

CLO Compensation Increases While Other In-House Lawyer Compensation Declines

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In 2009, we have seen salary cuts for associates at large law firms, where the \$145-\$160K starting salaries are no longer the norm. What about the salaries and bonuses of Chief Legal Officers and other in-house counsels at large companies? According to a recent [2009 Law Department Compensation Benchmarking Survey](#) by ALM Legal Intelligence, median U.S. chief legal officers saw their total cash compensation (salaries plus bonuses) increase by almost 4 percent this year to \$485,200. In other words, CLO compensation increases while other in-house lawyer compensation declines.

In light of the current economic climate, CLO's have good reasons to be happy to be taking home nearly half a million dollar in pay, even if it falls short of the 13% increase they received in 2008. CLO's are not far from their law firm counterparts, when law firms like Cadwalader posted a 30% decrease in profits per partner, but still took home \$1.88 million during one of the worst economic markets in nearly 60 years. Clearly, there is still plenty of money being made.

Those who are experiencing most of the compensation squeeze are "other in-house counsels." While CLO compensation increased, total cash compensation for deputy chief legal officers, division general counsel and high-level specialists decreased during the same period, by 1.4 percent, 9.8 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively. The ALM Survey did not provide figures. For more information on salary and bonuses for "non-CLO in-house counsels", see our previous Blog post: "[In-House Compensation Remains Flat As Companies Continue Cost-Cutting Measures.](#)"

If you are not in a "management" in-house position, what's the best paying practice? Not surprisingly, patent law is the most lucrative specialty for senior attorneys and attorneys. Senior IP attorneys took home 40 percent more than the national median total cash compensation last year. It pays to be in IP, whether in private practice or in-house.

To compile this survey, the ALM polled organizations with 5,000 or more employees (46%), with 66 percent of participating organizations reporting annual sales revenues of \$1 billion or more.