



2012 Salary Survey

by J. Robyn Dotterer

Though we had a good response to our survey this year, it was not as good as our last survey in 2008. This year we had eighty-four paralegals/legal assistants respond as opposed to ninety-nine responses last time. So keep this change in numbers in mind as it relates to percentages — we're still fifteen respondents off as it relates to comparisons from the last survey. Six of the respondents did not identify whether they were designated as a paralegal or legal assistant, but as in our last survey, the designation of Paralegal has gained tremendously in our industry over the past several years and 91% of the respondents identified as being employed as a paralegal, which is statistically the same as in our last survey.

Salt Lake County still employs the largest percentage of the respondents at 79.8% or sixty-seven of our eighty-four respondents. Box Elder County picked up one paralegal this year and Cache County lost their one paralegal from last survey. Davis County also picked up an additional paralegal and went from two to three respondents. Grand and Millard Counties either lost their paralegal or they were too busy to respond this year and show zero respondents. Summit County still has three responding paralegals and Utah County went from seven respondents to six this time. Wasatch County had a respondent this year and went to one from zero and Washington County stayed with only one respondent again this year. Weber County went down one from three to two respondents.

The gender spread in our profession changed slightly with an increase in male paralegals with the count going from seven to eight respondents, but they are still outnumbered by the seventy-six female paralegals who responded.

The number of paralegals who work part time also decreased from six to four, but the percentage of full time paralegals employees remain at about 95% of respondents.

It's good to know that employers are hiring as the number of paralegals working for their current employer under one year increased from last survey from eleven to fifteen. That shows that almost 20% of our respondents have been able to find an employer within the last year. With the economy having been so

slow for the past few years, it's nice to see that people have been able to find jobs. We were tied with twenty-seven paralegals having been with their current employer for one to five years and the same number for over ten years. The smallest group in this survey is the group having been with their current employer for six to ten years having changed from twenty-seven to thirteen. It seems that may have been the group changing jobs.

Only two of the respondents are brand-new paralegals as having been employed as a paralegal for less than one year, as opposed to our last survey where we had six new paralegals.

The Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar and the Utah Paralegal Association have both attracted significant numbers of members from our respondents. NALA also has a fair showing of members at twenty-one of our eighty-four respondents. Only seventeen respondents do not belong to a paralegal association. I'm glad to see that they got the word about our survey and responded. And, as members of the associations, let's be sure all our co-workers and friends know about the survey and the CLE that is offered so they can also participate if they want to.

By and large, it appears that about 90% of the employers of the paralegals in Utah do not require national certification as a condition of employment. Even though employment may not hinge on national certification, I think it's a good direction to go and if you've taken the time and effort to get through a paralegal program, pursuing the national certification at graduation while your education is still fresh in your mind, would be worth considering. I recommend the NALA Certification, as I'm sure many of the members of both the Paralegal Division and the Utah Paralegal Association would also recommend checking it

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out. Having a national certification will certainly set you apart from the crowd.

The level of education of the paralegals participating still shows that almost half of the respondents have a paralegal certificate, and almost 80% of those who responded to the question report that they obtained a certification from an ABA-approved program. The majority of employers do require a minimum education level to be hired as a paralegal and the majority of those who have that requirement do require a Paralegal Certificate from an ABA-approved program — the same as the previous survey so that appears to be an ongoing trend. An Associate's Degree in Paralegal Studies or a Bachelor's Degree are the next highest education requirements but at about half of the level as a Paralegal Certificate. The education level is a factor in setting the compensation level for about 60% of the respondents in both this and the prior survey.

Another interesting note is that, over time, we are transitioning from the designation of Certified Legal Assistant to Certified Paralegal for those of us who have taken the national certification exam from NALA.

The majority of paralegals do still work for private law firms, but in this survey the percentage of those in private law firms is smaller than the prior survey, and Government and Corporation employment opportunities have increased slightly.

Litigation defense is still the largest practice group with plaintiff litigation being the next largest practice area. Other categories that registered more than 10% participation were Real Estate, Family Law, Bankruptcy, and Wills/Estate Planning.

The majority of paralegals work with one to five paralegals in their place of employment which is similar to the prior survey. The next high groups are the organizations with six to ten paralegals, which tied with the organizations of over twenty paralegals. Most of us work in organizations with either one to ten attorneys or more than forty attorneys — actually split thirty-two/thirty-two in each group. The organization with eleven to twenty attorneys was third with nine paralegals, twenty-one to thirty attorneys had seven paralegals and the thirty to forty attorney organization had only four paralegals. I'm hoping that those groups have a lot of paralegals who did not have time to take the survey.

Microsoft seems to be the king of the software programs in our area, which is probably not surprising. Most of us use Microsoft Word, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Excel, and Powerpoint. Adobe Acrobat has also picked up a very large following. Many of us also use document database programs such as CaseMap,

Concordance, Sanction, and Summation. I am also anticipating that we will start to see new notebook trial programs in the very near future being used as notebooks become more widely used by attorneys for trial presentation.

The amount of overtime worked by our paralegals stayed fairly close to the same percentage rates as our last survey. The majority of our paralegals work either no overtime or only one to five hours of overtime each month at about 35% for each group. Only about 15% of paralegals work six to ten hours of overtime, fewer work eleven to twenty hours of over time at 8% and even fewer work over twenty hours of overtime at 7%. Only a few paralegals work fewer than forty hours per week and most of us work forty hours per week or more which is where our overtime comes in.

In this survey it was quite close in how many of us bill our time to our clients, with the difference being only three fewer people do not bill clients as do bill clients at 51.8% who do and 48.2% who don't. This is a closer ratio than our last survey, when about 2/3 of the respondents billed their time and 1/3 did not, so more of us are billing our time.

Most of us who do billable time spent 75% of our time doing billable work for clients. And most of us (60% or more) spend less than 10% of our time on non-billable work for clients or

Annual Paralegal Day Luncheon

For all paralegals and their supervising attorneys

**Speaker:
Chief Judge William T. Thurman**

May 16, 2013

Noon to 1:00 pm

**Salt Lake Marriott City Center
220 South State Street
SLC, UT 84111**

1 hour ethics/civility credit

administrative work that is also non-billable. Those of us who do have supervisory responsibilities (twenty-three of eighty-one who responded) primarily supervise secretaries.

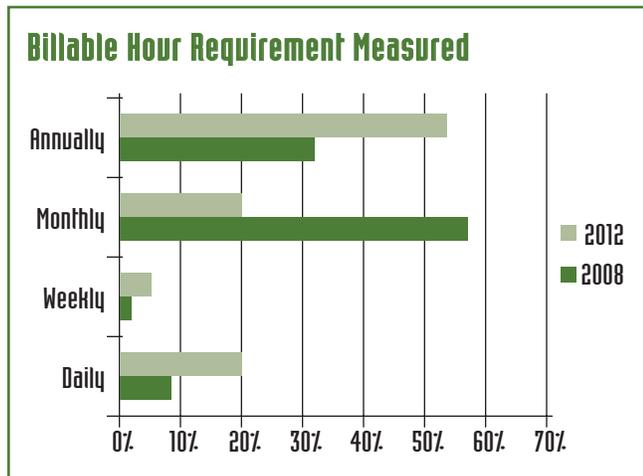
The number of employers that offer in-house training is a lower percentage in this survey — 46% versus 61% in the last survey. Of the employers that provide in-house training 42% provide six to ten hours per years and 36.2% provide one to five hours per year.

Employers of sixty-four respondents do pay for some outside CLE with 26% having a CLE budget for the year and 26% having no limit for local CLE events and 9% have no limit for CLE hours or events that will be paid for. This is a tremendous benefit for paralegals and is something that you should all be talking to your employers about if they do not provide this benefit for you. Most employers pay for the registration fees for CLE events but less than half pay for expenses for out-of-town CLEs.

The distribution of the types of tasks remained very similar to last year. Paralegals spend the greatest amount of time reviewing and analyzing documents, maintaining case calendars and files, maintaining document databases, drafting discovery responses, and drafting pleadings.

One of the most significant issues for paralegals is whether they have a billable hour requirement. In 2008, 48.9% of respondents did have a billable hour requirements and 51.1% did not – with ninety-four responses. In 2012, only 41.5% of the respondents had a billable requirement and 58.5% of respondents did not have a billable hour requirement.

The majority of respondents in the 2008 survey were measured on a monthly basis, but this survey had the majority being measured on an annual basis.



Interestingly, in the 2008 survey, the billable rates of the paralegals differed by the client or type of work being done fairly significantly.

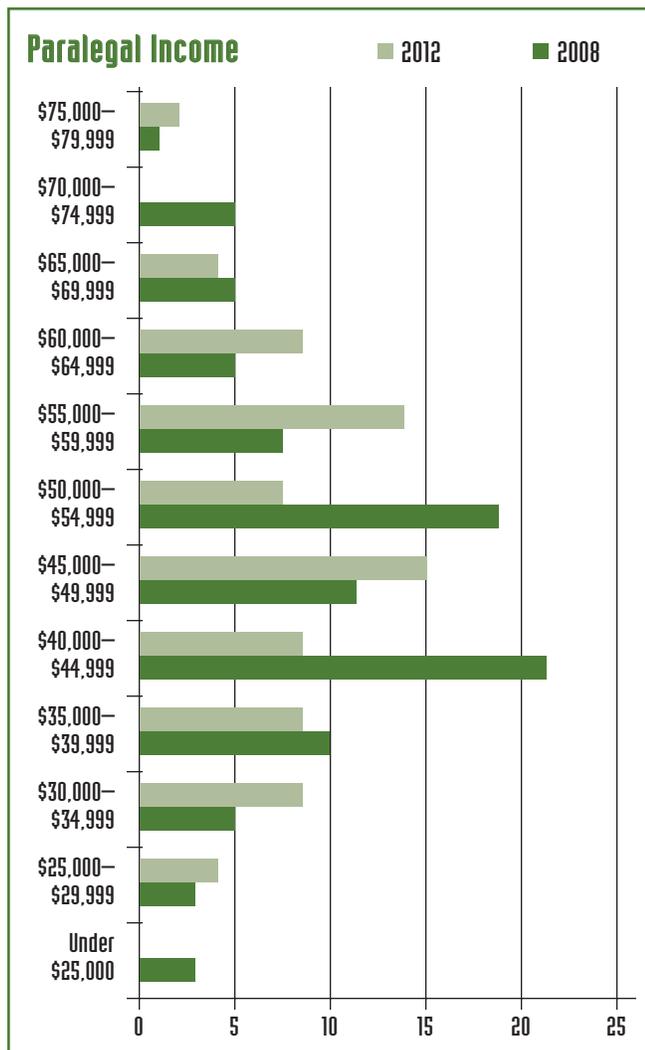
Only 41.5% said yes it did and 58.5% said no. In 2012, it was evenly split, 50/50.

The average billable hours rate also change from 2008 to 2012, in a couple of ways. In 2008, fifty-three paralegals responded and forty-six skipped the question. In 2012, there were thirty-eight paralegals who responded and forty-six skipped the question.

HOURLY RATE	RESPONSE %		RESPONSE COUNT	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
Under \$25	7.9%	3.8%	3	2
\$25-\$50	2.6%	1.9%	1	1
\$50-\$75	5.4%	5.7%	2	3
\$75-\$100	39.5%	34.0%	15	18
\$100-\$125	18.4%	41.5%	7	22
\$125-\$150	21.1%	13.2%	8	7
\$150-\$200	5.3%	0.0%	2	0
Over \$200	0.0%	0.0%	0	0

The rate that paralegals charge for freelance work remained fairly consistent with only six paralegals responding to this question in 2012 and only nine responding in 2008. It would seem that freelance work is not something that is done by very many of the respondents. The majority of respondents billing under \$25 per hour with five paralegals in 2008 and three in 2012. In 2008 one paralegal billed between \$100 – \$125 per hour and three paralegals billed at \$125 – \$150 per hour. In 2012, an additional category was added. There was one paralegal who bills at \$75 – \$100 per hour, one paralegal bills at \$125 – \$150 per hour, and this year we also had an additional category with one paralegal billing at \$150 – \$200.

The question most commonly asked of paralegals is what a paralegal can expect to make in Utah. This one is a little hard to answer. So much of it depends on the area of law and whether you work for a private firm, a corporate firm or a governmental agency. We had eighty-three responses in 2012 and ninety-five responses in 2008. In 2008, there were three paralegals who responded who made less than \$25,000. We had no one respond to that category in this survey so perhaps minimal salaries have gone up. And on the high end, in 2008, there was one paralegal respondent who made more than \$100,000. No one responded to that category this year so maybe the job is gone or the paralegal just did not have time to fill out the survey this year. Other than that one response in 2008, the highest category in both surveys is the amount between \$75,000–\$79,999. In 2008, there was one respondent and this year there were two.



In 2012, it was split pretty evenly between employers who paid a bonus at forty-two respondents and employers who do not at forty-one respondents. In 2008, there were also forty-two respondents who worked for employers with bonus structures and there were fifty-three respondents who did not.

The bonuses are based on billable hours for about 25% of the respondents and only about 4% are based on fees collected. The largest number of respondents identified a number of other reasons for the bonuses. The responses included a number of similarly-described reasons based on salary, efficiency, billable percentage, flat rates for all support personnel, cases settled, merit bonuses, company profits, years of service, and corporate incentive programs based on the company's yearly success.

In 2008 and 2012, the majority of the respondents did receive a bonus within the prior twelve months. The number was higher in 2008 with eighty-six respondents receiving a bonus and nine not receiving a bonus.

The numbers are not as good for 2012, with fifty-five respondents receiving a bonus and twenty-six respondents not receiving a bonus.

Perhaps this is reflective of the bad economy. It is clear that the vast majority of paralegals only received a bonus of between 1–3%, which is not very much, and it is down from 2008.

The majority of paralegals are hourly with fifty-two responding as being hourly and thirty-one being salaried in 2012. In 2008, the spread was similar with sixty-four respondents being hourly and thirty-two being salaried.

The majority of paralegals are also paid overtime at time and a half, with forty-nine responding yes in 2012, and sixty responding yes in 2008. The next highest response category is comp time at approximately one third of the respondents receiving comp time instead of overtime.

Benefits are paid by the employers at differing levels, and though it does appear that the benefits are spread fairly evenly between the 2008 and 2012 respondents, the number of respondents differs. Most paralegals receive standard benefits of health insurance for themselves and their families, and dental insurance for themselves and their families, with a lesser number receiving vision insurance. Most respondents also receive free or reduced parking, a free or reduced transit pass, and only a few receive daycare. The majority also enjoy the benefits of a 401(k) plan, a lesser number receive a profit sharing plan, and still a lesser number receive some other pension/retirement plan. Other benefits for some respondents include life insurance, long and short term disability, maternity leave, cafeteria plan, and flex-spending plans.

The majority of vacation or paid time off is determined by the length of employment in both 2008 and 2012. Only about a third of the respondents did not have this requirement.

The majority of the respondents in both 2008 and 2012 are given six to ten paid holidays a year and close behind are the paralegals who received more than ten paid holidays. A few of the paralegals are only given one to five holidays a year and only one paralegal had no paid holidays in 2012.

It appears that things have not changed significantly since 2008. Salaries for the majority group have gone up within the respondents from the \$50,000 to \$54,999 range in 2008 to the \$55,000 to \$59,999 range in 2012. Though we cannot do a straight-across comparison because of the difference in the number of respondents, it does seem like we have improved in the marketplace.

The complete salary survey with all the responses will be posted on the website. We appreciate your participation and hope that this information is valuable for you to use in your salary negotiations with your employers and that the employers will find it valuable in establishing the benefit plans for their paralegals.