



# **It's not about the money**

**2016 Evers Legal  
Career Satisfaction Report**

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## Introduction

It's a long held belief that frustrated lawyers at Big Law firms and in other areas of private practice turn to in-house positions in corporate legal departments in search of a higher level of job satisfaction. But as the corporate legal environment ebbs and flows, and the economy continues to ride its rollercoaster, has that age old belief held true?

That's what Evers Legal wanted to uncover when it conducted its 2016 Evers Legal Career Satisfaction Survey. Between November 2015 and January 2016, Evers Legal surveyed 223 in-house counsel throughout the country to gauge their career satisfaction.

Respondents included general counsel/chief legal officers (24%), assistant/associate general counsel (25%), and others at all law department levels, with nearly an equal gender mix (55% male, 45% female). Twenty percent of respondents hailed from large legal departments (51+ lawyers) and 44% worked in small legal departments (1-5 lawyers), with 36% falling in the middle. Respondents came from all over the country.

“I think we touched a nerve,” says Mike Evers, president of Evers Legal, a recruiting firm that places lawyers exclusively with corporate law departments. “Attorneys embraced this opportunity to address their daily work environment, and I believe the breadth of participation led to really interesting and valuable results.”

While the survey uncovered many notable observations, one of the most consistent themes is that in-house counsel aren't in it for the money—at least that is not their main focus. When asked what would make their jobs more satisfying, most respondents sought “expanded responsibilities” (49%) and “promotion” (46%).

“In-house lawyers are ambitious, success-driven professionals,” Evers says. “They get frustrated if they perceive they are hitting ceilings.”

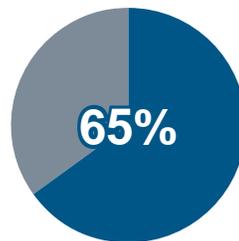
## Satisfaction Survey Key Take-Aways

The survey revealed a number of other noteworthy observations about the current state of career satisfaction among this diverse sample of in-house counsel:

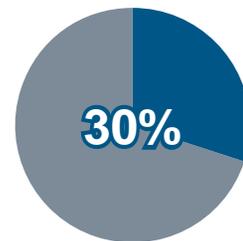
- A majority of respondents (65%) cited “intellectual stimulation” as the most rewarding aspect of their job. Only 30% of those surveyed named “compensation” as their highest reward. “This reinforces how we present our client orders to candidates,” Evers says, “Compensation needs to be competitive, but other factors really drive career choices.”

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### Most Rewarding Aspect of Job



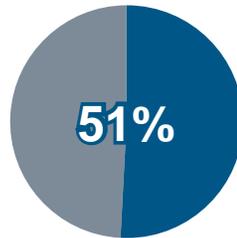
Intellectual Stimulation



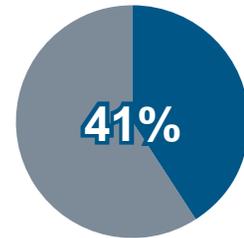
Financial Compensation

- Slightly more than half of respondents (51%) said “stress” was the most challenging aspect of their job, with “difficult internal client and/or supervisor” coming in second at 41%. “Corporate politics frustrate lawyers in particular,” Evers says. “They cannot control the business decisions internal clients choose to make and can struggle at times if their help or advice is resisted.”

## Most Challenging Aspect of Job



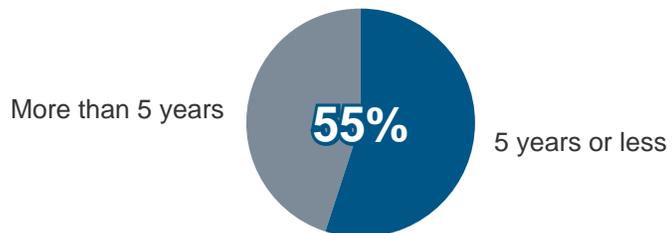
Stress



Difficult Client or Superior

- 55% of respondents have been with their current companies for 5 years or less. Although this is not statistical evidence of average in-house tenure, it does underscore the need for an in-house lawyer to network continually throughout her career and to not wait until she needs a new job.

## Time at Current Employer

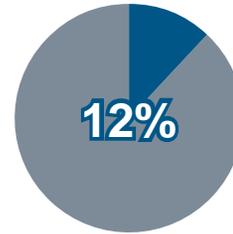


More than 5 years

5 years or less

- Only 12% of respondents said “lack of passion for company mission” is a challenge. This supports the idea that in-house lawyers enjoy working proactively for a business and in a team environment. For many, the numbers-driven culture of a law firm—be it billable hours or business development—eats away at the rewards of law firm practice.

### Most Challenging Aspect of Job

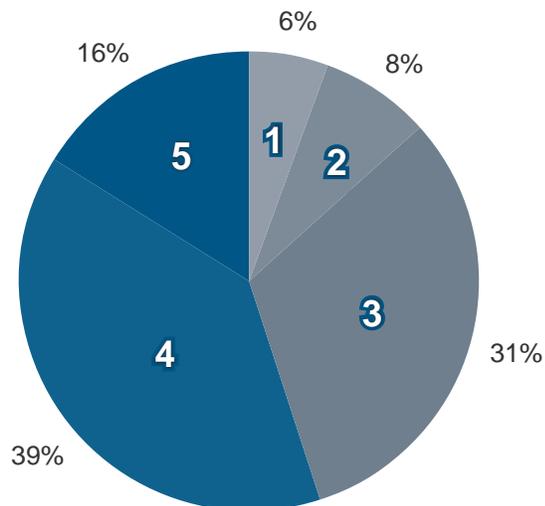


Lack of Passion for Mission

“The feeling of being underpaid usually occurs among lawyers at middle levels of legal departments who are comparing their pay to peers at large law firms.”

- On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), more than half of respondents rated their levels of job satisfaction either a 4 (39%) or 5 (16%). This indicates that in-house lawyers embrace the responsibility and can handle stress. Law departments are very desirable places of employment for lawyers.

### Satisfaction



Scale of 1 to 5

“In-house, success and promotion often rely on business decisions and corporate growth—matters that are not in the lawyer’s control.”

- 59% of in-house counsel respondents said they feel they are “underpaid,” with 39% believing they are appropriately paid and only 1% claiming to be overpaid. “Well, this certainly confirms that lawyers choose an in-house career path for reasons other than money,” Evers explains. “But let’s not lose sight of the fact that in-house counsel are paid well. Exceptionally well for those who become general counsel. The feeling of being underpaid usually occurs among lawyers at middle levels of legal departments who are comparing their pay to peers at large law firms.”

### Additional Observations

For the question, “Other than money, what would make your job more satisfying?” 55 respondents wrote in answers beyond the five options offered. The comments revealed an overall theme: that in-house counsel have a desire for more control over their career paths. Specific comments among those responses include: “More autonomy to make legal decisions for my company,” “More involvement with business teams on strategic development,” and one comment simply reads, “More control.”

“In a law firm, you know that if you do X, Y and Z, you will become a successful partner,” Evers says. “In-house, success and promotion often rely on business decisions and corporate growth—matters that are not in the lawyer’s control.”

When asked which career-related extracurricular activities they enjoy, more than three quarters of respondents (76%) said they attended conferences. “Lawyers are social beings and an occasional conference is simply a more enjoyable way to earn CLE credits versus online alternatives,” Evers explains. “And they are an easily accessible way to engage in networking with peers from other companies.”

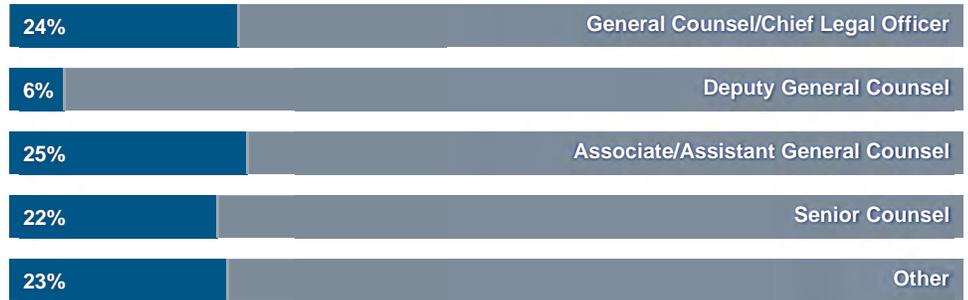
### Conclusion

General Counsel and other corporate leaders may want to view these survey results with recruiting and retention in mind. In-house counsel crave challenging work and an opportunity to influence business decisions. Top talent will gravitate to companies where lawyers are valued and respected. Focus on creating a healthy work environment.

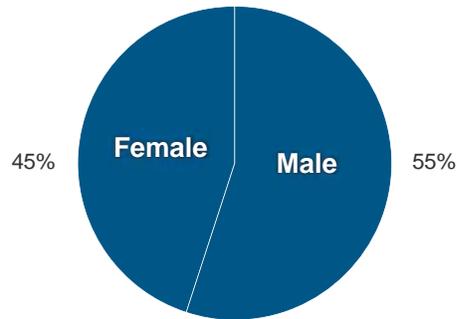
For the majority of lawyers who indicated stress as the least satisfying part of their jobs, Evers suggests accepting that much of one's success in-house is influenced by factors out of the lawyer's control, such as the profitability and growth trajectory of the company. "Build solid relationships with your boss, colleagues and internal clients," he says. "If you feel that others in the company trust and respect you, then difficult tasks or decisions will become less stressful."

## Full Survey Results

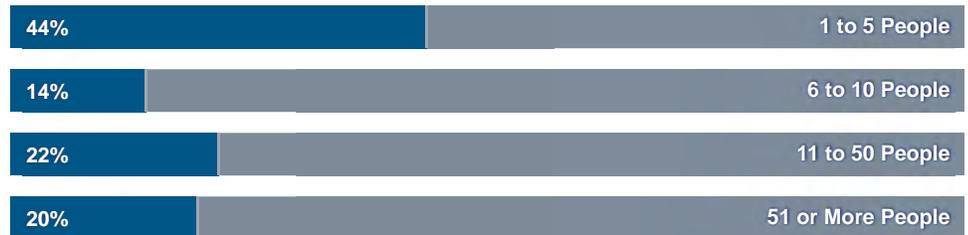
### What is your title?



### Please select your gender?



### How many lawyers are in your legal department?



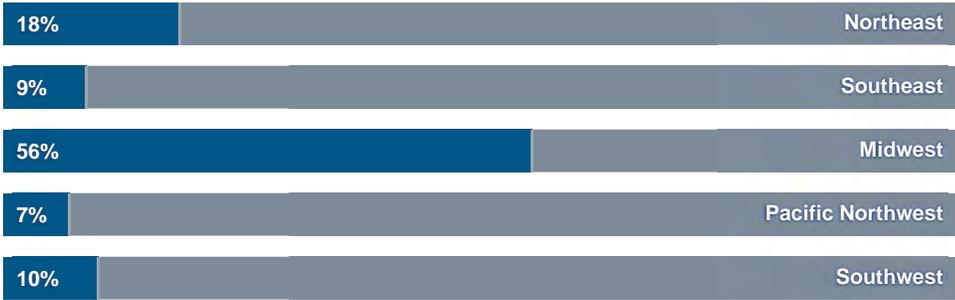
### How many years have you been out of law school?



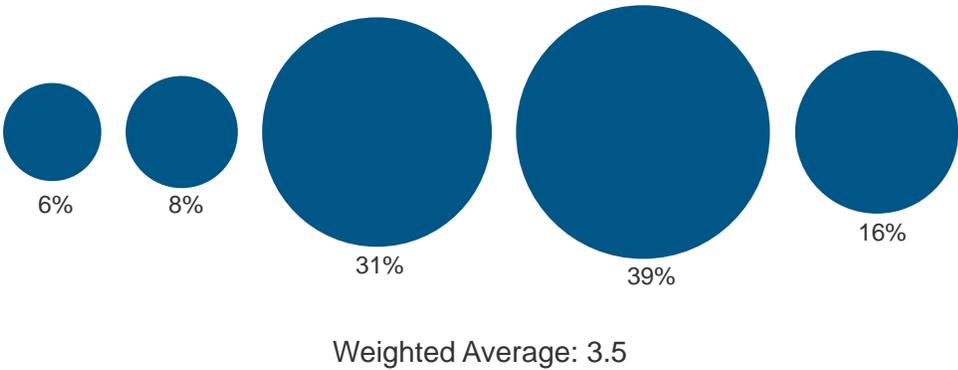
**How long have you worked with your current employer?**



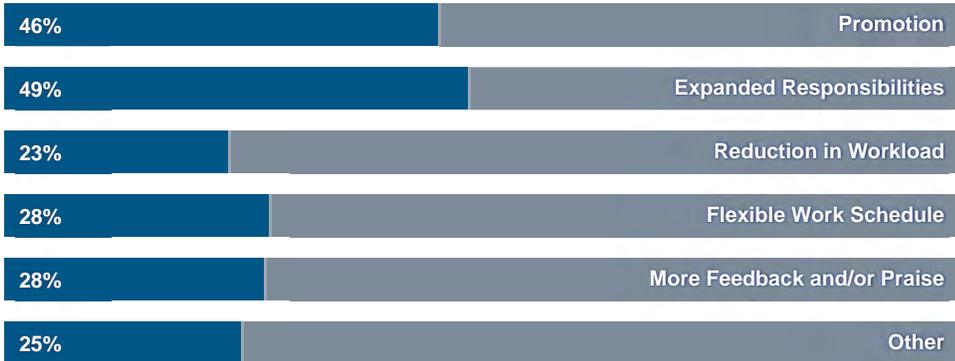
**Where are you located?**



**On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), how satisfied are you with your current job?**



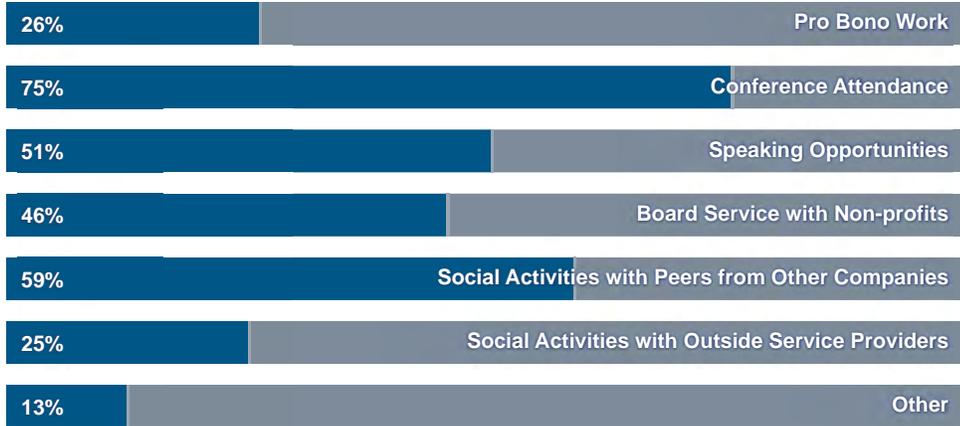
**Other than money, what would make your job more satisfying?**



## Do you believe you are:



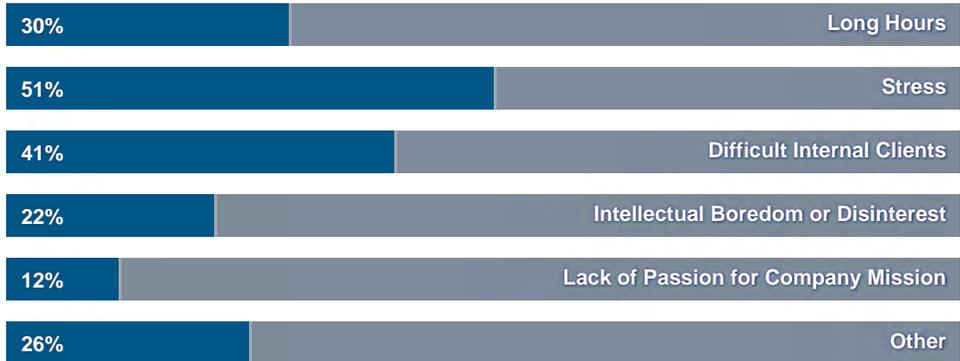
## Which of these extracurricular activities do you enjoy?



## What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?



## What's the most challenging aspect of your job?



**Do you actively network?**



Evers Legal has placed more than 200 attorneys into middle and senior level positions with leading companies throughout the country since it was founded in 1997.



**Contact Mike Evers about adding quality talent to your legal department.**

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