



Executive Summary: Survey on Work/Life Balance

The Survey

At the first meeting of the BASF Work/Life Balance Task Force, we decided that an important first step would be to survey legal employers to find out what they offer attorneys in terms of leave options, part time and other work/life balance policies and practices and how many people took advantage of the offerings. Task force member Beth Parker headed a sub-committee that drafted the survey that was sent by BASF to 305 legal employers. The survey was also posted on Survey Monkey. BASF collected 54 survey responses, which represents an 18% response rate.

The survey results were analyzed by a team at the Center for WorkLife Law at UC Hastings College of the Law who looked at the data by size of firm, attrition rate, minimum billable hour requirements, percent of women and other variables.

Summary of Conclusions

Business case:

- **Respondents are seeing the business benefits of work/life balance.** In the written policies that were sent to BASF, respondents mentioned developing their policies to help:
 - attract
 - retain
 - train
 - promote
 - maximize productivity
 - support diverse work/life issues
 - provide other long-term benefits.
- **Respondents recognize the importance of flexibility on both the attorney and firm side.**

Attrition

- **Attrition is high.** 1755 attorneys in Bay Area offices of the respondents left in the three years before the survey. This represents 48% of the number of attorneys working in these organizations at the time of the survey. The percentage of attorneys who left might be higher; eight firms did not respond to the question about attrition.
- **The attrition rate is higher for associates.** Of the 1755 attorneys who left, 1177 were associates. This represents 60% of the attorneys working in respondent organizations. 54% of the attorneys in the organizations that responded to the survey are associates.
- **The attrition rate is higher for women:** 45% of those who left were women while 37% of the attorneys currently working in the organizations that responded are women.

- **There is a correlation between attrition and minimum billable hours.** Of the firms with the lowest attrition rates, billable hours ranged from 1560 – 1850. Of the firms with the highest attrition rate, billable hours ranged from 1850 – 2000
- **Firms with lower attrition rates had more attorneys working part time and more part-time partners.** Five of the 193 equity partners (3%) in the 5 firms with the highest attrition rates were working part time while 9 of the 62 equity partners in the firms with the lowest attrition rates (15%) were working part time.

Reduced-hour arrangements:

- **Most men working part-time are doing so for different reasons than women.** Six firms reported high numbers of men working part time; in some cases there were more part-time men than part-time women in these firms. Surprised by this, we called the firms in question to ask why the men were working part-time. We reached four of them and found that while the women in these firms were working part-time for childcare reasons, most men were working part time for other reasons. Only one firm could identify a male associate who was working part-time for childrearing purposes.
 - Most were senior partners reducing their hours prior to retirement
 - Others were senior associates who decided to go off partnership track to do something else (write a book, do *pro bono* work, teach) and work as contractors
 - A few reduced hours for healthcare reasons
 - Others became “of counsel,” making themselves available to work on an as-needed, consultant basis.
 - An interesting follow-up to this survey would be to look at stigma attached to part time when it is not for childcare reasons.
- **Having a part-time policy correlates with size.** The larger the respondent, the more likely it is to have a part-time policy.
- **Overall, more have a part-time policy for associates than for partners.** 51% have a part-time policy for partners and 69% for associates. 65% of part-time attorneys are women.
- **Respondents at the time of the survey had 309 attorneys working part-time.** 28% of part-time attorneys are equity partners, 34% are associates. 11 respondents did not report any part-time attorneys. 55% reported having part-time attorneys who became partner while working part-time.
- **Most respondents offer a prorata salary, but a few still give “the haircut,” paying less than a prorata rate.** 83% that offer part time pay a prorata salary, 2% pay less than proportionally, 5% pay an hourly rate.
- **Most respondents compensate part-timers for extra hours worked.** 69% adjust compensation when an attorney works more hours than the percentage amount. 71% of those give some form of salary adjustment based on percentage/hours worked and 33% give some kind of bonus

Leaves:

- **Many firms have written maternity leave policies.** 82% of respondents have a written policy that covers maternity/pregnancy leave; 88% that do not have a written policy allow it on an ad hoc basis. Almost all the large firms have a written policy.
- **Most of the leave policies cover adoptions.** 85% of the respondents cover leave for adoptions
- **Length of paid and leaves vary.** Paid leave varies widely from 0 to 20 weeks with the average being 3 months. Unpaid varies from 0 – unlimited, varies based on situation/medical needs.
- **60% have a paternity leave policy.** Larger firms are more likely to have such a policy.