

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## BTI Client Service A-Team 2024

Survey of Law Firm Client Service Performance



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## Introduction

### Law firms’ client service just fell into an abyss. And the way out is getting murkier.

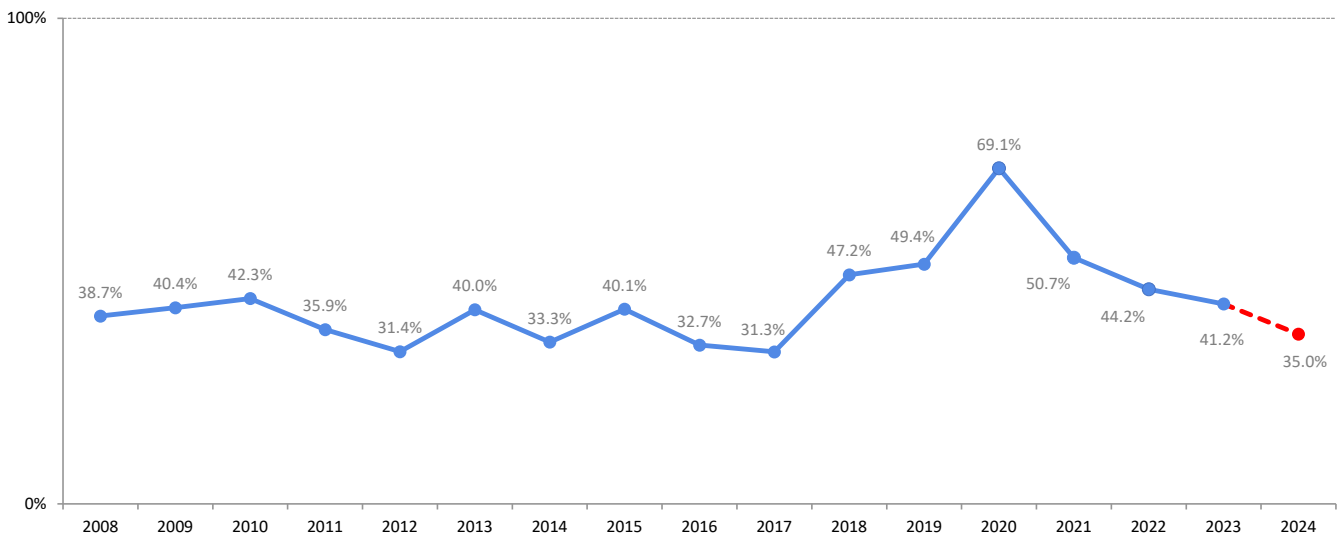
The firms who don’t see this breakdown in client service — and act on it — to make sure it gets better — are going to lose out to the firms who do. Boosting client service has never carried more weight or influence on clients — and the definition keeps changing.

It’s easy to blame the economy — or even overhiring. But — the law firms delivering superior client service are crushing it — and will continue to crush it. It is easier to keep upping your client service game if you are already good.

Law firms see their client service slip as they are:

- Busy looking for and integrating lateral partners
- Navigating the economy
- Cutting back on marketing and business development
- Unintentionally de-emphasizing client service
- Not investing as much as law firms serving the same clients

### Percentage of Clients Who Recommend Their Primary Law Firms



*Only 35% of corporate counsel recommend their primary law firms to a peer — down from 69% a mere 4 years ago. This rivals an 18-year low.*

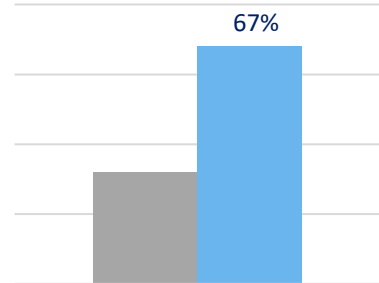
## Introduction

At the same time, corporate counsel are busy managing their own journey — and relying on outside counsel more than at any point in the last 23 years. They are busy helping pave the way for transformational change in their companies and want advice and advanced thinking. They need great client service so they can focus their full attention on the business issues.

This is a long way of saying the cost of even mediocre client service increased more than law firms' rates ever have.

The collapse in client service is an excellent setup for amazing success or expensive failure. But the opportunity and benefit to make clients' lives easier has never been bigger.

Use this report to get to — and stay — at the top of the client service — and growth — game.



Corporate counsel playing a key role in transformation

### The BTI Client Service A-Team: The Survey of Law Firm Client Service Performance

For the past 23 years, BTI has published this definitive ranking of client service excellence for the corporate law firm market. Our focus is on which law firms legal decision makers recognize for delivering the absolute best client service on a consistent basis.

This is the only report:

- To learn exactly where your law firm stands on client service. Clients identify and rank law firm client service performance in rich, robust and granular detail
- Long considered the gold standard in ranking and measuring law firm client service performance — now in its 23rd year
- Used by more than 200 law firms and 16,000 corporate counsel
- Sharing detailed rankings on each of the 17 activities clients rely on to gauge law firm client service performance

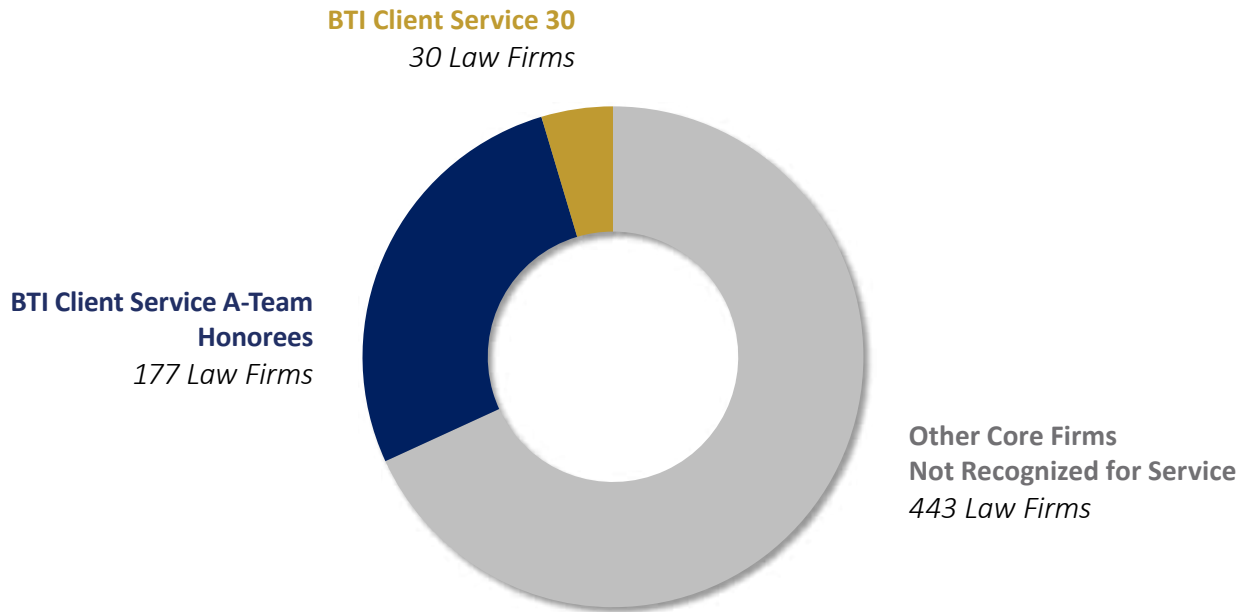
The BTI Client Service A-Team sets the standard to assess how law firms honestly stack up in client service delivery.

This analysis is based on 17 objective ranking factors — all of which corporate counsel agree drive the strongest relationships with law firms.

## The BTI Client Service A-Team Rankings

### 207 Law Firms Named by Corporate Counsel

According to BTI’s research, 650 core law firms serve large and Fortune 1000 clients. However, only 207 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 24.

Clients recognize another 27.2% 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 — beginning on page 58.

Fully 68.2% 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

## Powerful Insight into the 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Service

BTI's exclusive, independent, one-on-one interviews with more than 28,000 corporate counsel and C-level executives reveal 17 specific and unique activities driving superior client service and relationships. Of these 17 driving factors:

*Clients see 4 activities as scarce, delivering the absolute most value and driving hiring decisions on a continuing basis*

You and the firm's attorneys can draw on these primary activities to deliver superior client service and drive more business from existing clients, in good times or bad. These 4 decisive activities are:

1. Proving Your Commitment to Help
2. Client Focus
3. Providing Value for the Dollar
4. Understanding the Client's Business

## *New — 5 Wild Cards of Client Service — Unannounced High-Value Client Service Drivers Pop Up*

The roaring economy, peak workloads, and digital transformation sweeping the corporate landscape introduced new client service drivers. These are:

- ★ Including clients early in strategy and approach
- ★ Being trustworthy to be relied on for cost control
- ★ Higher client service standards for their primary law firms
- ★ Being easy to work with
- ★ Fielding the absolute best team

And these go with the client service activities defining the Price of Admission, the minimum requirements for delivering excellent client service:

- Dealing with unexpected changes
- Excellent quality deliverables
- Keeping clients informed
- Handling the inevitable problems
- Legal skills and prowess
- Delivering on core scope

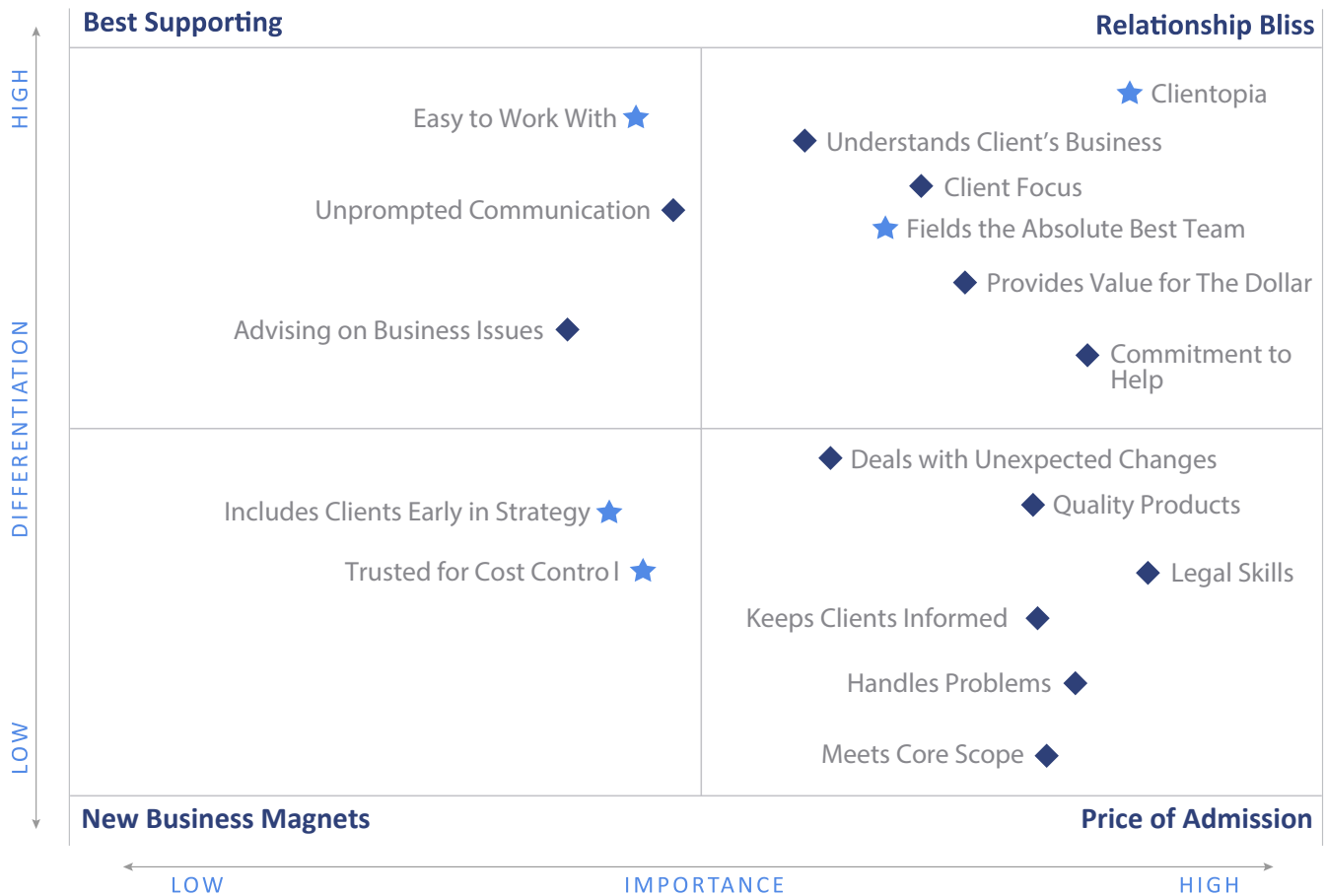
A savvy group of 207 law firms were able to deliver on client service expectations. These firms knew how to help their clients and acted quickly — without being asked. Some were already best-in-class performers and others got a shot of client service adrenaline — they moved from very good to excellent.

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 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships



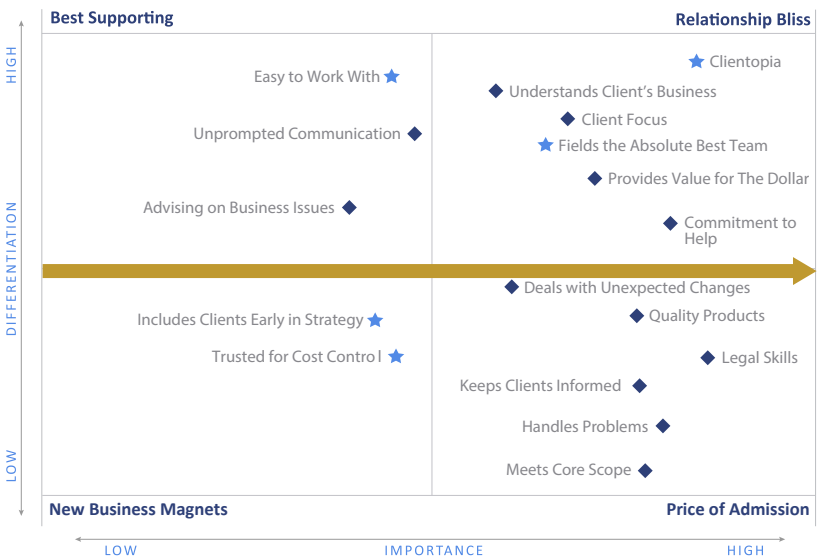
Source: *Clientelligence™: How Superior Client Relationships Fuel Growth and Profits* by Michael B. Rynowecer

# The BTI 17 Activities Driving Superior Client Relationships

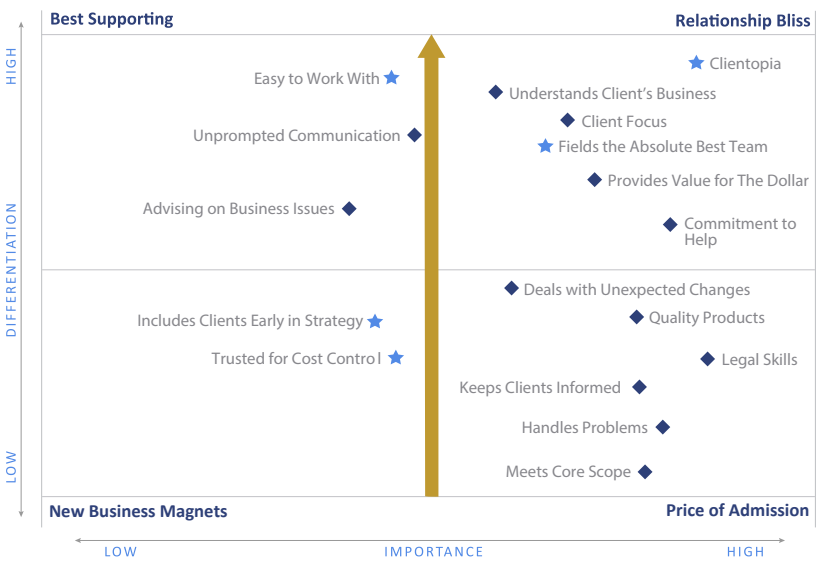
BTI’s research with more than 28,000 buyers of professional services isolates the 17 activities essential to delivering superior client service and driving the best professional relationships. Corporate counsel then assess each activity on 2 dimensions — importance and differentiation — to identify the 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.

# Understanding the Impact of Each Client Service Attribute and Activity

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

### Activities Driving Relationship Bliss: Quadrant 1

6 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.

### Minimum Client Service Requirements: Price of Admission: Quadrant 2

Corporate counsel point to 6 activities as the minimum requirements expected from any 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.

### Behaviors Adding Even More Support to Client Service Activities: Quadrant 3

These 3 high-value differentiators are 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.

### 2 Key Activities Proven to Drive New Business and Superior Client Service: Quadrant 4

These are business development tools under cover of client service. These activities are:

- Being trustworthy to be relied on for cost control
- Including clients early in strategy and approach

These drivers instill unmatched confidence in a law firm — not having to worry about budget and approach relieves 2 of the biggest client concerns.



## 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 more than 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 443 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

### 2024 Survey Participant Demographics

*BTI Client Service A-Team 2024* 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 **300** in-depth interviews

**TIME FRAME:** Conducted between **May 2023** and **February 2024**

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



*The BTI Client Service A-Team 2024* draws solely on in-depth, telephone-based interviews as part of BTI’s ongoing Annual Survey of General Counsel, now in its 23<sup>rd</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	Healthcare	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 2024

In a reversal from last year, client spending is growing faster than cases. And just like last year, clients face record levels of cases. Complex and high stakes matters are the sweet spots. This is the where the money is headed. The *BTI Litigation Outlook 2024: Navigating Litigation Spending in the New Unpredictable World* is available now to help you decipher the new market dynamics and seize the opportunity.



**Order Now**

### BTI Practice Outlook 2024

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 7 trends shaping the legal market in 2024 and more.



**Order Now**

### BTI Leading Law Firms 2024

*BTI Leading Edge Law Firms 2024: Law Firms Creating the Future with and for Clients* is your blueprint for securing the most prized legal work. Learn what matters now — and what doesn’t matter anymore — and the 121 firms getting it right. This report dives into the most compelling issues clients face — the law firms who can deliver on these expectations enjoy higher rates — and almost no RFPs. This is the plum work destined only for those firms who can deliver.

## 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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