

## Five Questions to Ask When Choosing a Legal Research Service Provider

### THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIABLE LEGAL RESEARCH

Despite changes in the legal industry, like advancing [technology](#) and innovative [legal marketing](#), there is one aspect that is as true today as it was decades ago: attorneys would not be able to provide accurate legal counsel without the use of a legal research service.

Without access to case law, statutes and regulations, as well as proper legal citation tools, an attorney could be flirting with malpractice each time they advised a client.

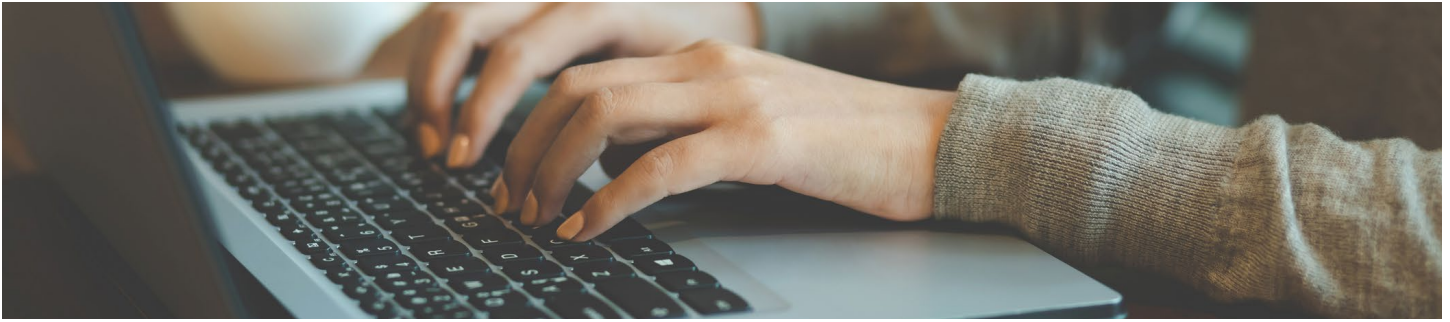
But given the amount of legal research service providers on the market, selecting the best one can seem daunting. Ask the right questions though and it becomes far less onerous. That said, here are five questions attorneys should ask when deciding which legal research service is right for them.

#### 1. WHAT WILL MY ROI BE IF I USE THIS LEGAL RESEARCH SERVICE?

The best legal research services help you efficiently find what you're looking for, so it is important to determine what kind of return on investment the tools you're considering can provide for your use case.

In this context, ROI means that the service should help you do more billable work in less time by surfacing the information you're looking for in as few steps as possible. That way, you can quickly move past researching and spend more time putting that research to good use by counseling your clients, negotiating with opposing counsel, etc. This is particularly important for attorneys who tend to provide their services on a flat fee or contingency fee basis where more time spent on legal research could lead to lower profit margins.

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A great way to determine the potential ROI of a service is to determine how long it takes to research an issue on one service versus its competitors.

A legal research service's features can also offer clues as to how likely it is to yield a positive ROI. Visualization tools that help you jump to the relevant details in your research will save you time. So too will a service's curated collections of information that can help you quickly find what you're looking for. And, the ability to organize your search results in a way that enables you to come back to them later without having to repeat any work can be a lifesaver.

## 2. WILL THE SERVICE'S AI AND ANALYTICS TOOLS HELP PROVIDE LEGAL COUNSEL?

You might have noticed that we're big fans of [artificial intelligence](#) and [legal analytics](#). That's because all attorneys, especially those in solo and small firms, can use these tools to level the playing field with BigLaw. The resources can help them find the information they need to serve clients efficiently and effectively, without an army of attorneys and paralegals.

While some [legal research services](#) have integrated AI and analytics into their products, you should look closely to determine how much actual value they provide.

Will they help you determine the citing relationship between relevant cases so you can find more supporting case law? Will they guide you to the cases that cite the key language or issues you are looking for? Will they give you an idea of how long a judge takes to rule on certain motions? Can they predict the likelihood that a bill you are tracking becomes law?

## 3. HOW HELPFUL WILL THE SERVICE BE IN DETERMINING WHAT'S GOOD LAW?

Few things are more embarrassing for an attorney than to learn from an adversary or a judge that a case they based their best argument on was recently overruled.

Every legal research service worth its salt provides some [editorial analysis](#) of decisions so that attorneys can avoid this embarrassing situation. But the level of this analysis varies drastically from service to service.

Does the service you're sizing up provide you with a preliminary indication of how courts have treated a decision or statute? Does it give you a sense of which citing reference had the strongest influence on that indication? Can you easily determine where there are splits of authority or which citing references provide additional support? Does the service integrate with your word processing software so that you can validate multiple citations and quotations at once?

## 4. CAN I ACCESS THE SERVICE ON THE GO?

These days, it is a forgone conclusion that at some point you'll need to access your legal research service remotely. When that time comes, will you be able to do so from your phone or tablet? Does the service you're evaluating have dedicated mobile apps with functionality that mirrors its full-sized experience?

Speaking of that web-based experience, will it automatically adapt to whatever size browser window you're on?

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## 5. DOES THE SERVICE HELP ME PROACTIVELY STAY ON TOP OF CHANGES TO MY SEARCH RESULTS OR THE TREATMENT OF A CASE?

The traditional practice of law requires attorneys to look backward at previously decided cases and enacted statutes. Yet, attorneys are arguably at their best when they're able to take advantage of new developments in the law.

Does the service you're considering alert you to changes in a publication or your prior search results? Can it proactively tell you if a case you're relying on [has been overruled](#)? Can it give you updates on legislation you're tracking or news topics that are of importance to you or a client?

### LOOK FOR FEATURES AND BENEFITS, NOT BELLS AND WHISTLES

Today, attorneys have more choices in legal research providers than they ever did. And most of these services have capabilities that are way ahead of what was offered just a few years ago.

But the number of choices often makes it difficult for attorneys and their firms to determine which service is best for their needs.

These five questions can help you cut through the clutter so that you can find the legal research service provider that best matches your needs.

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