



# Gateway (St. Louis)

A Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators

## Gateway Connection

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Association of Legal Administrators – Gateway Chapter



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### From the President, Angela Louis

It is the time of year that we start to reflect on the year both personally and professionally. I am thankful for my family, friends, co-workers and all that have touched my life this year. 2010 has gone by in a blur and as all of us are preparing for the closing of 2010 and planning for 2011, part of the process is to assess all the good and not so good in 2010. In doing this, remember that the Gateway Chapter of ALA membership is important to put in the planning for 2011. Renewal to both the National Association and local chapter will be hitting your desks soon.



The Association of Legal Administrators' (ALA) mission is to:

- Promote and enhance the competence and professionalism of all members of the legal management team.
- Improve the quality of management in law firms and other legal service organizations.
- Represent professional legal management and managers to the legal community and to the community at large.

Visit [alanet.org](http://alanet.org) and [ala-gateway.org](http://ala-gateway.org) for all the benefits of joining ALA.

As you take time to review 2010 help yourself make a great step forward in 2011 by renewing or joining ALA.

Thank you for your support and continuing success of our local Chapter.

Happy New Year!!

### ***Catching Up With... Jean Inabinett!***

Jean Inabinett is the Office Administrator of Helfrey, Neiers & Jones, P.C. She has been an ALA member coming on 8 years in January. We recently quizzed Jean for the “Catching Up With...” section, and her answers are below.

1. My main responsibilities are... *Accounting, Human Resources, Facilities Management and anything else the firm owners need accomplished.*
2. I became a legal administrator when... *I was contacted by a recruiter for a law firm hiring their first office manager.*
3. The thing I like best about being a legal administrator is... *The diversity and challenge of the duties.*
4. The thing I like least about being a legal administrator is... *Human Resource Management. Can't everybody just get along!*
5. The hardest situations I have had to deal with are... *Terminating employees. One case was especially difficult as the employee was a pregnant, single woman, but she had been warned many times and we finally had to terminate.*
6. As a legal administrator, I never thought I'd have to... *Clean up after the owners. I guess we need to add housekeeping to my duties.*
7. I decided to join the ALA because... *My managing partner insisted that I join. A prior firm did not encourage or allow joining (thought trade secrets would be shared), but my current firm is very supportive.*
8. My impression of the Gateway Chapter is... *Provides useful information, informative continuing education, and fun events for networking.*
9. If I were not a legal administrator I would be... *A College professor. Now that I have completed my Doctorate in Business Administration, my retirement job is to teach at a university.*
10. In my spare time I like to... *Now that I have spare time, I like to babysit my seven grandchildren, embroider on my machine, needlepoint, knit, and take walks with my husband.*

*“Conducting Hassle-Free  
Performance Evaluations”  
Audio Presentation on December  
7<sup>th</sup>. Contact [Sarah Whitehead](#) for  
more information.*


11. Three words that best describe me are... *Outgoing, friendly, fun, and jovial. (I had a little help with these adjectives from my accounting supervisor!)*
12. The biggest change I've seen in the legal industry is... *The decrease in available work, change in the areas of law with available work, and the increase in the number of timekeepers assigned to each support staff.*
13. The most challenging part of being a legal administrator is... *Keeping everything in the office working efficiently and effectively where everyone is at least satisfied if not happy.*



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## ***Keeping Up With ALA***

ALA Gateway Chapter website is getting an overhaul in the upcoming months... so be on the lookout! While the information will basically be the same, the look and ease of use will improve. But until then remember that the Chapter's website ([www.ala-gateway.org](http://www.ala-gateway.org)) offers educational information as well as membership information. For example, view membership information such as [Antitrust Guide for Members of the ALA](#), [Bylaws](#), [Code of Ethics](#), and the [ALA Mission Statement](#) all on the website under About ALA.

Education information can be found throughout the ALA Gateway website and the ALA National ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)). The Legal Management Resources tab offers valuable information in the [Legal Management Resource Center](#) and the [ALA Management Encyclopedia<sup>SM</sup>](#). The Legal Management Resource Center houses a Document Directory, Peer Consulting Directory, and the Leadership and LFA Community.

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## Legal Hiring and Compensation Trends

By Christy Pashia | Robert Half Legal

As a legal administrator or office manager, it's important to stay abreast of the latest hiring and compensation trends in the legal industry, especially now that many law firms are now focused on rebuilding their teams. Your ability to develop effective recruitment and retention strategies will be crucial in enabling your firm to attract the most talented, qualified and experienced legal

support professionals. This month's column will explore major trends in hiring and compensation identified in the newly released *Robert Half Legal 2011 Salary Guide*.

The guide is based on extensive research in our Robert Half Legal field offices throughout North America and ongoing surveys of senior- and partner-level attorneys at the largest law firms and legal departments in the United States and Canada. The information below will help you determine appropriate salary levels for support staff, increasing the success of your recruitment efforts.

## **Overview of Legal Hiring Trends**

Given the growth in high-demand practice areas, such as litigation, bankruptcy and foreclosure and healthcare, law firms are beginning to fill vacant positions in order to better serve clients. This means that retention will become a priority, as firms strive to keep their most valuable staff members from accepting offers from competing firms, corporate legal departments, government agencies and other organizations that benefit from the skills of paralegals and other support professionals.

Although competition is increasing among law offices, the hiring process can still be prolonged. Part of the reason is that hiring managers are very selective when searching for the exact skills they need, but finding them is not always easy. In fact, close to half (48 percent) of lawyers polled by Robert Half Legal said it is challenging for their law firms or companies to find skilled legal professionals today.

When a law office is unsure whether sufficient business exists to warrant a full-time hire, interim professionals are often engaged to bridge current staffing gaps, for special initiatives and to keep client service levels high. When business conditions eventually warrant a full-time hire, project professionals are frequently the first ones considered for these roles.

## **Skills and Expertise in Demand: Legal Support Staff**

In the transitional economy, many large law firms that previously consolidated support roles are hiring for critical positions, particularly those related to litigation and corporate transactional work. Law offices seek candidates with technology skills, practice area expertise and the ability to handle a wide range of administrative tasks.

One emerging trend in the hiring of support staff is the creation of hybrid roles. At smaller firms, for example, paralegals may be asked to perform duties in human resources, office administration or financial operations, in addition to their traditional responsibilities.

Given these new responsibilities and expanded job descriptions, today's paralegals must possess a higher, broader level of skills. Many law firms require candidates to have a four-year bachelor's degree along with practice area experience. Certification and/or accreditation from an American Bar Association-approved program can increase a candidate's marketability.

There is renewed demand for legal secretaries. Like paralegals, they are now required to perform multiple job functions. Lawyer-to-secretary ratios of 3:1, 4:1 and even higher are not uncommon as these professionals provide support for several lawyers or practice groups.

The most sought-after legal secretary candidates have strong backgrounds in litigation and e-discovery as well as experience in document management, legal research, time tracking and billing software.

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Chapter's  
Holiday  
Luncheon...**

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with the  
humor of Dan  
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**Wednesday,  
December  
15<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
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1:30pm**

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**Cost is FREE  
to ALA  
members and  
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Hill.**

For all types of legal support candidates – and administrators as well – experience is a critical factor in marketability. In response to a Robert Half Legal survey, 56 percent of lawyers said previous work experience or the prestige of the previous employer is the best indicator of a candidate's potential for success at their firm.

### **Compensation Trends for Legal Support Professionals**

Starting salaries for legal administrators and office managers are expected to increase at all sizes of firms in 2011. An administrator at a midsize law firm in St. Louis, for example, can expect a 1.5 percent increase from 2010 ranges to a range of \$66,750 to \$97,750. A senior paralegal with seven or more years' experience can expect a 3.1 percent increase at a midsize firm, to a range of \$55,000 to \$70,750. For legal secretaries, at small law firms, secretaries with seven to eleven years' experience will see the highest increase (2.8 percent), to a range of \$40,250 to \$51,500.

Other categories of legal support specialists, such as automated litigation support managers and contract administrators, can also look forward to increases in starting salaries. A contracts administrator, for example, will see an increase of 3.6 percent, with starting salaries in the \$56,000 to \$96,750 range, while a litigation support manager can anticipate a 2.7 percent increase over 2010 levels, to a starting salary range of \$52,500 to \$92,250.

While there are many qualified legal support professionals looking for work in the current competitive job market, the sheer number of applicants makes it more difficult to find the best match. Your firm can make the selection process less overwhelming by revisiting job descriptions and making sure they reflect the specific skills you're looking for. And utilizing interim legal professionals will help your firm add staff as needed without the risk of costly hiring mistakes.

*Christy Pashia is a senior account executive for Robert Half Legal in St. Louis, a leading staffing service specializing in the placement of lawyers, paralegals, legal administrators and other legal professionals with law firms and corporate legal departments. For more information, contact Christy at 314.621.2223 or [christy.pashia@roberthalflegal.com](mailto:christy.pashia@roberthalflegal.com).*

### ***View it on the ALA National Website - Question of the Month***

**Q: Some of our attorneys have poor timekeeping habits; they're often late submitting their timesheets, and I'm sure they don't remember all their billable hours. How can I persuade them to do better?**

A: The whole issue of timekeeping is one of those eternal questions that has no single good answer, unfortunately – some suggestions will work in certain firms and not others, but it’s a pretty good bet that no method will work all the time in any individual firm. The following may help persuade your attorneys to get their hours in timely. [CLICK HERE](#) to find out what!



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There are far-reaching changes to our national health-care system with the new health-care law that impacts — in some ways significantly — employers and their employees. Join this important Webinar to kick off the 2011 ALA Webinar series and get the heartbeat of the current health-care reform landscape and its impact on employers.

**Wednesday, January 19, 2011**  
11:00 a.m. (PT) • Noon (MT) • 1:00 p.m. (CT) • 2:00 p.m. (ET) (60 minutes)

Speaker: Peter J. Wertsching, Senior Vice President in the employee benefits practice at Willis HRH (Hilb Rogal & Hobbs Company).

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### ***Summary: Trends in the Legal Profession***

The Annual Partner Event this year was held November 17th at the Westin Hotel and featured Kristin Stark, Senior Director of Hildebrandt Baker Robbins who gave a presentation on the Trends in the Legal Profession to nearly 80 attendees.

Ms. Stark began by outlining the big picture on the economy. From there she moved to the change in competitive dynamics in the legal profession. The take away from this was that outside counsel spending is down in 2009 and 2010 and overall demand has been flat in 2010 (an increase from a decline in 2009 and 2008). Rate progression from 2007 to the present shows that although overall rates have been increasing the net collected does not match rates billed and has not increased at the same rate as rates billed. As far as expenses, direct expenses and overhead have both decreased in 2010 versus, 2008 and 2009.

The buyer's market is changing partner accountability. There is an increased focus on performance management of lawyers at all levels. She sees an evolution in the evaluation and setting of partner compensation that results in less focus on vague indicators and more focus on hours leverage, client penetration and client matter profitability. There is a growing use of closed compensation systems and a growing spread in partner compensation.

Pricing in the profession is evolving. Alternative fee arrangements are a growing focus. Fixed fees and project pricing, portfolio pricing is the long-term future of alternative pricing. The changing pricing structures have profound implications for the firm overall. Ms. Stark sees continued rate pressure for several years with a wider spread in rates.

Law firms are addressing the cost of production. There will be fundamental restructuring and real strategic planning implementation within firms. On the horizon she sees process improvement, project management, law firm driven outsourcing with new staffing models, more centralized management, new competitors and enforced strategies.



*2010 ALA Partner Event*

## *Calendar of Upcoming Events (2010 through 2014)*

*2010*

### December 9, 2010

- Program: HR Section - Audio Conference: “Conducting Hassle-Free Performance Evaluations”
- Time: 12-1 PM
- Location: Downtown: Greensfelder, Hemker & Gale, P.C. | 10 S. Broadway, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Clayton: Gallop, Johnson & Neuman, L.C. | 101 S. Hanley, Suite 1700
- Contact: Sarah Whitehead, [saw@greensfelder.com](mailto:saw@greensfelder.com)

December 15, 2010

- Program: Holiday Party
- Time: 12-1:30PM
- Location: Moulin, 2017 Chouteau Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63103
- Contact: Julie Hill

*2011*

January 2011                      2011 Nominating Committee Selection & Meeting

January 14-15, 2011

- Program: ALA National – Board of Directors Meeting
- Location: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort | Tucson, AZ
- Contact: Nicole Larson, ALA Headquarters

January 25, 2010

- Program: HR Section | Human Resource Trends: Uncertainties and Competencies
- Time: 11:30-1:00PM
- Location: Husch Blackwell | 190 Carondelet Plaza, Suite 600
- Contact: Sarah Whitehead, [saw@greensfelder.com](mailto:saw@greensfelder.com)

February 4-5, 2011

- Program: ALA Regional Team Orientation
- Location: Hyatt Deerfield | Deerfield, IL
- Contact: Nicole Larson, ALA Headquarters

February 16, 2011      2011 Slate of Officers Presented to Membership

March 16, 2011              Election of 2011-2012 Officers

May 22-25, 2011

- Program: ALA National Annual Educational Conference & Exposition
- Location: Orlando World Center Marriott Resort & Convention Center | Orlando, FL

July 15-16, 2011

- Program: ALA Chapter Leadership Institute
- Location: The Cosmopolitan | Las Vegas, NV
- Contact: Lisa Mikita, ALA Headquarters

August 12-13, 2011

- Program: ALA Board of Directors Meeting
- Location: Hotel Monaco | Denver, CO
- Contact: Lisa Mikita, ALA Headquarters

September 15-17, 2011

- Program: Region 3 & 4 Conference & Expo
- Location: The InterContinental | Kansas City, MO

- Contact: Lisa Mikita, ALA Headquarters

September 22-24, 2011

- Program: ALA Large Firm Administrators Retreat
- Location: The Ritz-Carlton Chicago | Chicago, IL
- Contact: Lisa Mikita, ALA Headquarters

November 11-12, 2011

- Program: ALA Board of Directors Meeting
- Location: Kiawah Island Golf Resort | Charleston, SC
- Contact: Lisa Mikita, ALA Headquarters

*2012*

January 2012            2012 Nominating Committee Selection & Meeting

February 15, 2012    2012 Slate of Officers presented to Membership

March 21, 2012        Election of 2012-2013 Officers

April 23–26, 2012

- Program: ALA National Annual Educational Conference & Exposition
- Location: Hawaii Convention Center, Hilton Hawaiian Village | Honolulu, Hawaii

*2013*

April 15-18, 2013

- Program: ALA National Annual Educational Conference & Exposition
- Location: Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center | National Harbor, MD (Washington DC area)

*2014*

May 19-22, 2014

- Program: ALA National Annual Educational Conference & Exposition
- Location: Metro Toronto Convention Center | Toronto, Ontario, Canada

***2010-2011 ALA Gateway Chairs and Committees***

<b>Bar Liaison</b>	Dianne Feltz, Co-Chair Angela Schaefer, Co-Chair
<b>Community Challenge Weekend</b>	Paul Dalziel, Co-Chair Joe Taylor, Co-Chair
<b>Diversity</b>	Michelle Martin, Chair Susan Muszynski

<b>Education/Professional Development</b>	Jacquie O'Quinn Steve Gilliland, Chair Tracy Bollig Connie Wiechens Angela York
<b>Human Resources</b>	Sarah Whitehead, Chair
<b>Membership Directory</b>	Angela Louis, Chair
<b>Membership Committee</b>	Patty Brokaw, Co-Chair Mary Hoffman, Co-Chair
<b>Newsletter</b>	Kara Brostron, Co-Chair Mary Jennings, Co-Chair
<b>Operation Bunny Hop</b>	Ana Helton, Chair
<b>Salary Survey</b>	Sarah Whitehead, Chair Carla Lucz Angela Louis Debbie Schneider Steve Heinle
<b>Vendor Relations/ Vendor Fair</b>	Maria Harvey, Co-Chair Donna Sobkoviak, Co-Chair Johnna Ferguson Cheri Meier
<b>Website</b>	Marie Vogt, Chair



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