telephone interviews

**TIME FRAME:** Conducted between **February 19, 2020** and **January 19, 2021**

**INCENTIVES:** Contributors receive a complimentary report of legal benchmarks and metrics

### Highest-ranking Legal Decision Makers

- General Counsel/Chief Legal Officer
- Direct Report to General Counsel
- Other Legal Decision Makers



No law firm submissions, self-referrals, firm referrals, suggestions, or payments are accepted for inclusion.



All interviews with top legal decision makers are confidential and anonymous, by company and person.



Probed 350 top legal decision makers at large organizations with \$700 million or more in revenue.



The *BTI Client Service A-Team 2021* draws solely on in-depth, telephone-based interviews as part of BTI's ongoing Annual Survey of General Counsel, now in its 19th year.



BTI is the sole sponsor of this research. BTI funds the research and controls the editorial content.

### Representative of More Than 15 Industry Segments

Companies ranged in size from \$700 million in revenue to the largest companies in the world.

Banking  
Chemicals  
Consumer Goods  
Energy  
Financial Services  
Food & Agriculture

Healthcare  
High Tech  
Insurance  
Investment Banks  
Manufacturing  
Pharma

Professional Services  
Retail Trade  
Telecom  
Transportation  
Wholesale Trade



## About The BTI Consulting Group, Inc.

## What We Do

For 30 years, we've successfully helped our clients strategically drive revenue, boost performance, attract and retain clients, develop more business in new and existing markets, and create enduring relationships with our data-driven customized programs and solutions tailored to meet each client's specific and unique needs.

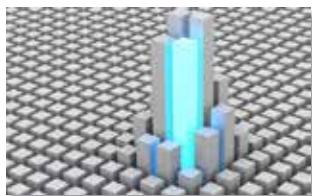
We examine the market from your client's perspective with a measurable, innovative, and high-impact approach.

From in-depth independent research to one-on-one interviews with C-suite executives, top legal decision makers and market leaders, our expertise and insight will help you understand — as well as benchmark — how clients acquire, manage, and evaluate their professional services providers.



### Client Feedback Programs

We help you reveal powerful, defining client insights you simply can't get anywhere else through innovative, world-class feedback.



### Business Development Training

We help you and your firm catapult your business development skills, culture, and mindset, fast.



### Client Service Excellence

We help you redefine how clients think about you and your firm for the short and long term.



### Market Research and Insightful Client-Centric Reports

Authoritative, innovative and practical advice from our research. BTI's client service rankings, brand health assessments, market forecasts, and more are the industry gold standard.

## Leading-Edge Insights

### Authoritative, innovative, and practical advice from our research

Law firms who would otherwise have little insight into corporate counsel hiring decisions, goals, law firm preferences, market positions, and detailed recommendations can now gain access to the same research used by the largest and best-performing firms in the world. The data and insight found in BTI's reports are used to train attorneys, guide business development, inform strategy, and calibrate market trends against firm tactics. In short, you get many of the benefits of a custom study commissioned for your firm, at a fraction of the cost. These insights are proven to drive growth and client retention and protect fees.

Our reports come with a 100% satisfaction guarantee and complete telephone support to help you maximize the value from our publications.

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### BTI Practice Outlook 2021: Pandemic-Led Legal Spending

Guide your business development efforts and budgets with precision. Discover where clients are planning to boost spending at double-digit growth rates, where they will stay the same, and where spending will drop in 2021. Plus, learn the 8 key trends shaping the pandemic-led legal market.



**Order Now**

### BTI Litigation Outlook 2021: The Pandemic-Led Market

The largest segments of litigation are getting more funding at the expense of other segments. Your definitive guide to this split market is here. This comprehensive deep dive immediately helps you identify the most current and vexing client needs — helping you meet these needs before competitors realize there's new work for the taking.

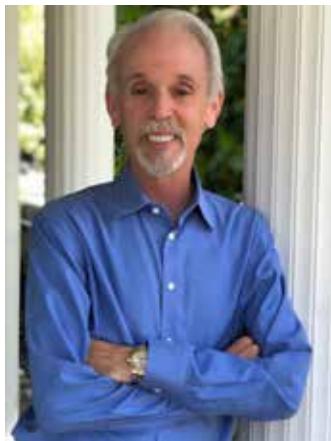


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### BTI Cybersecurity & Data Privacy 2020

Cybersecurity & Data Privacy is the fastest growing practice of any area of law. A wake-up call for law firms around the world as global concerns surge ... this critical developing practice is demanding law firms be well-informed and well-positioned. Our in-depth conversations with more than 250 top legal decision makers including Chief Compliance Officers, Chief Privacy Officers, Chief Privacy Counsel, and General Counsel have revealed groundbreaking and compelling insights law firms need to know today to deliver excellence to your clients.

## Michael B. Rynowecer, Founder & President a.k.a. The Mad Clientist



For questions, research inquiries, and information about BTI's client feedback programs, market insight research, seminars, training, or workshops, please contact us by calling **+1 617 439 0333** or via email at **mrynowecer@bticonsulting.com**.

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