

BTI Litigation Outlook 2026: **More Contentious. More Complex. More Spending.**

Changes, Trends, and Opportunities For Law Firms

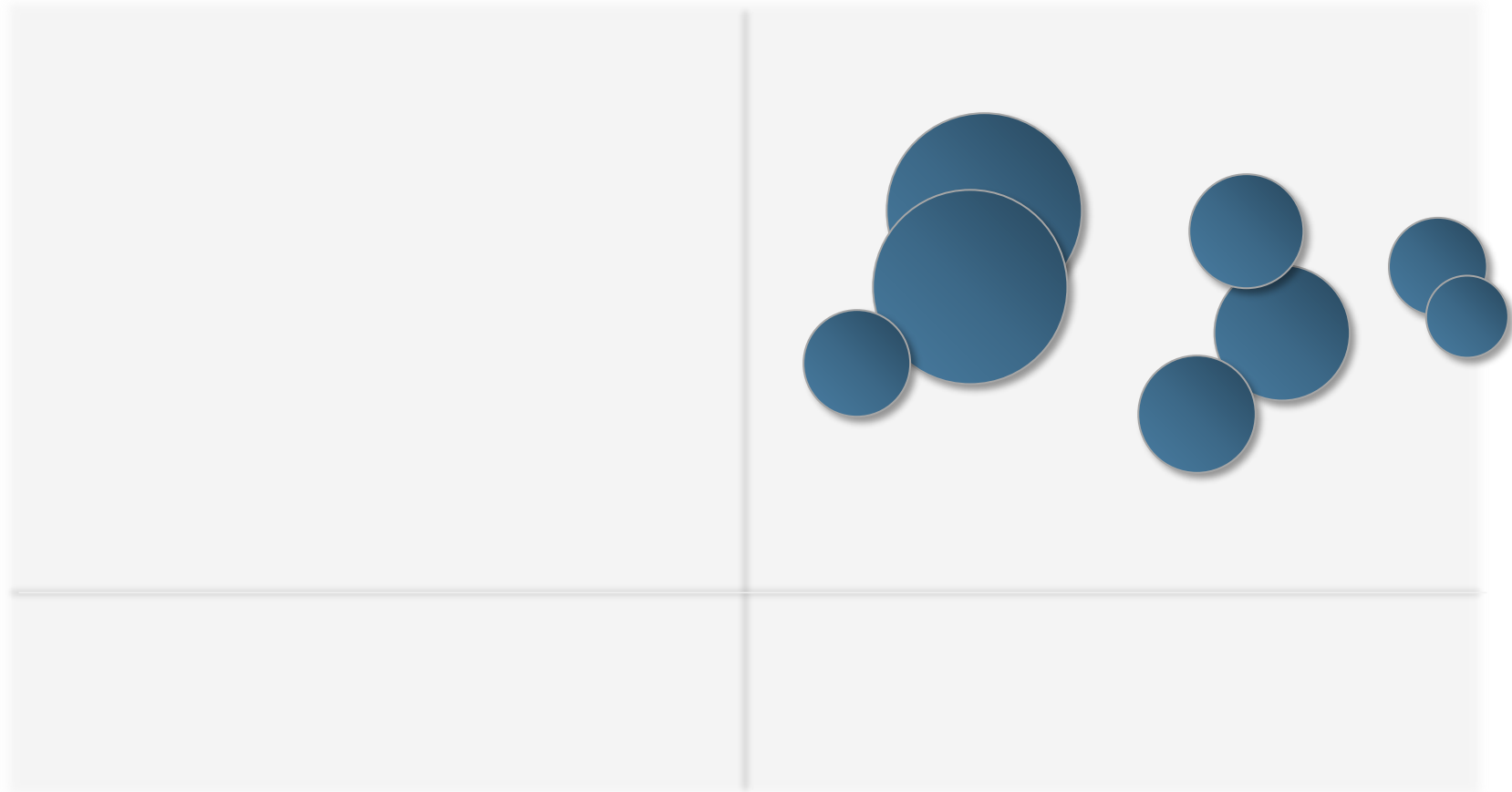


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High Rate, High Growth Opportunities Detailed for 18 industries, including:

- Banking
- Chemicals
- Consumer Goods
- Energy
- Financial Services
- Food/Agriculture
- Health Care
- High Tech
- Insurance
- Manufacturing
- Pharmaceuticals
- Professional Services
- Real Estate
- Retail Trade
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- Powerhouses – 9 Firms
- Leaders – 31 Firms
- Distinguished – 36 Firms
- Standouts – 36 Firms

Class Action Litigation | 43

- Powerhouses – 12 Firms
- Leaders – 25 Firms
- Distinguished – 30 Firms
- Standouts – 44 Firms

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- Powerhouses – 7 Firms
- Leaders – 12 Firms
- Distinguished – 32 Firms
- Standouts – 40 Firms

Securities & Finance Litigation | 51

- Powerhouses – 9 Firms
- Leaders – 11 Firms
- Distinguished – 19 Firms
- Standouts – 33 Firms

Complex Employment Litigation | 55

- Powerhouses – 9 Firms
- Leaders – 25 Firms
- Distinguished – 36 Firms
- Standouts – 33 Firms

Employment Litigation | 59

- Powerhouses – 10 Firms
 - Leaders – 35 Firms
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-

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- Powerhouses – 10 Firms
- Leaders – 15 Firms
- Distinguished – 30 Firms
- Standouts – 40 Firms

Complex Commercial Litigation | 67

- Powerhouses – 12 Firms
- Leaders – 16 Firms
- Distinguished – 47 Firms
- Standouts – 47 Firms

Commercial Litigation | 71

- Powerhouses – 13 Firms
- Leaders – 35 Firms
- Distinguished – 37 Firms
- Standouts – 37 Firms
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Generative AI Litigation | 76

- Powerhouses – 6 Firms
- Leaders – 6 Firms
- Distinguished – 20 Firms

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The Most Feared

- The 4 law firms clients don't want to see on the other side of the table

Feared Firms

- 12 Firms

Awesome Opponents

- 45 Firms

Intimidating Opponents

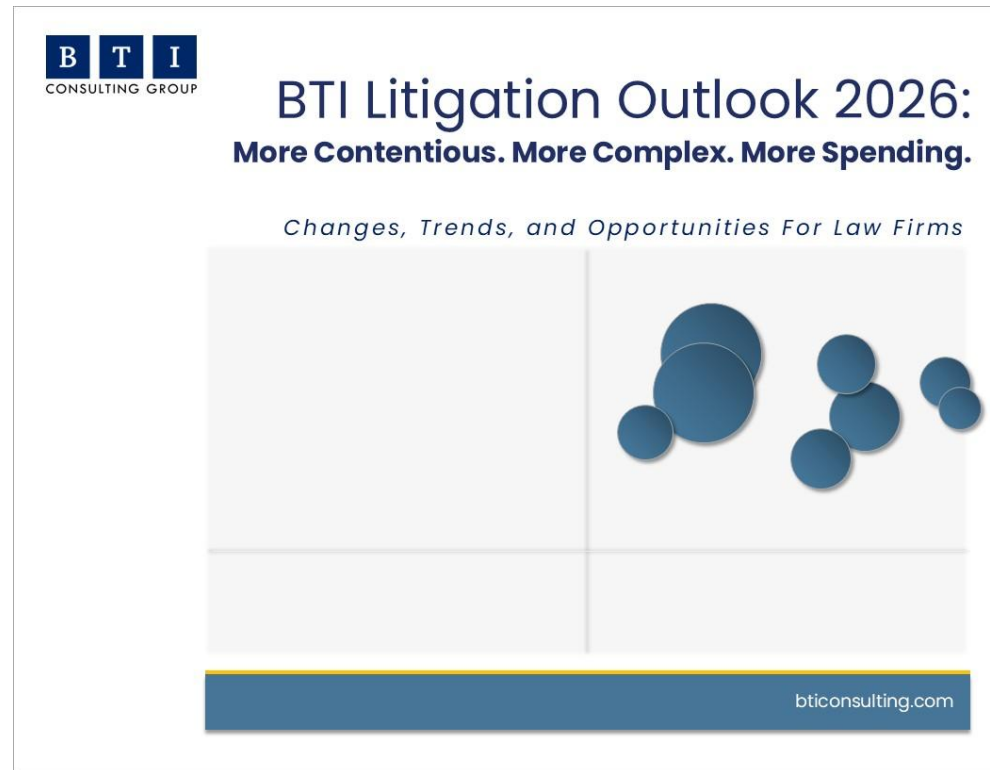
- 37 Firms

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Click here to order **Litigation Outlook 2026:**
More Contentious. More Complex. More Spending



At a Glance

- Clients with budget increases plan very big increases
- Complex and contentious litigation are the fastest growing
- Clients hiring new firms to deal with more contentious issues

Turbocharged Growth Ahead

The litigation market is turbocharged – accelerating faster, hitting harder and offering more opportunity for law firms than ever.

In 2026, more than two-thirds of companies will boost litigation spending – many by over 10% – propelling a fierce contest for the most agile, fearless and innovative counsel. High-stakes, “bet-the-company” matters are now part of everyday life, as disputes grow more complex, contentious and business-critical.

AI-fueled IP battles are only the beginning. Add massive class actions and relentless cybersecurity claims, and clients are demanding rapid, creative strategies and industry-specific insights. Employment litigation brings confounding challenges – while new breach of contract claims grow bigger and more complex than they ever have.

The winners will be those who deliver speed, precision and bold thinking – not just arguments.

This report pinpoints the fastest-growing segments, the practice areas commanding the biggest premium and the industries where opportunity is set to explode. And details the law firms – by name – best suited for this plum work.

Litigation in 2026 isn't for the cautious – it's for those ready to run in the red zone.

Our 16th BTI Litigation Outlook reveals the contentious and complex nature of litigation – why litigation spending is growing again.

Contentious, complex, and novel cases translate into top-of-the-market rates for firms who can solve the problems.

Clients are:

- *Boosting spending by more than 10%*
- *Looking for new law firms who can deal with the complexity*

Clients' 2026 litigation spending brings a whole new set of business development demands – all outlined in rich detail in this report.

BTI Litigation Outlook 2026 immediately targets the most compelling opportunities – and the business development strategies to get the work. Order today!

7 Key Trends Shaping Litigation in 2026



More litigation now hits business operations (revenue) directly – raising urgency, and rates



Clients are expanding what they call bet-the-company – creating a fast-growing segment of complex need



Litigation is more contentious than ever – driving spending and new law firm selection criteria



Clients describe litigation chaos conditions as a result of caseload, complexity, novel claims and financial risk – looking to law firms for help



Litigation budgets are jumping – with increases deep into double digits



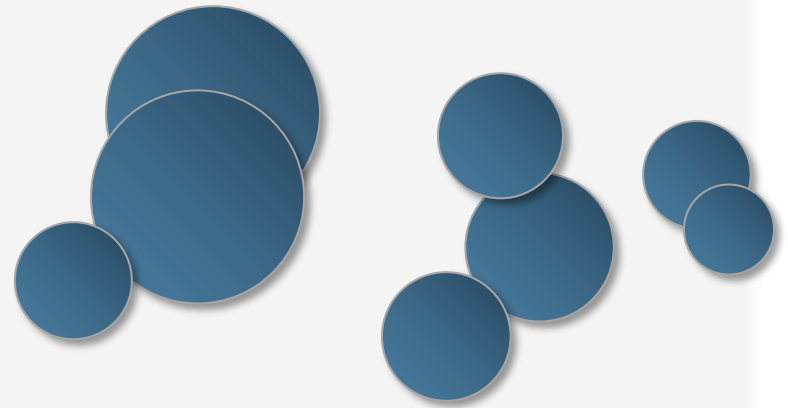
6 areas of litigation show acute demand



64% of clients are increasing spend – up from 57% a year ago

BTI's Litigation Forecast 2026

Opportunity Roadmap



How to Use BTI's Litigation Forecast 2026

Identify Growing (and Shrinking) Market Segments

Vertical axis measures 2026 growth potential

- Practices above the zero-growth line highlight segments growing faster than the overall market
- Practices below the growth line are growing slower than the market

Pinpoint Premium Rate Opportunities

Horizontal axis identifies relative average rates

- Practices on the right side of the chart garner higher average hourly rates
- Practices on the left side of the chart experience greater rate pressure

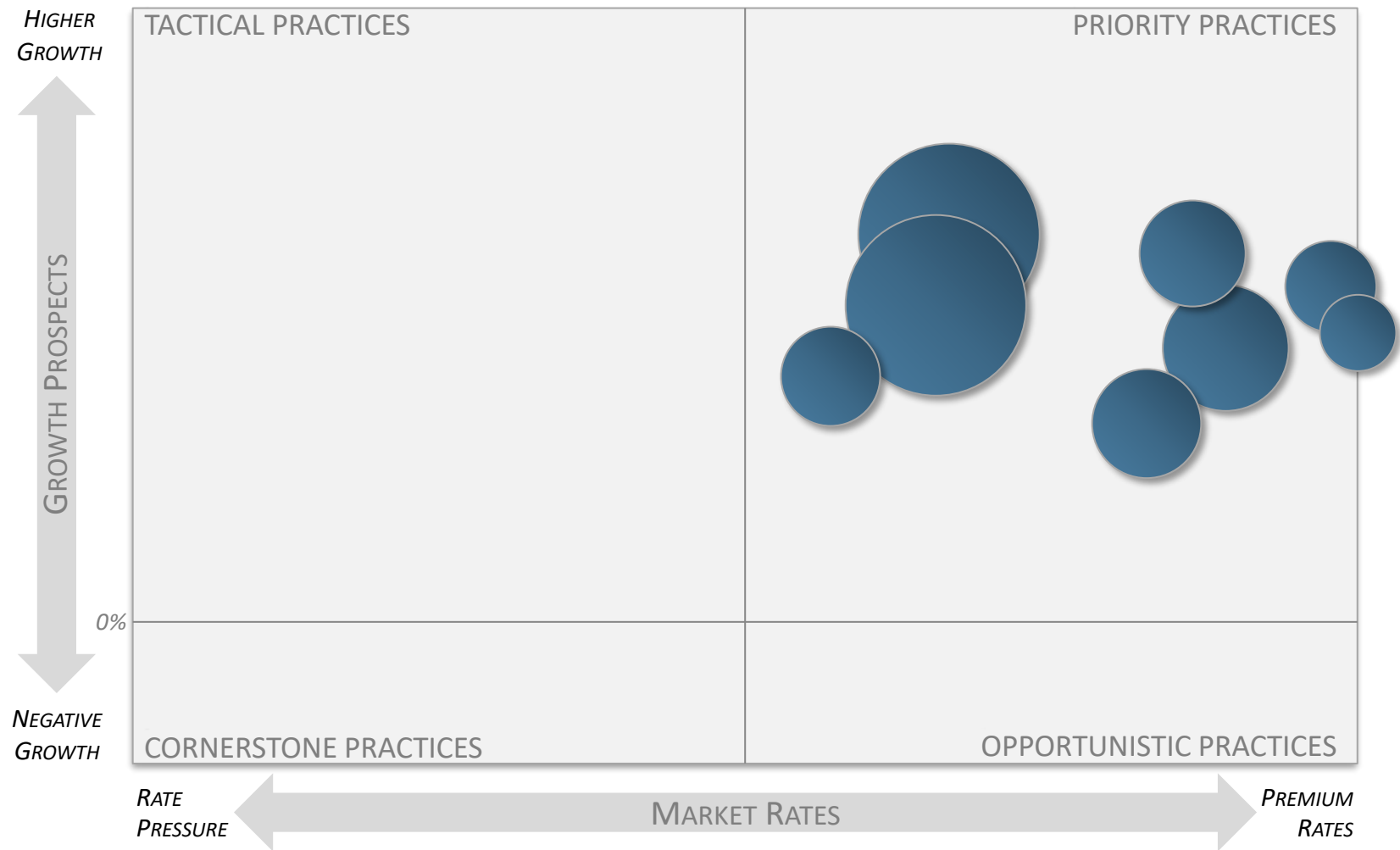
Understand Extent of Opportunities

Bubble size measures market size

- The size of each practice bubble measures the total corporate counsel spending in the litigation segment

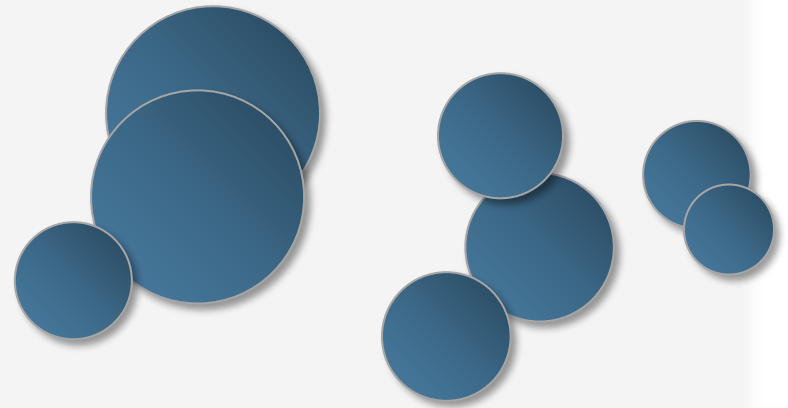


BTI's Litigation Forecast 2026



Industry Assessment for 2026

BTI Opportunity Zone



How to Use BTI's Opportunity Zone Chart

The BTI Opportunity Zone chart is a comprehensive look at growth prospects by cross section of industry and litigation segments. This chart is your roadmap for understanding how different client organizations will react to service offerings and rates in the upcoming year. Use this guide to better leverage resources, assemble right-sized pricing structures, and target hot opportunities.

BTI Hot Opportunities

The intersection of industries and litigation segments tagged for prime growth and higher-than-market rates

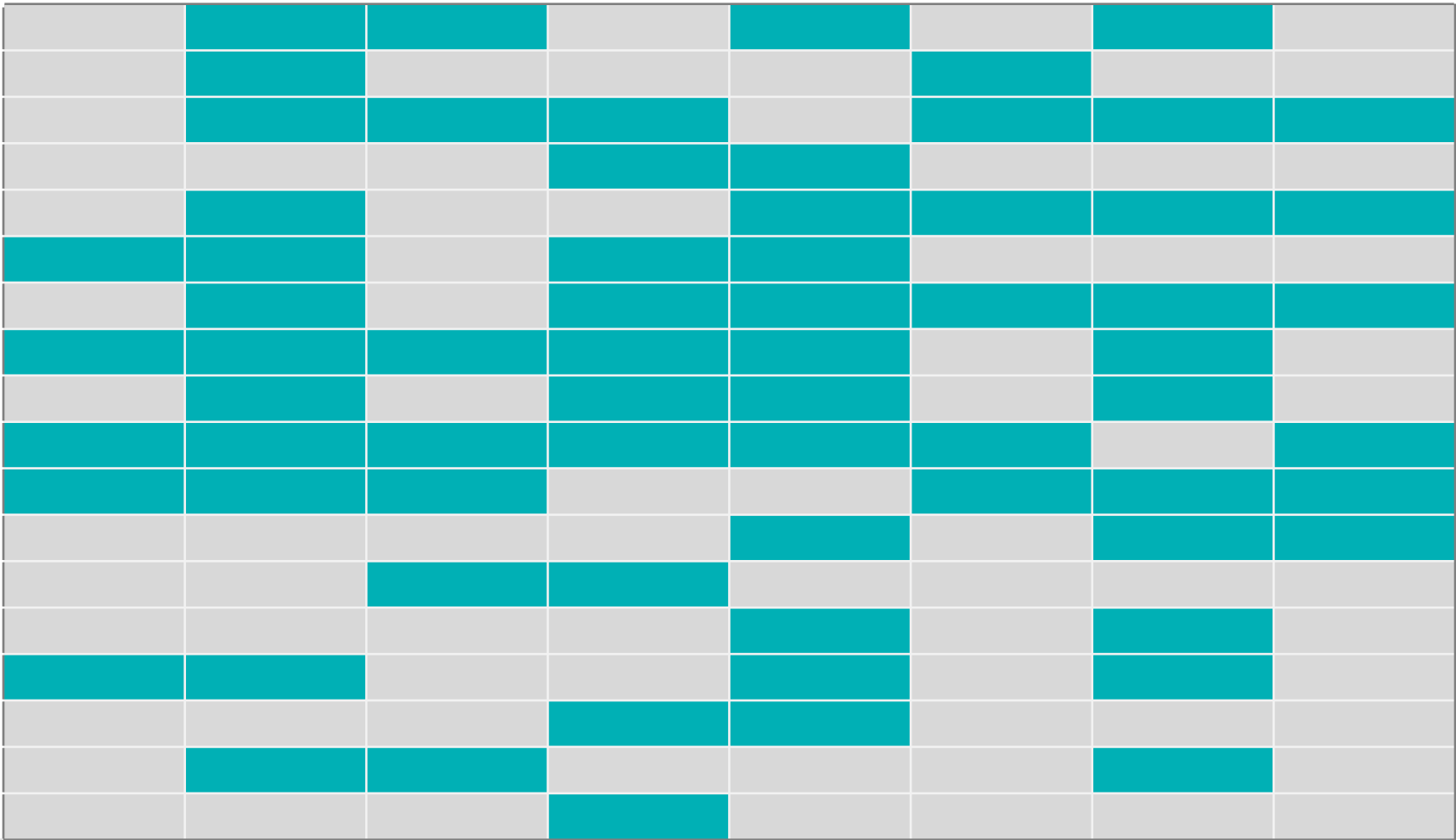
Market Neutral

The intersection of industries and litigation segments expected to see average or neutral growth

Pressure Points

The intersection of industries and litigation segments expected to experience price sensitivity or pushback

BTI Opportunity Zones 2026: Opportunities by Industry and Litigation Segment



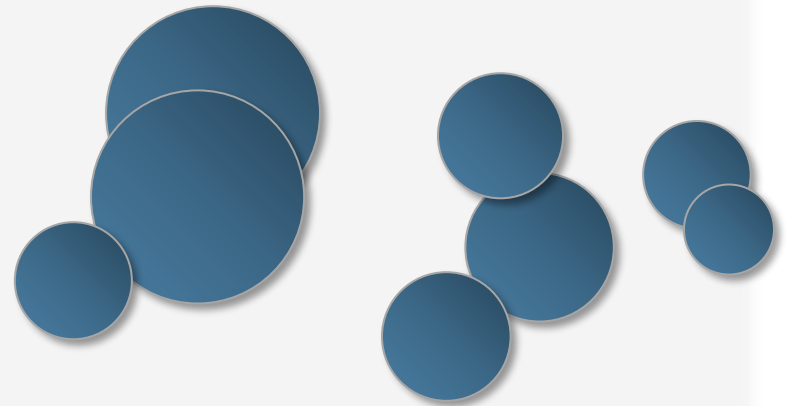
BTI Hot Opportunity:
Higher Need, Higher Rates

Market Neutral

Pressure Point:
Pressure on Rates

Client Law Firm Preference and Favorites

Law Firm Leaders



Litigation Powerhouses: Law Firms Leading the Litigation Market

As litigation gets more complex and firms become more aggressive – clients are spending more as they reevaluate their options of law firms based on:

- Ideas and approaches
- Client service
- Prior performance
- Prowess in dealing with aggressive counsel

Top legal decision makers identify the firms best suited to meet their most pressing litigation needs.

Congratulations to these 280 firms for this impressive performance – singled out by clients with no prompts or suggested names.

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The BTI Fearsome Foursome

Contentious. Mean. Aggressive. Chaotic. Inventive. Complicated: How corporate counsel managing litigation describe the state of litigation. Corporate counsel demand for more fearsome law firms is growing; it is the only way to keep ahead of the aggressive nature of the claims. Outside counsel able to strike fear in the hearts of their opponents see a winning advantage. They also believe their cases will be settled faster with a more fearsome law firm.

The BTI Fearsome Foursome are the firms clients tell us they least want to see on the other side of the table in litigation. The Fearsome Foursome define new rules to play by, are relentless, cunning, aggressive, very smart, and play to win – and win big.

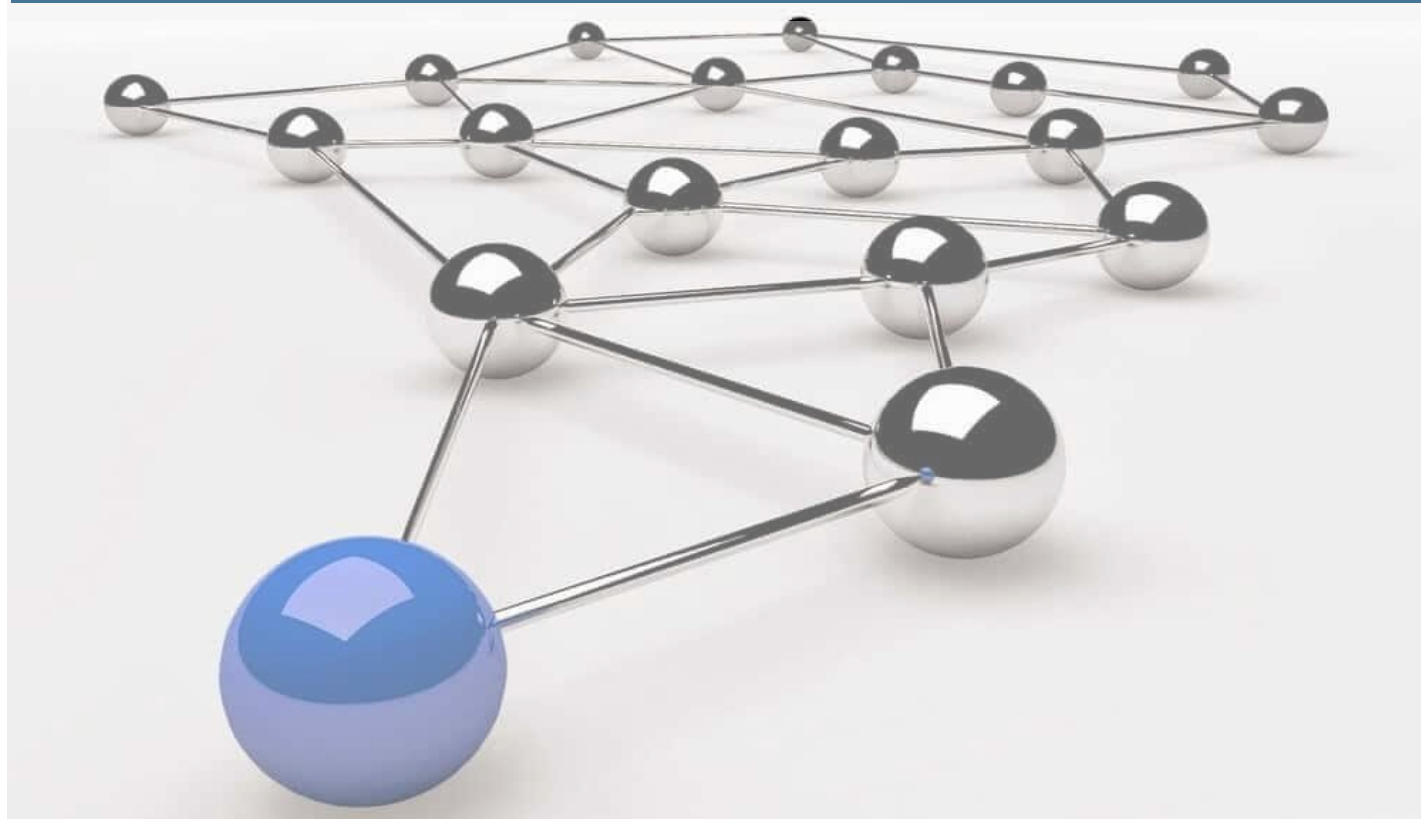
Only 4 of the 98 law firms clients don't want to litigate against stand out as the most Fearsome. Congratulations to The BTI Fearsome Foursome of 2026 for their intense approach and fierce tactics in today's ever-evolving, complex and dynamic litigation market.

*BTI
Fearsome Foursome
2026
to be announced on
September 18, 2025*



BTI Litigation Outlook 2026

Methodology

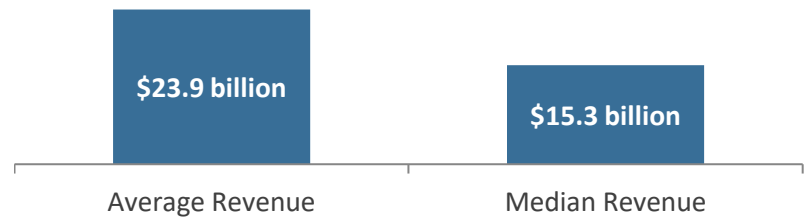


Our Methodology and Approach

INDEPENDENT, ORGANIC, UNBIASED RESEARCH, BASED SOLELY ON CLIENT FEEDBACK

Survey Participant Demographics	
Research	More than 350 in-depth surveys
Time Frame	Primarily between February 2025 and August 2025
Incentives	Respondents receive a complimentary report of benchmarks and metrics

Legal Decision Makers Responsible for Litigation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of Litigation• Chief and Vice President of Litigation• General Counsel/Chief Legal Officer• Direct report to General Counsel	
Organizations with Highest Levels of Legal Spending	



Representative of more than 15 Industry Segments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Banking• Chemicals• Consumer Goods• Energy• Financial Services• Food & Agricultural• Health Care• High Tech• Insurance• Manufacturing• Pharmaceuticals• Professional Services• Retail Trade• Real Estate• Telecom• Transportation• Utilities• Wholesale Trade	

***BTI Litigation Outlook 2026** is based solely on in-depth surveys and telephone interviews with leading legal decision makers. This comprehensive analysis trends data from more than 30,000 corporate counsel client interviews conducted over the span of 24 years.*

This research is independent and unbiased – no law firm or organization other than BTI sponsors this study.

Each year, BTI reaches out to a strategically designed group of top legal decision makers at large organizations with \$1 billion or more in revenue. We target the decision makers in the industries who spend the most on legal affairs as well as thought leaders and innovative Chief Legal Officers. Our survey also includes Chief Legal Operating Officers and business executives who hire and influence the selection and hiring of law firms.

Participants are granted confidentiality at the individual and organizational level.

BTI Consulting Group

About Us



What We Do

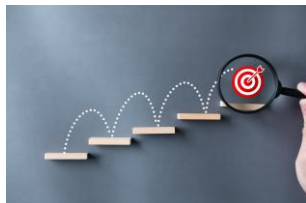
For more than 30 years, we've successfully helped our clients strategically drive revenue, boost performance, attract and retain clients, develop more business in new and existing markets, and create enduring relationships with our data-driven customized programs and solutions tailored to meet each client's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



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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.

Market Research, Expertise, and 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.

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BTI Client Service A-Team 2025



Long considered the gold standard in measuring client service performance by clients and law firms alike, the *BTI Client Service A-Team 2025* is the only source for measuring client service solely from the client perspective. Now in its 24th year – this is the most important edition ever with more than 350 new, in-depth interviews.

 **Order Now**

BTI Most Recommended Law Firms 2025



The most enduring, longest-lasting relationships started with a simple, unsolicited suggestion from one legal decision maker to another. *BTI Most Recommended Law Firms 2025: Unlocking the #1 Source of Law Firm Growth* shares the names of the firms earning these recommendations above all others.

 **Order Now**

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LinkedIn is all grown up – is your LinkedIn strategy? *BTI Benchmarking Law Firm LinkedIn Performance 2025* delineates how law firms are performing along 9 key metrics – including rankings of law firms' performance by name – and includes detailed recommendations on improving your position.

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Michael B. Rynowecer, President

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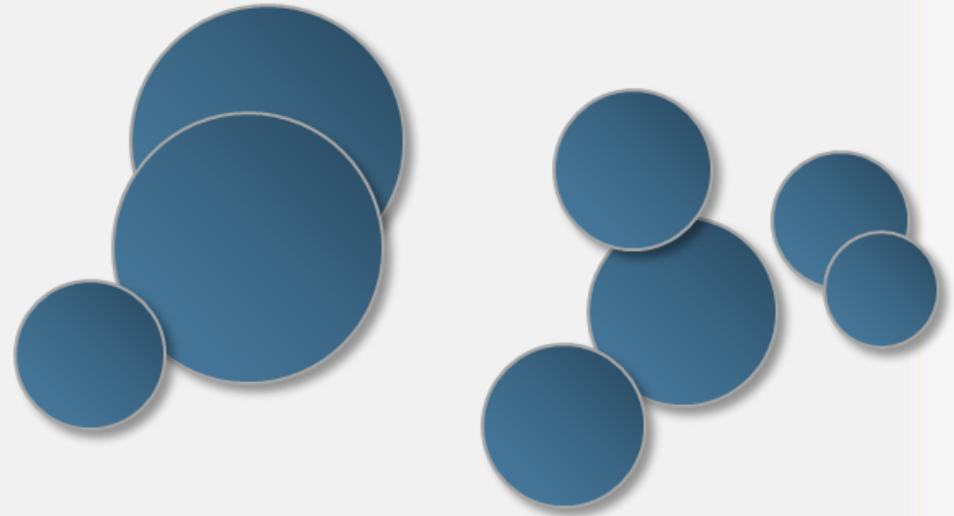
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