



2017 Salary Survey

by Greg Wayment

With the gracious support of the Utah paralegal community, the Paralegal Division has recently completed the 2017 salary survey. The first one was conducted in 2008, followed up in 2012 and again in 2015. The goal of the paralegal salary survey is to firstly answer the question, “What can a paralegal in Utah expect to make?”; but also to track the education, skills, CLE opportunities, and requirements, membership in professional organizations, and benefit trends for paralegals in the state. Hopefully by doing so, we can provide a baseline for paralegals when negotiating benefits, salaries, and bonuses.

The survey was open to Paralegal Division members and non-members alike. For full sake of disclosure, there was no eligibility screening, meaning anyone that had access to the link was welcome to answer the questions. By and large, most of the respondents (at least 92%) reported their job title as paralegal. The other 8% reported as being legal assistants, administrative assistants, and other compliance related positions.

The 2017 survey contained sixty-one questions and was taken by a total of 122 individuals. Unfortunately that is down from 173 in 2015, but more than the eighty-four that took it in 2012, or the ninety-nine that took it in 2008. We would like to thank the 122 people that took the time this year to take the survey! The following is a reporting and analysis of the results.

As has been the trend, the majority of respondents are employed in Salt Lake County (85%), with just 5% reporting from Utah County, and 2.5% in Weber and Washington Counties respectively. At 96% of the respondents, women still account for the large majority of paralegals working in Utah.

Almost 33% of respondents have been employed in the field for over twenty years, with 31% in the one-to-five year category. As for current employment, almost 39% have been with the same employer for over ten years and just roughly 1% more (or almost 40%) have held their current positions for between one and five years, indicating some mobility among Utah paralegals. Surprisingly, we only had one respondent who reports as working part-time, and no self-employed.

Membership in paralegal organizations has remained robust, with 70% of respondents belonging to the Paralegal Division (up 18% from the last survey) and approximately 24% enjoying membership in the Utah Paralegal Association. Roughly 22% are members of the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). The vast majority of respondents, over 93%, were not required to have passed a national paralegal certification exam prior to being hired. This number has held steady since our 2012 survey. Sixteen percent answered affirmative to obtaining a C.P. designation, and 7% answered to having obtained an A.C.P. designation.

Twenty-five percent of Utah paralegals report having earned a bachelor's degree (down 15%), while 22% have a paralegal certificate (down 17.5%). According to our survey, the majority of paralegals in Utah have an associate degree (36%).

As for employers, 61% require their paralegals to have met a minimum education level; of these, 28% require a certificate from an American Bar Association-approved paralegal program (down 16%), which nearly 70% of Utah paralegals possess (down 9%). Education is not often directly tied to compensation, however, as over half of respondents indicated that their employers do not consider education levels as a factor in setting compensation. Surprisingly, only about 18% of law firms require paralegals to have a bachelor's degree.

The second part of our survey addressed firm environment, duties and responsibilities. Of respondents, nearly 53% work in private law firms, with approximately 18% working in corporations, and 23% work in the public sector. As for practice areas, we

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found that 49% of respondents practice in the litigation arena, with 44% of paralegals doing defense work and nearly 37% doing plaintiffs' work. Other big areas of employment are corporate, personal injury, and business law.

A clear majority of respondents, 56%, work in organizations that employ no more than five paralegals. As for firm size, the vast majority are either quite small or quite large, with nearly 44% employing between one and ten attorneys and 37% employing over forty attorneys.

Utah paralegals are near-unified in their use of Microsoft Word at 96%. For legal research, the use of Lexis/Nexis and Westlaw is almost evenly split (with a small majority using Westlaw). A new question on this survey asked paralegals "What software does your firm/you currently use to manage large formal document productions?" The overwhelming majority (thirty-six respondents) use Adobe. iPro and Concordance were evenly split with eleven, and Summation and Relativity had two. A few other responses included PIMS, Worldox, NetDocs, and Nuance.

A large number of people skipped this question.

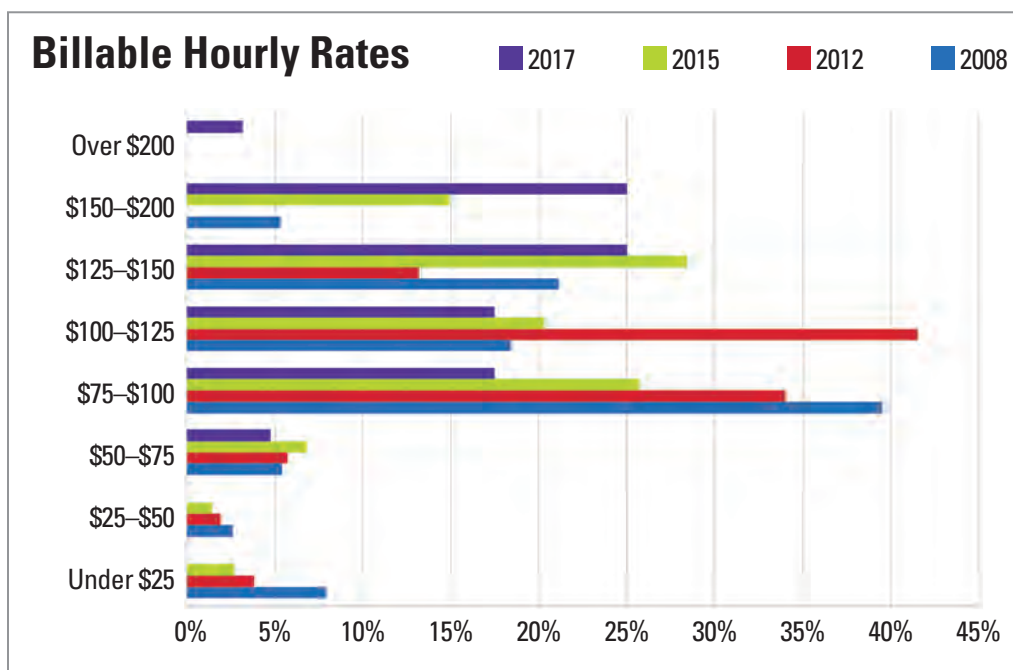
Most respondents, almost three-quarters, work very little or no overtime in the average month. Six percent work over twenty hours a month. The question of whether respondents bill time to clients is nearly evenly split. Of the 51.6% who do bill their time, the majority bill over 75% to clients, with under 10% of their time spent on non-billable administrative work. Nearly 43% have no billable hour requirement. Of those that do, 1,500–1,600 was the biggest category with 25% of the respondents, followed by 1,600–1,700 hours at 14%. In addition, nearly 31% of respondents supervise a secretary.

In this survey, we found that a higher number of employers are providing in-house CLE (46% yes, 54% no). Over 85% of employers pay for outside CLE, which is a trend we are pleased to see has increased. Of those who pay for outside CLE, 100% of

respondents receive payment of registration fees, with nearly half receiving hotel accommodations and mileage as well. A slightly smaller number provide reimbursement for airfare and a per diem. Nearly 21% of paralegals have annual CLE budgets, while another 31% having no limit for CLE that will be paid. We are also pleased to report that a majority of respondents report attending Paralegal Day and the Brown Bag CLE events.

Turning to paralegal salary, benefits and other compensation. The largest category of respondents at 16%, report making between \$70,000 and \$74,999. The next largest category at 12%, make between \$45,000 and \$49,999. With a three-way tie at 11%, we have \$40,000 to \$44,999; \$50,000 to \$54,999, and \$55,000 to \$59,999. The lowest reported salary was in the \$25,000 to \$29,999 range and the highest (one respondent) was in the \$100,000 and higher category.

In our last survey we wrote "disappointingly, nearly 55% of employers do not have a bonus structure in place for their paralegals." We are happy to report that 38% reported this time that there is not a bonus structure in place (meaning 17% more paralegals are being recognized for their good work with a bonus incentive). Of those who do, about 32% tie bonuses directly to billable hours and fees collected. Primarily bonuses are based on personal performance and company success. The majority of reported yearly bonus amounts is between \$1,000 and \$4,999. The second largest category was between \$5,000 and \$9,999. And the outliers are two at \$20,000+ and ten in the \$1 to \$999 category.



A large percentage at 79% reported receiving a raise in the last twelve months, with the majority (70%) reporting the percentage of the raise being 1–3% of their annual salary.

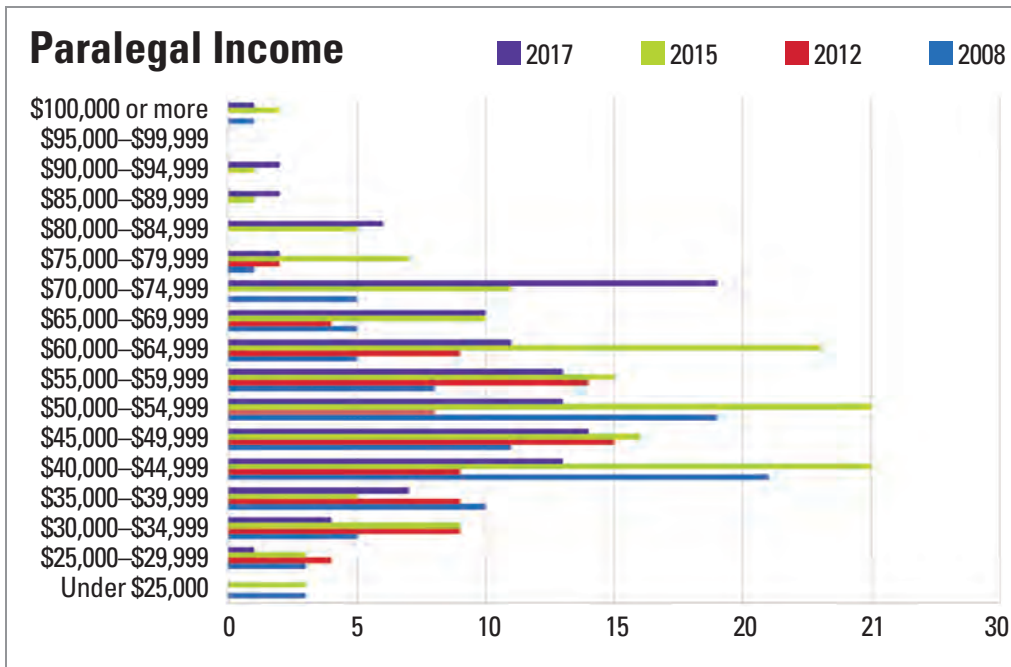
About an even number of paralegal report being paid salary vs. hourly (47% and 52% respectively). As for benefits provided, 89% of respondents have access to health insurance for

themselves (with slightly less having access for their families) and roughly 75% having access to dental insurance. Over 87% have a 401(k) plan with their employer, and just under 25% have profit sharing or another pension plan in place.

An astonishing 95% of respondents answered that they feel secure in their position with 52% reporting that if they needed

to find new employment, they are optimistic they could do so. We did have several people comment that their biggest concern in finding a new position would be their age.

The completed survey with all the responses will be posted on the Paralegal Division’s social media sites. We greatly appreciate your participation and hope that this information is valuable for you during salary negotiations with your employers.



Utah State Bar Fall Forum 2017

by Greg Wayment

I was fortunate once again to be able to attend the Utah State Bar’s Fall Forum which took place on November 9th and 10th at the Little America in Salt Lake City.

I attended three hours of the litigation track this year, which focused on depositions. The topics included preparing to take and defend depositions, winning the battles to win the war, expert depositions, and using depositions at trial. Jonathan Hafén once again put together an outstanding faculty with both new and familiar faces.

The lunch keynote was delivered by Nina Meierding, who spoke about miscommunication across cultures and genders. After lunch, I attended a session titled “Who is your client” with Melyssa Davidson and Paxton Guymon. And finally, for the last hour, I attended an informal but informative update on the state of the Licensed Paralegal Program in Utah with Justice Himonas.

The Paralegal Division wants to extend a thank you to the co-chairs Juli Blanch and Judge Blanch as well as the rest of the Fall Forum Committee. Also, we’d like to particularly thank the committee for again offering a reduced rate for paralegals and Paralegal Division members. To all paralegals in Utah: We continue to strongly encourage you to attend the Bar’s three annual conventions, and believe there is not a better way increase your education, sharpen your skills, and make valuable connections with other members of the Utah State Bar.