Measuring the Impact of Concept-Based Legal Research

Return on Investment Report
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Executive summary

This survey measures the performance of Parallel Search, a new form of legal search, evaluating its impact on the time spent on legal research as well as the quality of search results.

We sent out the survey to attorneys who had previously conducted at least 10 searches on Parallel Search. Participants in the survey included attorneys from solo and small firms as well as Am Law 100 firms. We asked them to compare Parallel Search against other research platforms they have used. Among the survey respondents, Westlaw was the most commonly used research platform outside of Parallel Search, followed by Casetext and LexisNexis.

Three out of four attorneys said that they preferred Parallel Search over other legal research platforms. They also indicated that they preferred the quality of search results with Parallel Search; 69% believe they are more likely to find an on-point case with Parallel Search.

When asked how much time is saved by researching with Parallel Search, the average per attorney was 11.5 hours saved per month. This is in part explained by the fact that attorneys estimated on average 47% fewer searches needed to find an answer when using Parallel Search.
For attorneys, these time savings translate into a significant return on investment for using Parallel Search. As clients continue to grow increasingly unwilling to pay for legal research time, those 11.5 hours per month saved by Parallel Search can be converted into time spent on billable work (or business development, taking on additional cases, etc.).

**Introduction**

Parallel Search is a new form of legal search that overcomes the limitations of keyword search. To use it, the attorney inputs a complete sentence as a query and Parallel Search returns case law with matching concepts, including results that use none of the same language as the query. It is built on a new kind of natural language processing technology — transformer-based neural networks — that is trained to understand concepts in the law.

This offers a much more natural way for attorneys to search. Rather than trying to construct a boolean query to communicate the attorney’s question to a search platform, or re-writing natural language queries until figuring out which language the search platform will understand, an attorney can simply write a full sentence, just like he or she would write in a legal document. Parallel Search takes it from there.
It also means that attorneys can research without anxiety over whether they have constructed exactly the right query, or whether their selected keywords may mean they have unintentionally excluded some category of results.

Example Parallel Search query and results

Smith’s subpar job performance was the reason for his termination as shown by the numerous written warnings, not discrimination.

13 Results from Parallel Search

**Hudson v. Lands’ End Inc.**
928 F. Supp. 2d 1045 (W.D. Wis. 2013)

... Additionally, the fact that plaintiff received a poor performance review and repeated admonishments before being discharged is evidence that he was fired for poor performance and not a discriminatory reason. ...

**Yacoub v. McGovern**

The legal industry has responded extremely enthusiastically to Parallel Search; attorneys have described it as “straight up witchcraft” and said it
“almost feels like cheating.” But we wanted more clarity around exactly how Parallel Search is impacting legal research for attorneys who use it.

We reached out to approximately 200 attorneys who had recently conducted at least 10 searches with Parallel Search. This included attorneys who currently subscribe to Parallel Search as well as those who tried it for free. We offered a $5 Amazon gift card to any attorney who completed a survey about their experience with Parallel Search. (Find the complete list of survey questions in the Appendix.)

**Survey participants**

35 attorneys completed the survey. Of those, 14 are solos, 8 work for firms of between 2 and 50 attorneys, and 13 work for firms of 100 or more attorneys, including several Am Law 100 firms.

These attorneys work in a wide range of practice areas, including consumer class actions, intellectual property, administrative law, personal injury, natural resources law, white collar criminal law, public interest and civil rights litigation, employment law, family law, business litigation, ERISA, commercial litigation, corporate transactional work, appellate law, and products liability.

Several of the survey questions ask attorneys to compare Parallel Search to the other legal research platforms they use.

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have most commonly used. Survey respondents included the following platforms as their basis for comparison:

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<td>Bloomberg</td>
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Survey results

Time savings: 47% fewer searches, 11.5 hours saved per month

When asked “Do you believe Parallel Search saves you time compared to other research platforms,” the vast majority of attorneys (88%) confirmed that Parallel Search saves them time on legal research.
For more clarity as to how much time attorneys can save with Parallel Search, we asked respondents to estimate time savings on a specific research question, on a typical research project, and over the course of a month.

For a research question, we asked respondents to estimate the percentage of time saved by using Parallel Search (0% faster, 10% faster, 20% faster, etc.). The average response was that researching with Parallel Search is 52% faster than other research platforms. No one gave an estimate of less than 10%.

On a typical research project, the majority of respondents (55%) estimated 2 or more hours saved per research project. The average estimate across respondents was about 2.3 hours saved per research project.

Expanded over the course of a month, the majority of respondents (70%) estimated Parallel Search would save them 5 or more hours per month. The average estimate across respondents was 11.5 hours saved per month.

One reason Parallel Search saves time is by enabling attorneys to find the right results earlier in their research process, rather than requiring that they, for example, repeatedly revise a boolean query in order to find the right way to ask the question. This explanation is supported by the respondents’ assessment. We asked attorneys how many searches it typically takes them to find an answer on other research platforms, and how many searches they expect it to take on Parallel Search. On average, attorneys estimated 4.7 searches to find an answer on other platforms, and 2.5 with Parallel Search; a 47% reduction in searches.
Search result quality: 69% more likely to find an on-point case

Of course, speed alone is not enough for a legal research platform; it also needs to return the right results. We asked respondents to assess whether they are more, equally, or less likely to find on-point results with Parallel Search. 69% responded “I believe I am more likely to find an on-point case with Parallel Search,” and 29% responded “I believe I am just as likely to find an on-point case with Parallel Search.” Just 1 attorney answered “I believe I am less likely to find an on-point case with Parallel Search.”

We also asked, conversely, whether attorneys believe they are more, equally, or less likely to miss a case by using Parallel Search. Although 5 respondents (14%) said they thought they would be more likely to miss a case with Parallel Search, the vast majority (86%) believed that Parallel Search would not increase their likelihood of missing a case; in fact, a majority (51%) said that they would be less likely to miss a case by using Parallel Search.

Search experience: preferred by 74% of attorneys

We asked: “How would you compare the experience of researching with Parallel Search to other research platform(s)?”
74% of respondents answered they either prefer or strongly prefer Parallel Search to other research platforms. The remaining 26% answered “No preference.” No respondents stated that they preferred another research platform.

We also asked respondents to explain their preference, adding some color to the reasons the majority prefer Parallel Search. Explanations included:

### Attorney quotes

“Parallel search works better than Westlaw's plain text search and costs much less.”

“Finds on-point cases reliably.”

“Very intuitive and like the ease of use.”

“You can type in a whole sentence, instead of just keywords, and cases pertaining to your desired position magically appear.”

“90% of the time it's right on point and gets me there fast.”

“I actually find what I am looking for.”

“I like not having to use boolean searches and the A.I. seems to come up with at least a couple really on-point cases in each search. And if there aren't any directly on point, usually there are one or two that take me to on-point ones.”
We also asked, “What would you say to an attorney who has never heard of Parallel Search? Would you encourage them to try it?” Other than 3 respondents who skipped this question, **100% said they would recommend trying Parallel Search.** Responses included:

**Attorney quotes**

“The ability to frame my questions in plain language and have multiple cases to choose from.”

“So much easier for staying in the flow of writing.”

“I have already suggested CaseText and Parallel Search to 2 colleagues and told them both that this is the ‘next big thing’ in legal research and it puts them light years ahead of the opposition.”

“Give it one week, and I am confident that you will fall in awe.”

“It's amazing.”

“I think the concept is terrific and believe in this approach.”

“Yes, I would, and have, encouraged other attorneys to use it because of the likelihood that their first search will find at least one case on point.”

“I have encouraged attorneys to try. My exact words are ‘game changer.’”

“Highly recommend this tool, unlike anything I’ve ever worked before. Major time saver for trying to find obscure or extremely narrow issues.”

“It really must be seen to be believed.”
**Return on Investment**

**For lawyers who bill hourly**

While legal research may take up a large chunk of an attorney’s time, those who bill hourly are increasingly finding that time spent on legal research is not time they can bill to clients. A 2019 study by Bloomberg Law placed legal research in the top 5 most time-consuming tasks for attorneys, but found that only 76% of time spent by junior associates on legal research was recoverable. ²

When we conducted our own survey of in-house counsel in 2020, several pointed to legal research as one of their least favorite activities to see appear on bills from their outside counsel; they described their unwillingness to pay to train young lawyers, or to pay for attorneys they hired as subject matter experts to spend time searching for answers. ³

By giving attorneys back 11.5 hours of research time per month, Parallel Search provides the opportunity to redeploy that time on billable work. Assuming 76% of that was non-recoverable time, that means attorneys get back 8.74 hours per month that would have been taken up by non-billable work. Depending on an attorney’s hourly rate, that could translate to an ROI of anywhere from $2,202.48 per attorney per month (at an hourly rate of $252, the

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² [https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/litigators-sound-off-on-their-most-time-consuming-task/](https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/litigators-sound-off-on-their-most-time-consuming-task/)

average from Clio’s 2020 Trend Report⁴) to $6,555 (for those at elite firms charging $750/hour).

For lawyers who do not bill hourly

The value of attorneys’ time is, of course, not determined by whether or not they bill hourly. Although time saved by Parallel Search is a bit tougher to translate into a dollar amount for attorneys who bill on contingency or through alternative fee arrangements, those 11.5 hours can mean time spent on business development, taking on additional work, or even just 11.5 more hours spent outside the office.

Conclusion

This survey reveals the potential for Parallel Search to dramatically improve legal research. In addition to cutting down the time attorneys spend searching for an on-point case, the majority of attorneys reported that they were actually more likely to find an on-point case, thanks to Parallel Search’s unique ability to find results based on concepts, not keywords. On top of that, most attorneys preferred the search experience with Parallel Search, which offers a much more natural, painless way for lawyers to search. Parallel Search enables attorneys to spend less time struggling over boolean queries, cuts out hours of non-billable work, and pays for itself by

recovering hours of time attorneys can reallocate towards billable work and business development.
1. Describe your practice.
2. How many attorneys work at your firm?
3. Other than Parallel Search, what legal research platform(s) have you most commonly used?
4. How would you compare the experience of researching with Parallel Search to other research platform(s)?
5. Explain what you prefer about Parallel Search or your other research platform.
6. How do the quality of cases you find with Parallel Search compare to other platforms?
7. Do you believe you are more, equally, or less likely to miss a case by using Parallel Search?
8. How many searches does it typically take you to find an answer on research platforms other than Parallel Search?
9. How many searches do you estimate it will take you to find an answer with Parallel Search?
10. Do you believe Parallel Search saves you time compared to other research platforms?
11. Over the course of a typical month, how much time do you estimate that Parallel Search could save you?
12. On a typical research project, how much time do you estimate Parallel Search could save you?
13. How much faster do you believe you could answer a research question with Parallel Search compared to a traditional legal research platform?
14. What would you say to an attorney who has never heard of Parallel Search? Would you encourage them to try it?
15. Any additional comments about Parallel Search?