

# The three traits of the unrivalled lawyer

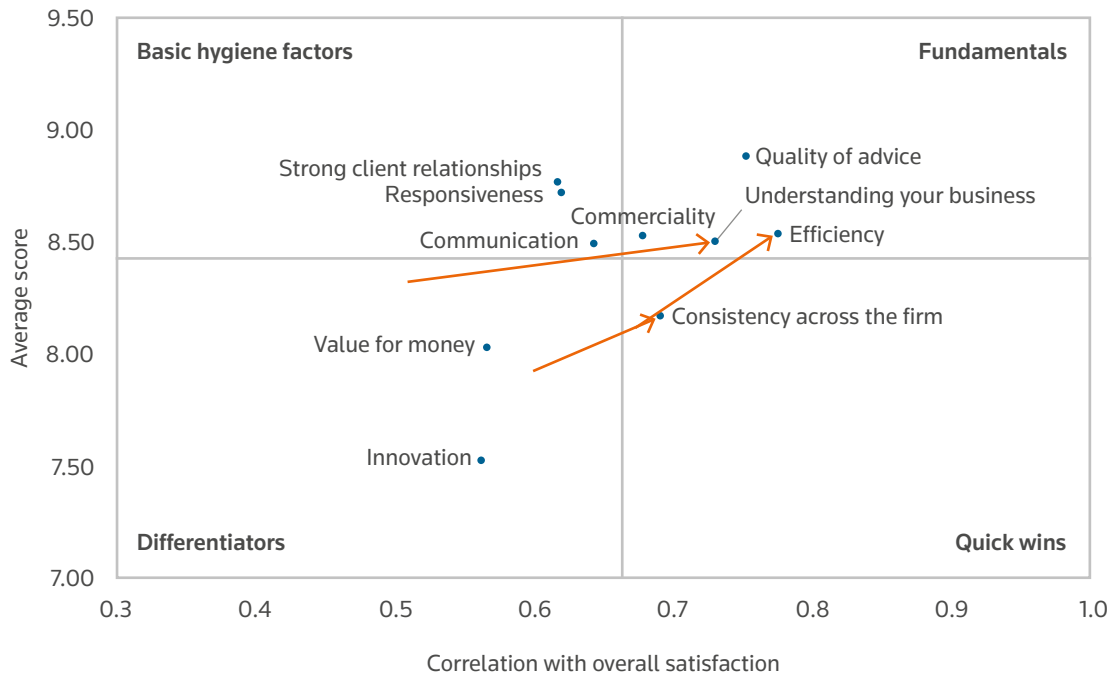
# Introduction

When tackling a new legal matter, lawyers and clients want to be unrivalled. However, what measure of success qualified a lawyer to be classified as 'unrivalled', and how does one achieve that status? It is simply being better than opposing counsel in every matter. Being better involves expertise, hard work, and the proper resources. It means backing a solid legal strategy with research and readiness. With today's legal technology, research tasks that once seemed impossible because of time constraints and a vast amount of data to be reviewed, in order to source a sound strategy, is now possible in a reduced amount of time.

Is 'unrivalled' an unachievable benchmark, or is it the new benchmark?

In this report, we will outline three traits of an unrivalled lawyer and how legal research can influence a lawyer's ability to achieve that level of professional practice. Accuracy and efficiency are paramount. However, for lawyers to feel unrivalled, they also need confidence. A lawyer's confidence comes from comprehensive preparation, an unassailable case, and the trust of their team.

## Key areas driving client satisfaction:



NOTE: All attributes positively impact clients' satisfaction

Source: Sharplegal - Global Elite

*"What we're seeing here is quite high in the top right-hand quadrant is quality of advice. Those corporate counsel who were asked about the qualities that they are looking for, and how they score their law firms, in terms of quality of advice, on average, law firms are delivering high levels of client satisfaction."*

– Samantha Steer, Director, Market Development, Large Law Firms, Thomson Reuters

# Accuracy

Whether the matter is big or small, accuracy is the most fundamental part of any successful case. But client expectations have grown beyond that aspect. They expect error free, reliable, commercial and solutions-focused advice, and they expect this quality advice consistently across the firm. They now expect their lawyers to bring a higher level of expertise into their case preparation – even before exploring case strategy.

Building a case on solid footing is essential. It doesn't take a major mistake to derail a case. Any number of small, yet critical errors could cost a lawyer and their client a victory.

## **Accuracy pain point: Keeping up with changes in the law**

Every lawyer knows that with the speed at which legislation changes, keeping up to date on all changes can be a real challenge – but it's critical to an accurate case. The flow of changes and updates is more than a busy lawyer can manage by themselves.

## **Accuracy pain points: Keep on top of, and accurately evaluate, complex legislative changes**

A key part of preparing a case is keeping up to date with, and accurately evaluating, complex legislative changes. Trawling through banks of legislation to accurately see if any relevant changes have been made is time-consuming and takes the focus away from what the client wants – error free and reliable advice, but advice that is commercial and solutions focused.

### **Accuracy solutions: Legislation Alerts**

Clients need accurate advice on changing regulation. With the pace of change of legislation, keeping on top of all changes can be a real challenge. Legislation alerts means lawyers are always notified of the latest information, and harnessing the horizon scanning capabilities on Westlaw® can give an accurate appraisal of the changes coming down the line.

### **Accuracy solutions: Statutes Compare**

Be able to accurately evaluate complex legislative change, instantly. By utilising the Statutes Compare feature, it takes the guess work out of evaluating the changing face of legislation. Use the tool to compare single provisions or see how whole acts will be impacted by a bill with a few clicks. Moreover, lawyers can compare prospective and draft versions as well as historic. Generating a document with all the textual changes marked up means that effort is focused on accurately presenting the impacts to clients.

### **Accuracy solutions: UK-EU Divergence Tracker**

Give clients an accurate picture of how Brexit is changing how they operate their business. By using the UK-EU Divergence Tracker lawyers can easily navigate the complexity of two diverging regimes and identify key documents and the differences between them. Be able to swiftly state to clients how the law differs and generate simple and accurate marked up documents to aid in analysis and presentation to clients.

# Efficiency

While both accuracy and efficiency are key traits for an unrivalled lawyer, they don't necessarily go hand-in-hand. Clients expect lawyers to know everything and they want answers quickly. They don't want to pay for gaining the insights they believe lawyers should already know. So, whilst they want the accuracy that comes from the detailed review and checking of everything related to their matter, they don't want to pay for the time it takes to achieve that.

## Efficiency pain point: Second guessing

"Many lawyers, including myself, are perfectionists", says Angela Rudolph, a senior associate with Thomson Reuters product management team. "It's how we survived law school and qualified. We want to make sure that every bit of our case is accurate and yields the results that we want. The fear of making mistakes means you spend more time reviewing documents and data, and you probably want to triple- or quadruple-check everything on your list. This eats up valuable time and chips away at your efficiency."

## Efficiency pain point: Questioning your information sources

Online research tools can be extremely helpful in adding efficiency to case preparation — but not if lawyers have doubts about their authority. If lawyers ever question whether sources are complete and up to date, that's an efficiency pain point.

## Efficiency pain point: Managing non-billable hours

Managing non-billable hours is not just a pain point for efficiency, it effects reach throughout a firm. Many lawyers are perfectionists; the fear of making mistakes means time is spent reviewing more documents and data than is probably needed, including triple- or quadruple-checking everything. This eats up valuable time. Further, if time is being spent questioning information sources, time is not being saved.

When livelihoods are based on the billable hour you don't want to move hastily — but you also don't want to get trapped in a spiral of write-downs — that non-billed time spent researching a new area of law, keeping up with changes in the law, and figuring out how they relate to the practice. Establishing efficient work practices at a law firm directly contributes to the bottom line of the business. Therefore, arming the firm with the right tools is essential.

### Efficiency solution: Case Analytics

In a busy legal practice, lawyers need to be able to quickly locate the relevant case authorities. The Case Analytics Precedent Map allows lawyers to narrow down large lists of case authorities using search terms, filtering using the Westlaw taxonomy, and focusing on key relationships from a single screen. With this feature, lawyers can quickly expand research using the expanded references and check authorities from up to 3,000 cases in minutes.

Cases are often overruled, and lawyers must be positive the case authorities being used are valid. The Case Analytics Treatment Map allows lawyers to see how a case has been treated and immediately drill down to the topics and treatment of interest and be able to view the citation from the judgment without ever leaving the research page.

### Efficiency solution: UK-EU Divergence Tracker

Changes brought about in the UK, after leaving the EU, are still emerging. To help firms and clients remain compliant – whether in the UK or EU is much easier with the UK-EU Divergence Tracker. Be able to see at a glance how divergency may impact lawyers and their clients – as well as see the opportunities for clients and business. By being able to analyse different regulatory regimes, the ability to call up two jurisdictions and see the textual differences in highlight turns hours of research into seconds.

# Confidence

Whilst the traits of accuracy and efficiency are easy to define, confidence can be a bit more cryptic. Is confidence exclusively an internal trait, or can it be built within certain circumstances?

Thomson Reuters® Sharplegal data reveals that clients are looking for strong individuals and that means lawyers who have the necessary credentials to deliver quality advice, who are responsive and can deliver, and who are reliable — with a superb ability to cultivate strong client relationships. Clients also care about expertise — they look for deep subject matter expertise when instructing a lawyer.

But having expertise and projecting expertise are two different things — and it boils down to one thing: confidence. Not only is confidence of value to clients, but it's also noted by peers when evaluating their opponents including when considering referring a client to another lawyer.

Confidence impacts daily work life as well as long-term career prospects. Clients want to see a confident lawyer handling their case; fellow lawyers will refer potential clients to one they believe is confident and competent; and firm management looks thoughtfully at confident junior lawyers when assessing potential partners.

## **Confidence pain point: Having confidence in your research**

Research is the basis for all legal work and feeling confident that every stone has been turned whilst prepping a case is important. Timing is also a factor: finding errors early in research, rather than later, is key to feeling that a case is strong. Product engineers call this 'failing fast' as they design a new product and welcome the early errors. Catching bugs in early prototypes means they can be easily and inexpensively fixed — not so when problems are discovered at the manufacturing stage. The same is true for preparing a legal case. Finding errors early in research process means that lawyers won't have to re-evaluate their case strategy at the final hour. They can start by asking a colleague for their views on a proposed strategy, but ultimately rely upon technology that can detect and correct weak spots in your research.

## **Confidence pain point: Projecting confidence to your clients**

Even though a lawyer may have devised a strategy, applied it to their work, and run it by trusted colleagues, confidence can still waver in front of clients. That type of situation is a problem for both lawyer and firm. Lawyers need to be certain that research is on point, but there are not endless hours in the day to recheck work. There are tools lawyers can utilise to give unwavering confidence when presenting to clients.

### **Confidence solution: Case Analytics**

One of the most nerve-wracking points for a lawyer in developing a strategy for a client's case is having the confidence the case authorities can be relied upon. Case analytics ensures that even the most time pressed researcher can complete a thorough check of authorities ensuring that they are relying on the best possible case law.

Knowing when case research is sufficient, and that there isn't a relevant case lurking in the background can be a cause of sleepless nights. Lawyers need to have the confidence that their case research is complete. Case analytics provides the confidence that there is no need to check just one more case. With Case Analytics, lawyers can evaluate hundreds of cases and even discard cases from the research, so it is clear when the research is completed.

### **Confidence solution: Legislation Alerting**

To be able to offer quality of advice, a lawyer must have the confidence that they are advising on the complete regulatory picture. Legislation alerting provides lawyers with the reassurance that they are aware of changes to legislation they are monitoring. Due to the way Westlaw UK incorporates prospective and draft changes have confidence that you have the most complete picture you possible can.

*“Westlaw’s always been able to tell you when new things appear on the service, but notifying you of changes to specific items that you’re interested in means that an awful lot of effort is taken away, and you can just rely on your inbox to let you know when things have changed.”*

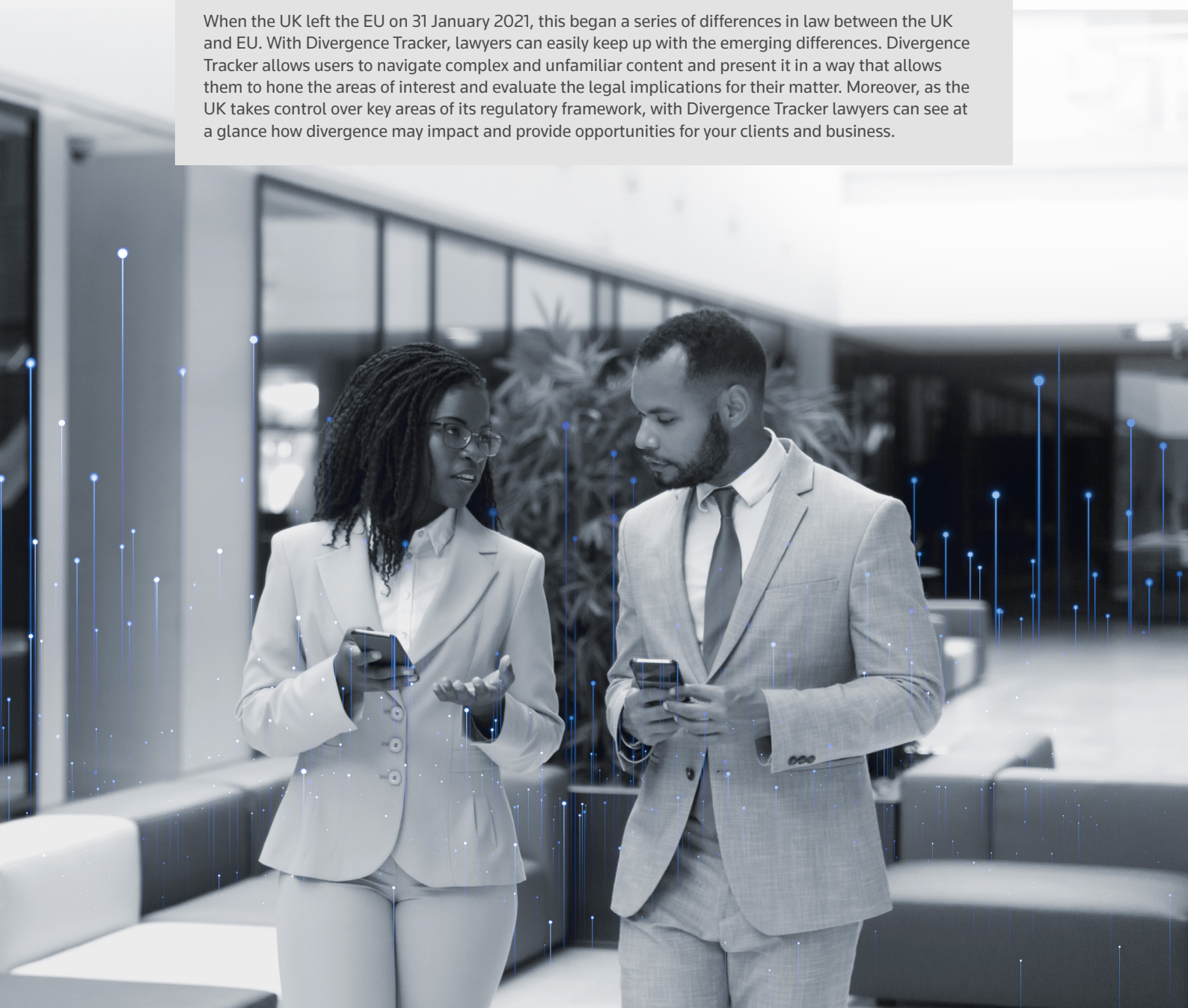
- Santiago Alonso, Director of Product Management, Westlaw UK

### **Confidence solution: Questions**

Questions is a feature that makes it easy to find the document to read to get the authoritative view on a concept or area of law. Search commonly asked questions and return succinct results with key paragraphs highlighted. The Questions feature ensures that even if lawyers are researching an unfamiliar area of law – they will be starting from an authoritative source making research more effective.

### **Confidence solution: UK-EU Divergence Tracker**

When the UK left the EU on 31 January 2021, this began a series of differences in law between the UK and EU. With Divergence Tracker, lawyers can easily keep up with the emerging differences. Divergence Tracker allows users to navigate complex and unfamiliar content and present it in a way that allows them to hone the areas of interest and evaluate the legal implications for their matter. Moreover, as the UK takes control over key areas of its regulatory framework, with Divergence Tracker lawyers can see at a glance how divergence may impact and provide opportunities for your clients and business.



# Conclusion

When evaluating the key traits of an unrivalled lawyer, accuracy, efficiency, and confidence intermingle. Accuracy can sometimes grapple with efficiency, and these traits can affect confidence. When you add demanding client expectations and legal pain points, achieving unrivalled status can be challenging. However, when legal technology is added to the equation —all three can align to raise one lawyer above the rest.

## **The complete solution: Westlaw Edge UK**

Westlaw Edge UK is **the** standard for trusted online legal research. It is created and updated by a team of lawyers, computer scientists, and research technicians to produce the best and most powerful legal research product in the industry, built on the foundation of the market-leading research platform.

Its rigorous editorial standards ensure the most up-to-date, connected, and organised collections of case law, legislation, and regulations, providing the highest degree of accuracy.

Its time-saving research tools are powered by industry-leading technology and editorial enhancements.