



Autumn 2025

Entitlement

**The power of personality in law:
Why introversion is a legal superpower**

Plus:

- **The removal of the Bona Vacantia list:
Inheritance fraud exposed**
- **Cross-border estate headaches:
Managing US assets in UK estates**
- **Title Research team Q&A**



Entitlement

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Welcome to the autumn 2025 edition of Entitlement

Now that we're well on our way towards the end of the year, with cooler temperatures setting in and the leaves beginning to turn, we're happy to welcome you to the autumn edition of Entitlement, our industry magazine for Solicitors and legal practitioners.

In this quarter's edition, we're pleased to feature a lead article from guest author **Scott Walker, Consultant Solicitor at Richard Nelson LLP**. Scott challenges the long-held stereotype that only bold, outspoken personalities thrive in the legal profession. Drawing from personal experience and deep insight, he highlights how traits like introversion, sensitivity, and quiet reflection are not weaknesses, but powerful assets. This article serves as a timely reminder that there is no single mould for success in law. By embracing diverse personality types, we can build stronger teams, deepen client relationships, and create a more inclusive, human-centred profession.

In our second article, Title Research shines a spotlight on a disturbing vulnerability in our legal system, one that criminals have been exploiting to misappropriate estates from rightful heirs. We examine how gangs have manipulated the transparency of unclaimed estates to establish fraudulent claims, and argue for stronger safeguards that balance public accountability with the protection of beneficiaries. Find out why removing the Bona Vacantia list from public view matters not only for probate and genealogy professionals, but for the integrity of the legal system itself.

Our third article, brought to you by myself, sheds insight on some of the most frustrating delays and complexities that should be expected when administering cross-border estates. I unpack the procedural, legal, and practical hurdles posed by IRS requirements, highlighting how even routine estates can face multi-year delays. For legal professionals, this article acts as a timely reminder that early planning, expectation management, and specialist support are crucial when navigating the transatlantic probate minefield.

Finally, we conclude this edition with an interview with **Ben Osborne, Business Development Manager** at Title Research. In an increasingly complex legal landscape, the need for specialised support in probate genealogy and international asset administration has never been greater. As estates grow in intricacy and global reach, legal professionals are turning to trusted partners who can deliver expert solutions with precision and reliability. Ben offers a candid and insightful look into his role at the forefront of this evolving field. With a strong background in professional services and a clear passion for building meaningful client relationships, Ben shares how he bridges the gap between legal professionals and the specialist services that help them navigate complex estate matters with confidence. His reflections reveal not only the value Title Research brings to law firms across the UK, but also the personal commitment that drives meaningful client outcomes.

As always, if you would like to contribute to a future edition of Entitlement, we'd be delighted to hear from you. We hope you enjoy reading!



Anthony Allsopp,
Head of Business
Title Research

The power of personality in law: Why introversion is a legal superpower



By Scott Walker
Solicitor, Trainer, and Speaker
Consultant Solicitor, Richard Nelson LLP

Scott Walker,
Solicitor, Trainer, and
Speaker

Scott Walker is a Solicitor, trainer, and speaker in Wills and probate law. He is also an introvert, a Highly Sensitive Person, and someone who was once told he was too quiet to make it in law. But Scott has found that the very traits he and others thought were weaknesses have actually become his biggest strengths. Scott now helps legal professionals and law firms understand how introversion and extroversion shape the way we work, build teams, and support clients - and how embracing those differences can transform both careers and client relationships. He also helps and supports legal professionals and private client teams with practical skills based and technical training in all areas of Wills and probate law.

When people picture a successful lawyer, the image that often comes to mind is one of confidence, outspokenness, boldness, and authority. For years, I believed that because I didn't match this stereotype, I might not have a place in the profession. I'm an introvert and a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP), and for a long time I carried the belief that being quiet, shy, or reflective were traits that held me back.

The truth I've discovered is that these traits aren't weaknesses. In fact, they can be some of the most powerful strengths a lawyer can bring to the table.



Understanding introversion, extroversion, and ambiversion

To start, it's important to clarify what we mean when we talk about introverts and extroverts:



Introverts

Tend to draw energy from time alone or in quieter settings. They often prefer reflection before action and may find too much stimulation draining.



Ambiverts

Fall somewhere in between being an introvert or extrovert; they can enjoy both solitude and sociability, and flex depending on the situation.



Extroverts

Usually gain energy from social interaction. They think and process ideas out loud, thrive in group settings, and often feel energised by activity.

It's a spectrum rather than a box, and most of us move along it depending on context, environment, and energy levels.



Introversion vs shyness

One of the biggest misconceptions I encounter is the belief that being introverted means being shy. They are not the same thing.



Introversion

Is about where you get your energy from (quiet reflection vs external stimulation and social interaction).



Shyness

Is about fear of judgment in social situations.

You can be introverted and not shy at all, or you can be extroverted and shy. Personally, I've experienced both - I'm introverted and socially anxious at times - but separating the two concepts is essential for understanding how we function and thrive.



The Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)

Many introverts may also identify as being a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP). While some of the traits overlap, it is a distinct concept. Around 15-20% of the population are HSPs, meaning their nervous systems are more finely tuned to subtleties and stimulation.

An HSP processes information - both emotional and environmental - more deeply than others. They might find that they are more affected by noise, stress, conflict, and other people's moods. HSPs often have a rich inner world, are highly observant, experience emotions deeply, and may struggle with overstimulation.

For lawyers, this can manifest as:



Noticing details others might miss.



Being deeply empathetic to clients' needs.



Feeling more affected by conflict or overstimulation.

While it can bring challenges (overwhelm, stress, needing more downtime), it also equips us with an incredible capacity for insight, compassion, emotional intelligence, and client care - qualities that are invaluable in practice areas like private client law.

Of course, it can also present difficulties when dealing with grief and conversations about death and illness daily. Recognising if we (or our colleagues) are HSP helps us manage the challenges and stresses associated with working in Wills and probate law.



Every personality has value

Whether we are introverted, extroverted, HSP, or shy (or a blend of these traits), we are all unique, with different and equally valid strengths. We still need extroverted lawyers, the confident networkers who enjoy social interactions, build rapport quickly, bring energy to a room, and help others feel at ease. They are often skilled at thinking out loud, articulating ideas on the spot, and contributing actively to discussions and meetings.

For those of us who are introverted, shy, or HSP, it is not something that needs to be fixed. It's a way of experiencing the world, and with the right tools, it can help us thrive in a legal career.



My journey: From “too quiet” to trainer and speaker

When I was starting out in law, I was told more than once that I was too quiet to succeed. That comment stuck with me and, for a time, made me feel like I didn't belong.

But as my career progressed, I began to see things differently. My abilities to listen deeply, reflect before advising, and empathise with clients weren't weaknesses, they were exactly what clients valued most. In fact, they made me more effective in areas like Wills, probate, and estate planning, where sensitivity and trust are critical.

Introverted qualities help us connect more easily with clients because we can have deep and meaningful conversations on a one-to-one basis and ask difficult questions calmly, compassionately, and honestly. This encourages clients to open up, feel understood, and trust us. All our introverted traits help us to really understand our clients' challenges.

Today, those same qualities that once felt like barriers are the foundation of everything I do - in my work with clients, in my training and speaking, and in my personal life.



Why personality matters in legal practice

The law is a people business. Yes, technical knowledge and legal expertise are essential, but the way we understand and interact with people is often what makes the difference between an average lawyer and an exceptional one.



Here are a few reasons why personality awareness is so important in law:



Teamwork and productivity

Treating everyone the same is a common mistake. Introverts and extroverts work, process, and contribute differently. Valuing both equally creates happier, more productive teams.



Client relationships

Adapting to a client's personality type can reduce misunderstandings and complaints. Some clients need time to process information; others want to talk through everything in detail. Meeting them where they are builds trust and satisfaction.



Conflict prevention

Many workplace conflicts are simply clashes of personality styles. Recognising the root of these differences allows managers to prevent issues before they escalate.



Retention and wellbeing

Lawyers who feel understood and valued for who they are are more likely to stay and thrive.



Practical tips: Harnessing personality in law

Here are some simple, practical ways lawyers and managers can start applying these ideas:



In meetings

Pause to invite contributions from quieter team members. Give agendas in advance so introverts have time to reflect and prepare. Set expectations up front and agree how the meeting will be structured.



With clients

Notice whether a client processes best in writing or verbally, and adapt your communication style.



As a manager

Rotate between structured discussions (great for extroverts) and written reflections (ideal for introverts).

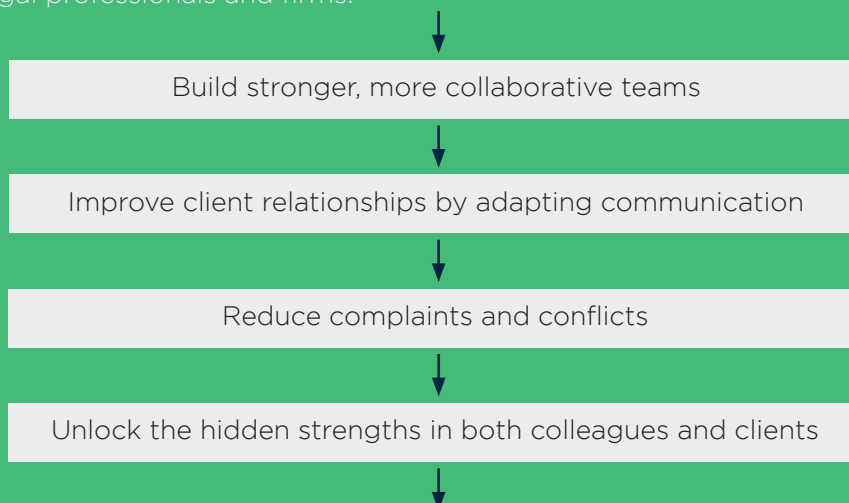


Personally

If you're introverted, give yourself permission to recharge after high-energy events. If you're extroverted, be mindful of giving others space to reflect.

This is exactly what I explore in my training session, *The Power of Personality in Law: How understanding introversion and extroversion transforms legal practice, teamwork, and client care.*

The session helps legal professionals and firms:



There's no one "type" of lawyer. Whether you're quiet, loud, reflective, energetic, or somewhere in between, there's a place for you in law. By understanding ourselves and others, we can build a profession that values every voice and delivers better outcomes for clients.



Closing thoughts

If you've ever felt too quiet, too sensitive, or too different to belong in law, know that your traits may be your greatest strengths. The power of personality is not about changing who we are, but about recognising, valuing, and harnessing what we each bring to the profession. We don't need to become someone else to be successful in law. We need to become more of who we already are.



Service spotlight:

Solving problems caused by Heir Hunters

Genealogy in the UK is an unregulated industry, with very few barriers to entry. As such, there are numerous firms of Heir Hunters, large and small, that can present themselves as reputable firms able to assist the legal profession.

Title Research is the only major UK genealogy firm that specialises in solely working with Private Client Practitioners, and one of only four to be regulated by the FCA for insurance mediation purposes.

Some professionals find themselves dealing with an estate that has had involvement from Heir Hunters which has not fully resolved the matter and they need support. Common scenarios include:



Lack of insurance

Heir Hunter not able to arrange insurance or unwilling to do so

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Missing heirs

Details of located heirs not passed on because they refused to sign commission agreements with the Heir Hunter

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Incomplete research

'Free' research not suitable or comprehensive enough

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Title Research can support you if you find yourselves in this position. Without judgment or obligation, we will review the circumstances of your file and provide a free research assessment and work with you to find a suitable solution. We can also provide educational support to help guide you and your team to help with possible future estates.

If you have a problem probate file where an Heir Hunter has not resolved it fully, we can help you close it, **permanently**.

The removal of the Bona Vacantia List: Inheritance fraud exposed



Title Research

In July of this year, the official list of people who have died without leaving a Will, known as the Bona Vacantia, was removed from the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk). It has since come to light that this action was taken following a BBC investigation into criminal gangs using the list to claim millions of pounds worth of inheritance unlawfully. The perpetrators were able to exploit the legal system by hastily writing fraudulent Wills to receive a Grant of Probate, allowing them to pose as the sole beneficiaries of an unknown amount of money and property.



What is the Bona Vacantia list?

Bona Vacantia is a Latin term meaning “vacant goods” and refers specifically to assets, estates, or property that have **no legal owner**, typically because someone has died intestate (without leaving a Will) and with **no known heirs**. When this happens within England and Wales, the assets do not simply vanish, but are instead declared Bona Vacantia and pass onto the Crown. They are entered into a government-issued list detailing information on the deceased person and the estate they left behind. In England and Wales, such estates are managed by the **Bona Vacantia Division of the Government Legal Department (GLD)** on behalf of the Crown, which is the ultimate heir according to the rules of intestacy. However, both the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster administer their Bona Vacantia estates separately on behalf of the Duke of Cornwall (Prince William), and the Duke of Lancaster (the King).

The existence of the list provides a public register of unclaimed estates, allowing potential heirs to step forward and claim their entitlement. It also serves as a legal mechanism to handle abandoned or unclaimed property and ensures that assets are not simply lost or stolen when they no longer have a legal owner.



Why has the list been taken offline?

On 7 July, the unclaimed estates page on the GOV.UK website, previously listing around 6,000 unclaimed estates, was temporarily withdrawn. It has since been updated with a message reading “We have temporarily removed the unclaimed estates list from our website.” Two days later, an article was published by the BBC stating that the list had been taken offline due to an investigation finding evidence of a criminal gang using it to commit millions of pounds worth of fraud. The investigation (which is still ongoing) has highlighted just how easy it is for fraudsters to use the Bona Vacantia list to identify assets held in unclaimed estates and exploit weaknesses in the legal system, allowing them to write these assets into fake Wills. From there, the criminals proceed to apply for a Grant of Probate using the online service to gain the legal right to administer and access the assets held within the estates.

According to a [BBC investigation](#), several cases of this criminal activity have taken place within the south of England, and are thought to be connected through a complex network of company directorships listed under names of Hungarian origin. This has led investigators to believe that it is the same gang of criminals responsible for all the cases that have already been identified. It remains unclear just how many fraudulent entitlement claims have so far gone undetected, and how many pounds worth of stolen assets have been taken.

The Bona Vacantia list has been removed from the GOV.UK website to make it harder for the perpetrators to identify other unclaimed estates to target, and to protect the information of the estates that have already been involved. The decision to remove the list will undoubtedly impact [“heir hunting” firms](#), who up until now have used the list to locate people who are legally entitled to inherit from a deceased relative’s estate, but are unaware of their legal claim.



What impact will this have?

Title Research’s primary focus has always been to support Private Client Practitioners in completing probate genealogy work. Therefore, unlike Heir Hunters who rely on the Bona Vacantia list, the work we do should not be affected by its removal. However, the findings of this investigation are still troubling, as it highlights just how little protection is available to legitimate beneficiaries. We have long believed that the Bona Vacantia should only be accessible to approved professional genealogists who hold a track record of successfully applying succession laws, rather than being open to anyone with little or no experience in probate genealogy.

Implementing this change would make criminal activity such as this much more unlikely to occur, and would safeguard the administration of estates further. It is this sentiment that originally led to the removal of estate values being published, and as fraud becomes more sophisticated, so should the safeguards that are put in place to minimise such opportunism. Sadly, since the probate genealogy industry is not independently regulated, fraudsters can still steal valuable assets from rightful heirs, as recent events have shown. Removing the list from the public domain is the wise choice in the short term, but careful consideration is required to solve the long-term problem; otherwise, genuine claimants to seemingly Bona Vacantia estates will have no way of learning of their potential entitlement.



How Title Research can support you

At Title Research, we specialise in supporting Solicitors with complex estate administration. Whether it’s verifying entitlement, locating missing beneficiaries, or dealing with overseas assets, our team is here to make the process more efficient and risk-free.

Title Research provides fast, fixed-fee access to genealogical research, making us the safe choice for the resolution of complex estate administration cases. If you want to find out more, get in touch with our Client Services Team by calling 0345 87 27 600 or emailing info@titleresearch.com.



Would you like to be featured in the next edition of Entitlement?

We would love to hear your idea for a guest article on your area of expertise.

If you would like to contribute to Entitlement, please email us:

news@titlresearch.com



Cross-border estate headaches: Managing US assets in UK estates



By Anthony Allsopp
Head of Business, Title Research

Anthony Allsopp,
Head of Business
Title Research

When a client asks you, “*When will the estate be finalised?*” it is likely not for the first time, but it is always the hope that with a fair wind, it perhaps might be the last. Every practitioner carrying out administration work on estates will know that there is no end of unforeseeable variables that may cause delay – topical now is how UK banks can be challenging at the pre-grant stage in terms of providing date of death values for a deceased’s account. Equally, we can all agree that the Probate Registry can be slow (although improving in some ways, if you believe the data), and if we mention HMRC, try not to sigh.



Cross-border estates and the US equivalent of HMRC

Let’s consider cross-border estates and the US equivalent of HMRC, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If US assets held in a UK estate exceed \$60,000 at the date of death, then it is usual for financial institutions to request a [Federal Transfer Certificate](#) (Form 5173) before those assets can be transferred and or liquidated. This particular document is issued by the IRS once it is satisfied that there is no tax liability, and assuming the deceased was never a citizen of the US, there should not be.



Preparing application forms and timeline

Pre-COVID, these certificates were issued in 9 to 12 months from the point of application. The currently advised turnaround is **18 to 24 months, as the IRS is still dealing with a backlog** (the US has similar tax treaties in place with at least 20 other jurisdictions).

Preparing the application is quite complex:



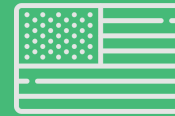
The Grant will need to have been issued



If the **UK estate is taxable**, the Inheritance Tax (IHT) will also need to be prepared,



Tax affidavit



Specific US forms where the specific aspect of the treaty that the estate is claiming relief from must be stated.

This part alone can take a few months before we even reach the 18 to 24-month stage. In a best-case scenario, the estate will be staring down the barrel of a two and a half year wait just to obtain the requisite documentation needed to satisfy US financial institutions. But, of course, there will then be the added time to actually administer the assets, which we all know is quick and easy...



Surely it couldn't get worse...

Realistically, collecting high-value US assets means the estate should expect to wait around three years, as things stood entering 2025. Surely, it couldn't get much worse than this... could it?

If you were following international news at the start of the year, you may have been aware that in a drive to improve spending efficiency at the Government level, a large swathe of the Federal workforce in the US was "laid off". Unfortunately, the IRS was not immune to this, and if rumours are true, it lost two-thirds of its entire workforce, which has directly impacted the team responsible for Tax Treaties.



The legal risk: Unconscionable bargains

Formally, the advice remains 18 to 24 months to issue tax clearance. The good news is that at Title Research, we usually have 50 matters ongoing at any one time that involve IRS applications, **so we have some pretty reliable data on how long it currently takes**. The bad news is that it is taking longer than the advised 18 to 24 months on average.

In our experience, **applications are currently being turned around in three years**. So, add in the two months to prepare the application and a minimum of four to six months to administer the assets once the IRS has issued Form 5173, and **the estate could well be looking at four years to resolve the US aspect**.



Conclusions

This is far from ideal, especially in scenarios where the US assets form a significant part of the estate, and even the most patient clients will start to abandon their sensibilities; after all, bereaved families just want to move on. The best advice we can offer is to manage expectations early in the process, as the best coping method can often be foresight and preparation.

Title Research has over 20 years' experience specialising in cross-border estates, with particular in-house expertise in dealing with US assets.

60 years of Title Research

Title Research is proud to celebrate 60 years of supporting legal professionals in solving complex estate administration cases



During the last 60 years, we've been trusted to provide:



Genealogical research to trace missing beneficiaries since 1965



Asset repatriation from overseas (shares, property, and funds)



FCA-regulated support with indemnity insurance

1965

The company was founded by Tom Curran, a former Architect's Draughtsman and Entrepreneur to help Corporate Trustees and Lawyers with the task of tracing missing beneficiaries and missing legal documentation.

1990's

Tom Curran retires, and his son, Tom Curran, takes over as Managing Director. Work commences to digitise birth, marriage, and death records for use in-house.

1998

Policy decision taken to no longer undertake public domain case work and focus solely on instructed work.

2001

Title Research no longer accepts instructions from Solicitors to work on a contingency fee basis.

2004

Title Research purchases Horsham based firm Direct Probate Services and starts to offer overseas asset services to further support Solicitor clients. Title Research awarded Queen's Award for Innovation.

2022

Title Research is awarded Probate Research Firm of the Year at The British Wills and Probate Awards 2022.

Today

Continues to assist estate administration professionals by providing specialist support services worldwide. Partnerships with Professional Conferences, Central Law Training and STEP allow us to offer advice and guidance whenever required.

It's not just our **60 year history** that sets us apart. It's our continued drive to provide reliable expert solutions that give you peace of mind.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Title Research team Q&A

Title Research is proud to have an expert team of genealogical research and asset repatriation specialists.

Our team brings extensive experience and expertise to tackling complex estate administration cases. In this edition of Entitlement, we interviewed our **Business Development Manager, Ben Osborne**, to discuss his favourite aspects of the role, the biggest challenges facing probate professionals today, and how Title Research can help clients overcome these challenges.



Ben Osborne,
Business Development
Manager
Title Research

What does your role as Business Development Manager involve on a day-to-day basis?

My day-to-day role at Title Research centres around generating business leads for our technical specialists and delivering our service proposition directly to law firms across the UK. I spend a significant portion of my time visiting Solicitors' offices in-situ, which allows me to understand their specific needs, current ways, and demonstrate how our probate genealogy and international asset administration services can support their practice.

What is your favourite aspect of your role?

What I enjoy most is the relationship-building aspect and the problem-solving element of what we do. Every probate case is unique, and I love working with Solicitors to understand their specific challenges, showing them how our services can provide solutions they might not have considered.

The variety is also exciting – one day I might be explaining complex international asset tracing to a large firm, and the next I'm working with a high street practice supporting their needs. The face-to-face interactions and the satisfaction of helping professionals deliver better outcomes for their clients makes this role particularly rewarding.

How does your role support Solicitors and legal professionals who use Title Research's services?

I act as the primary liaison between Title Research and the legal community, helping Solicitors understand how our specialised genealogical research and asset repatriation services can enhance their probate practice. By visiting law firms directly, I can assess their specific challenges and tailor our service proposition to their needs.

My role involves educating legal professionals about the complexities of probate genealogy and international asset administration, and demonstrating how partnering with us can save them time while ensuring thorough, professional research. I maintain ongoing relationships to ensure they receive consistent support and can access our expertise whenever complex inheritance matters arise.





How do you think demand for genealogical research and asset repatriation is evolving in today's market?

The market is definitely growing and becoming more sophisticated. We're seeing increased awareness among Solicitors about the importance of thorough genealogical research, particularly as estates become more complex and international. With people increasingly mobile and assets held across multiple locations, there's growing demand for specialised expertise in international asset administration.

There's also a greater understanding that proper genealogical research isn't just about finding beneficiaries – it's about protecting firms from potential claims and ensuring they've fulfilled their professional duties.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing probate professionals today?

From my conversations with Solicitors across the UK, I see several key challenges. Time pressure is a major issue – Solicitors are often dealing with complex cases while managing heavy caseloads, and genealogical research can be incredibly time-consuming when done in-house.

There's also the challenge of expertise – probate law is one thing, but genealogical research requires specialised skills and access to resources that most firms simply don't have. International cases add another layer of complexity with different legal systems and asset tracing requirements.

How do you think Title Research can help clients overcome these challenges?

Title Research addresses these challenges by providing specialised expertise that allow Solicitors to focus on what they do best – the legal aspects of probate work. We take on the time-intensive research work, using our specialised resources and experience to deliver thorough, reliable results.

Our international asset administration services are particularly valuable for firms dealing with cross-border estates, where we can navigate different legal systems and tracing requirements. We also provide the documentation and reporting that helps protect firms from potential claims by demonstrating due diligence has been conducted.

Essentially, we act as an extension of their team, providing specialist skills when they need them most.

How does Title Research differentiate itself from other providers in the probate support space?

Our key differentiator is our comprehensive approach and the depth of our expertise. We don't just provide research – we provide consultancy. When I visit firms, I'm not just selling a service; I'm offering genuine partnership, sharing knowledge that helps them understand the broader implications of complex probate cases.

Our combination of traditional genealogical research with international asset administration services means we can handle the full spectrum of complex probate matters. We also pride ourselves on our personal approach – firms know they're dealing with real experts who understand both the research challenges and the legal context.

What feedback have you received from clients about what they value most when working with Title Research?

The feedback I receive is that clients value our reliability and the quality of our reporting. Solicitors tell me they appreciate having a partner they can trust with complex cases, knowing the work will be thorough and delivered on time.

Many also comment on our consultative approach – we don't just deliver results; we explain the implications and help them understand the broader context. The personal relationships we build are also frequently mentioned; Solicitors like knowing they can pick up the phone and speak to someone who understands their practice and their specific needs.

Our ability to handle both straightforward genealogy work and complex international cases through a single point of contact is also something clients consistently value.

Ben focuses on driving growth across the company's core channels of probate genealogy and international asset administration. With extensive experience in account management, sales, and partnership development, Ben brings a results-driven approach to building lasting relationships with legal professionals and firms across the UK.

Prior to joining Title Research in May 2025, Ben spent seven years in the higher education industry as a Business Development Manager. He worked at the University of Law, where he led new business development initiatives, managed strategic partnerships, and oversaw teams responsible for employer engagement and student placements. His experience also includes account management roles at Newman University, where he specialised in SME engagement and skills development programs.

A graduate of Staffordshire University with a BA Honours in Business Studies, Ben is passionate about delivering exceptional service propositions and maintaining strong, long-lasting client relationships. He regularly represents Title Research at networking events and legal conferences, helping to raise the company's profile within the probate and legal community.





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