

## **Results of the Beta Test of the Utilization/Salary Survey - 2005**

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by J. Robyn Dotterer

At long last the data have been compiled on the first web-based utilization/salary survey for the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division with the assistance and cooperation of the Legal Assistant's Association of Utah (LAAU). A joint committee was formed to undertake the drafting of a utilization/salary survey that could be established on the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division's web page and could then be taken by paralegals or their supervising attorneys online.

I was the Committee Chair (by default) since I was the Utilization Chair of the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar at the time the request was made. Serving on the committee were Heather Holland, Records Manager and Paralegal for SOS Staffing Services, Inc., Staci Robison, Paralegal for Hill, Johnson & Schmutz, LC, and the representative of the Legal Assistants Association of Utah, Diane Samudio, Senior Paralegal for Symantec Corporation. We had input and support from three Division Chairs over the life of this committee's work. Initially, the assignment to form the committee was made by Chair Sanda Flint, past-Chair Tally Burke oversaw most of our work, and current Chair Danielle Price is assisting in the modifications for future surveys and ongoing committee work to keep the data base at the Bar updated and functioning into the future. We had technical support from the excellent staff of the Utah State Bar and worked closely with Lincoln Meade, Toby Brown and Brooke Bruno and anticipate (and hope) that their technological support of the web site will carry into future surveys.

In our first survey the committee tried to cover the areas that we believe to be of the most importance to paralegals working in Utah and since this is the first survey and was basically a Beta test of the site and the survey, we do not have data for comparison purposes or correlations. We have identified a number of questions and categories of questions that we want to reformat so future survey responses will allow for correlation of the data.

At this point, our data is relatively straightforward in terms of having had a limited number of responses (94) and no history to draw comparisons to. About 20% of the responses were from attorneys rather than paralegals. We found that having the same survey available to both attorneys and paralegals caused some interpretation issues,

and a number of our questions had fewer responses than non-responses. That created a problem for purposes of correlation. We are looking at having the survey being responded to only by paralegals to eliminate the number of non-answers by persons who may not know the specifics of the particular questions being asked.

We are posting the Executive Summary of the responses at the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division website. We also will have some graphic representations of some of the responses that lend themselves to visual representation.

The demographics of the responses were interesting. Of those who responded, 85% were female. More than half of our respondents work in law firms, 25% work in governmental agencies and about 10% work for corporations. The areas of practice are varied but the highest percentage work in litigation. The next high categories are in contracts, family law, bankruptcy and regulatory practice. We are planning in the future to be able to do some correlations based on the organizational employment and will reformat some of the questions to allow for those correlations. (See Graphic identified as Question #2.)

Only 3% of the respondents are part time employees and 2% are independent. It appears that the paralegals in Utah are by and large engaged in full-time work. We will also do some reformatting of questions to separate out the part-time data and independent contractor data from the full-time paralegal data to allow for correlations in those separate areas. Most of the paralegals work in organizations with five paralegals or fewer, and the next highest percentage (20%) work in organizations with 6-10 paralegals. Only three of our respondents work in organizations with more than 50 paralegals.

The majority of paralegals work in small organizations with five or fewer attorneys. The next largest group (20%) work in organizations with 6-10 attorneys. It is interesting to note the next highest percentage in this category is a leap in the size of firms from 6-10 to 80+ attorneys where 13% of the paralegals work. Most of the respondents have worked in their current employment between 1-3 years and the next largest group is 4-6 years. We have one hardy paralegal who has worked for the same employer for 31+ years!! Kudos to them and their employer.

There doesn't appear to be a correlation we can draw between years as a paralegal and years with a particular employer. We have approximately the same number of paralegals between 1-5 years as we do at 16+ years. Those in the middle (about 45% of the respondents) have worked between 6-15 years. The experience of the paralegals in Utah is very impressive.

It was interesting to note that the largest percentage of those who responded to the question regarding education had at least a Bachelor's degree or Associates degree. (See Graphic identified as Question #15.) Although not all respondents had a paralegal degree, the majority of our respondents had either a paralegal degree or a paralegal certificate.

Salary information is varied and due to the input of part-time and free-lance paralegals and the numbers of non-responses, we are unable to draw a correlation between the various areas of employment. We will be able to do that more fully after our next survey where we separate out those various categories. The Executive Summary provides the responses of those who responded to the salary/raise/bonus questions. It was interesting to note of those who responded to the survey, the majority did receive a bonus last year. (See Graphic identified as Question #24.)

Though most of the respondents identified themselves as exempt, it is likely that due to the Department of Labor changes last year, this number will change significantly by the next survey. Almost half of the respondents are compensated financially for overtime work, but about a quarter of them are compensated with time off. Most of the respondents work less than 10 hours in overtime per week, but the next largest group work between 10-20 hours of overtime per week.

Many organizations support membership in a variety of activities and almost half have membership in the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar. We need to work to increase our numbers in that area and will be looking to the members of the Utah State Bar to encourage their paralegals to become members of the Paralegal Division.

Benefits and compensation packages also vary but the majority of the respondents receive paid vacation, sick leave, 401k plans and a variety of medical coverages. The number of vacation days is largely based on length of time with employer. The largest number of respondents received 7-10+ paid holidays. (See Graphic identified as Question #31.)

Our questions on paralegals who bill their time and related questions had as many non-responses as responses to some of the questions. That tells us that a large segment of the persons answering these questions do not bill their time and we need to separate this category of questions so it is responded to only by persons who bill their time, which will allow us to draw correlations regarding how that time is billed.

The survey results also provide information on areas of interest for CLE to allow the organizations to provide support to their members. (See Graphic identified as Question #45.) Please feel free to call our CLE Chair and suggest topics for CLE brown bags ☺ or even more effective, call and volunteer yourself ☺ paralegal or

attorney to present at a CLE! You can contact either of the Continuing Legal Education Co-Chairs to make requests or volunteer to make a presentation. Contact Sanda R. Flint, CP, Director-at-Large, Continuing Legal Education Co-Chair at [sflint@strongandhanni.com](mailto:sflint@strongandhanni.com) or Sharon Andersen, Director-at-Large, Continuing Legal Education Co-Chair at [Sharon.andersen@slcgov.com](mailto:Sharon.andersen@slcgov.com).

Though we were not able to draw as much correlative data from the survey responses as we had anticipated, we have identified how challenging developing a utilization/salary data base can be. We are attempting to correct the format of the questions and the division of categories to allow for future correlations and will build on the results from this survey to chart the growth, changes and trends in the paralegal field in the future.

We believe that over the next several years we will be able to compile a data base of information that will allow the paralegals in Utah, as well as their attorneys, to be able to establish a competitive and fair compensation package based on experience, education and client base information.

If you become aware of future surveys through the Bar Journal or e-mail announcements through the Utah State Bar, the Paralegal Division or LAAU, please tell other paralegals you know about the survey and ask them to participate.

The data we compile will only be as good as the participation of the paralegals in Utah make it.

The Paralegal Division Board is always available to answer questions or provide assistance regarding the utilization of paralegals. The current Utilization Chair of the Paralegal Division is Meg Chesley. Meg can be contacted at : [mchesley@pblu.com](mailto:mchesley@pblu.com).

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