

**Survey: Regulatory Lawyers,
Business Litigators in Demand**

Stephanie Lovett

02-06-2007

If you are a corporate regulatory attorney, commercial litigator, or skilled paralegal, you should feel pretty secure about your job.

Those professionals, along with first-year associates and legal secretaries, were highlighted as in demand in Robert Half Legal's 2007 Salary Guide, released last week. The survey provided salary numbers for a range of experiences and types of firms as well as industry trends.

Robert Half surveyed 300 attorneys from the largest law firms and corporations in the United States and Canada.

The consensus of legal industry experts who spoke to *The Legal* was that the survey confirmed a number of trends they are seeing, but they disagreed on some points as well.

The survey noted an increase in the use of project attorneys, increased competition between law firms, and corporations doing more work in-house. Attorneys with backgrounds in real estate, corporate compliance and intellectual property were highlighted.

These conclusions made sense to Lisa Goldstein of Rainmaker Trainers. She said attorneys need to have industry-specific experience in today's market.

"From a global view, as [law firm] salaries continue to go up, corporations seem to be doing more work in-house as a result, and there's cost pressures coming from both sides. . . The more commoditized work is being done by temps, so it's a selling point for law firms to specialize," Goldstein said.

Of the 150 in-house corporate attorneys surveyed, 34 percent said increased workload was their department's biggest challenge, a point echoed by Frank D'Amore of Attorney Career Catalysts.

D'Amore said he knew a number of attorneys who had left firms for a "saner lifestyle," only to be swamped by the demands of working in-house.

Twenty-five percent of lawyers surveyed chose ethics and corporate governance as the area of the law that would experience the most growth in the next year while 23 percent cited litigation and 19 percent said intellectual property. Real estate, bankruptcy, general corporate/commercial and employment law drew smaller percentages.

But Goldstein said she didn't necessarily agree that ethics and corporate governance would continue to be as in-demand.

"I have heard that Sarbanes-Oxley issues are going to decrease because companies are going offshore and incorporating there because the regulations are so stringent," she said.

Maura Mann, Robert Half manager of training and development, said the Philadelphia market was seeing a strong increase in need for paralegals with three or more years of experience. Mann said less people were entering the professional training programs for the professions but the demand was still high.

Goldstein said she thought the demand for experienced paralegals and administrative assistants could be partially attributed to the increase in women entering law school over the past 40 years.

D'Amore disagreed with the survey's top two responses for the biggest incentive to stay at a law firm or corporate legal department: The survey reported 38 percent citing a pay increase or bonus and 29 percent saying professional development opportunities were the best incentive.

D'Amore said most people he knew cared more about the work environment and life-balance issues, but that partners and management often mistakenly thought money mattered most.

As for the salary figures themselves, there were no real surprises.

The survey only included bases salaries, and did not include bonuses, according to Mann.

Of all categories, first-year associates' salaries' percentage change since last year was highest. Those salaries increased an average of 6.6 percent across all firm types. Robert Half's classification of midsized firm (35-75 attorneys) saw the biggest increase, 7.9 percent, over 2006.

Attorneys with four to seven-plus years experience had the lowest percent increase in salary, according to the survey. The average for all firm sizes was a 1.8 percent increase in base salary. But Mann said bonuses and other compensation could mean the more experienced attorneys had much larger overall take-home increases.

Mann said the salary figures were collected from Robert Half's 28 offices across the U.S. and Canada.