



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BTI Client Service A-Team 2023

Survey of Law Firm Client Service Performance



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## Introduction

Client service takes a second step down in as many years after peaking at the height of the pandemic. Blame the combination of:

- High attorney turnover – where clients feel they were left in a void
- Still capacity-challenged firms – with slow mobilization and response
- Soaring demand for short, concise answers to questions about new regulations and workplace activism – in response to soaring management requests
- Corporate counsel turnover – with no law firm outreach from the inherited law firms

### Unseen and Unexpected

Corporate counsel are being drawn closer and closer to the business issues – all as legal needs keep piling up. Top management are peppering corporate counsel more than ever. Clients face no choice but to answer quickly and concisely. And they need help from outside counsel to answer these questions.

It's not a coincidence these clients need answers fast, just as law firms face record turnover and a host of new attorneys who clients say don't reach out to them.

But – a group of law firms used all these circumstances to their advantage. They doubled down on client service, improved communication, beefed up industry knowledge, and became a regular source of critical knowledge. You can see the most improved firms detailed in this report [here](#).

The new urgency and uncertainty creates a whole new set of client expectations – as top management increases the number of time-sensitive questions they have for the legal department. BTI research reveals new highly influential client service attributes:

- Provides Practical Solutions – making its 2nd appearance
- Fields the Absolute Best Team – a growing concern initiated last year
- Offers Customized Solutions – new this year

Clients are facing peak workloads. They are making more decisions than ever about strategy and approach. They also learned how regulatory and workforce issues are industry and culturally specific – meaning anything but a customized solution won't work.

These are the drivers behind the new attributes – clients want practical counsel able to deal with multipronged issues designed specifically for them, with the best team.

In addition, clients still rely on 4 proven behaviors to drive superior client service:

- Commitment to Help
- Delivering Value for the Dollar
- Client Focus
- Understanding Your Client's Business

A savvy group of 241 law firms were able to deliver on client service expectations. These firms knew 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.

## Introduction

Clients recognize more midsize firms than they have in years. These smaller firms are quick to respond and pick up on the importance of company culture. These firms are getting more than their fair share of the business – and can be a thorn in the side for mega firms – as clients expect large firms to deliver to the highest standard they experience.

The swirl of new regulations, perceived anti-business environment, and peak workplace activism combined with peak management interest create the most compelling need for superior client service.

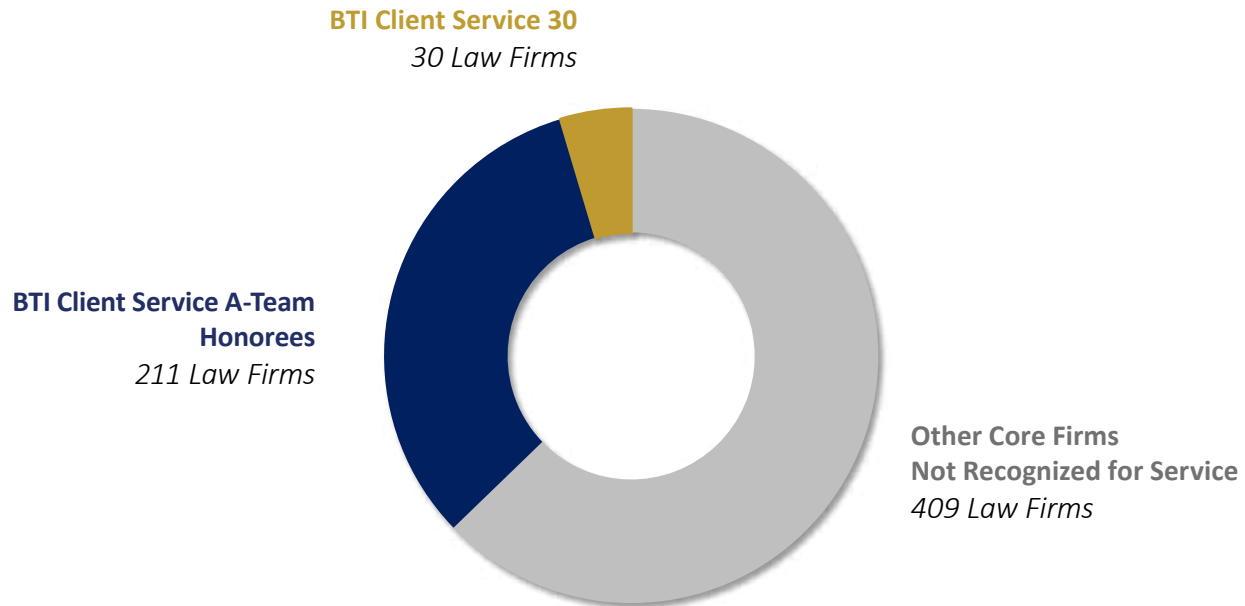
Clients continue to look to outside counsel more than ever. Look for the client service needs to change and evolve — but the best performers will have the best access to clients and be able to spot the new expectations first.

Clients now have the highest expectations of law firms they have ever had. And the market offers the highest rewards in years.

## The BTI Client Service A-Team Rankings

### 241 Law Firms Named by Corporate Counsel

According to BTI's research, 650 core law firms serve large and Fortune 1000 clients. However, only 241 law firms, 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 performs 9 to 15 times better than all others. They account for 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 11.

Clients recognize another 32.5% of law firms chasing the heels of the elite. This group is strong on key aspects of client service delivery and positioning itself 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 62.9% of all law firms serving this market are missing in action. The increased client service volatility offers more opportunities for these firms to earn their way into the client service leadership groups.

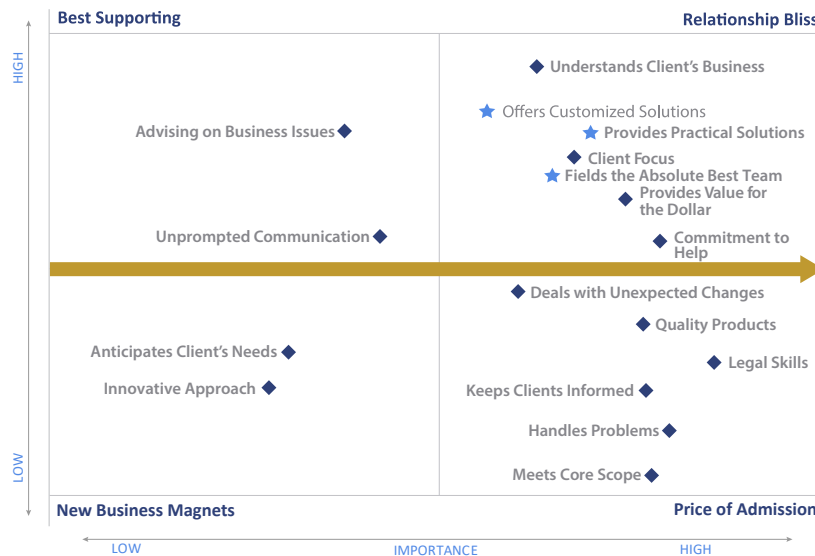
Success demands a clear plan and clean execution — it's been done and we have helped law firms do it.

## The BTI 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships

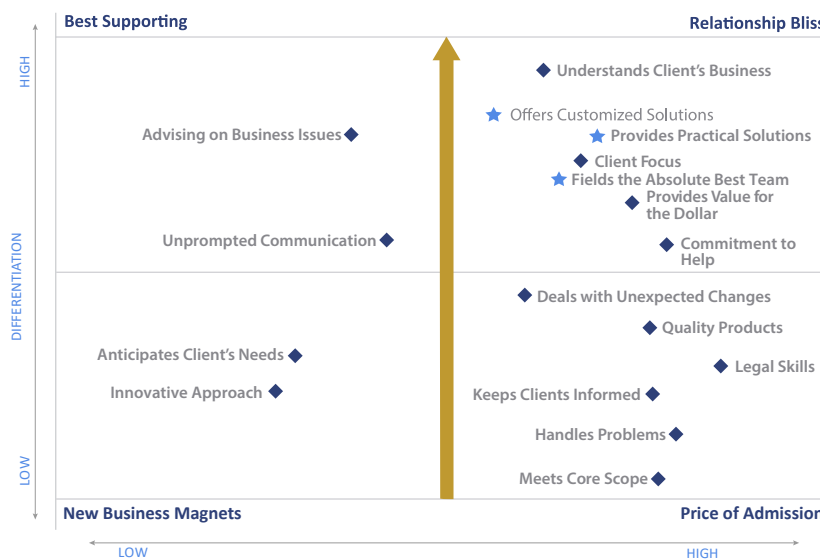
BTI's research with more than 17,000 buyers of professional services isolates the 17 activities essential to delivering superior client service and driving the best professional relationships. Corporate counsel then assess each activity on 2 dimensions — importance and differentiation — to identify the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



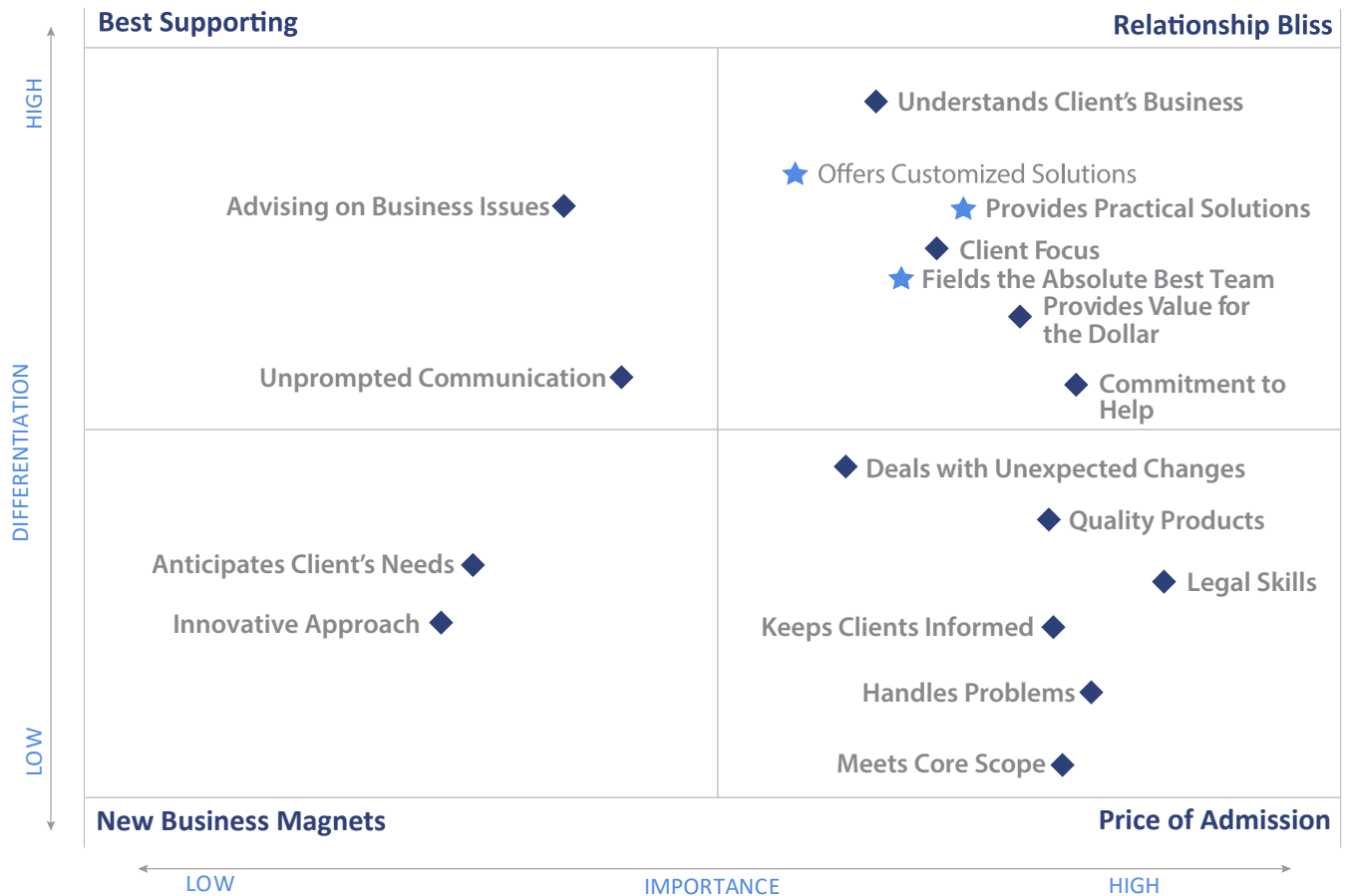
The horizontal axis of this chart represents relative importance of each activity. Activities on the right side of the chart are more important to legal decision makers than activities on the left side.



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:**

- Offers Customized Solutions
- Fields the Absolute Best Team
- Provides Practical Solutions

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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Clients managed to overlook the 369 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

### 2023 Survey Participant Demographics

*BTI Client Service A-Team 2023* 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:** More than **350** in-depth interviews

**TIME FRAME:** Conducted between **September 2022** and **February 2023**

**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 Maker



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 more than 350 top legal decision makers at large organizations with \$1 billion or more in revenue.



*The BTI Client Service A-Team 2023* draws solely on in-depth, telephone-based interviews as part of BTI's ongoing Annual Survey of General Counsel, now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 \$1 billion in revenue to the largest companies in the world.

Banking	Health Care	Professional Services
Chemicals	High Tech	Retail Trade
Consumer Goods	Insurance	Telecom
Energy	Investment Banks	Transportation
Financial Services	Manufacturing	Wholesale Trade
Food & Agriculture	Pharma	





# About The BTI Consulting Group, Inc.

## What We Do

For more than 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.

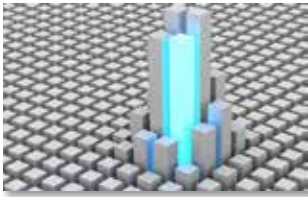
We examine the market from your client's perspective with a measurable, innovative, and high-impact approach.

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 Litigation Outlook 2023

Our 11<sup>th</sup> *BTI Litigation Outlook* uncovers how client behavior and spending are changing in 2023. 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.



**Order Now**

### BTI Practice Outlook 2023

Your annual guide to targeting your clients' legal dollars with precision. Guide your business plans with insight straight from your clients on how they plan to divvy up their outside counsel budgets. Plus, learn the 11 trends shaping the pandemic-led legal market in 2023 and more.



**Order Now**

### BTI M&A Outlook 2022

M&A activity is about to set a record — 71% of large corporations will be pursuing acquisitions by the end of 2021. You have only one source to map out the opportunities — the *BTI M&A Outlook 2022*. Get there first and learn exactly how clients are picking their M&A firms, dealing with all the firms getting into this market, and the industries where the action is.

## 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](mailto:mrynowecer@bticonsulting.com)**.

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