Survey Finds High-Level Women In-House Lawyers Paid Less

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As women attorneys reach the higher rungs on the corporate law department ladder, they are still having trouble getting paid as much as their male counterparts, a new survey indicates.

ALM Legal Intelligence and *Corporate Counsel* recently released the "2013 Law Department Compensation Benchmarking Survey," which gathered compensation information from 4,851 attorneys in nine job categories within 188 corporate law departments. This year, ALM filtered the results by gender, and the data showed evidence of a compensation gap between men and women above the managing attorney level.

Deborah Froling, president of the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL), a professional organization that advocates for women in the law, said that this disparity did not come as a surprise to her.

“We see the same thing in the NAWL survey with respect to law firm partners,” she said, referring to her organization's research on the pay gap between female and male equity partners at law firms.

The women in the ALM/*Corporate Counsel* survey who held the top positions in their law departments—chief legal officers and general counsel—reported an average total cash compensation of $575,200, while their male counterparts pocketed an average of $723,700. Female deputy chief legal officers surveyed brought home an average of $316,400 in total cash compensation, while men in the same positions made an average $386,700. Total cash compensation was calculated in the survey as a combination of salary reported as of March 1, 2013, and annual cash bonus for 2012.

Smaller bonuses for women accounted for a large part of the disparity between the numbers for top-level men and women corporate counsel. The survey indicated that GC and CLO women and their deputies made around 40 percent less in bonus payouts than men in the same roles.

Froling said that to close the upper-level gender pay gap, there should be an effort not only to get more women lawyers in the law department pipeline, but to get decisive action on compensation practices from the top down.

“When you look at corporate legal departments that are headed by women, there tend to be more women there and they're a little more sensitive to the compensation issues,” she said.

As for compensation across legal department positions, the ALM survey provides evidence that the middle levels of law departments—lawyers in the attorney and staff attorney categories—fared the worst in the survey's results. While higher-level lawyers and recent law school graduates posted modest salary gains, salary for staff attorneys dropped by about 6 percent from...
the previous year's data.

In the case of bonuses, the survey indicated all positions in law departments brought home less last year. Compared to the data in the 2012 edition of the survey, bonuses decreased by an average of 11 percent in management positions and 48 percent in non-management positions—bringing numbers closer to 2010 than 2011 levels.

For more information, or to purchase a copy of the “2013 Law Department Compensation Benchmarking Survey,” please visit ALM Legal Intelligence.