

## In-House Female Lawyers Earn Less Than Their Male Counterparts

*By: Karen Anderson*

Let's talk about what we learned in kindergarten about playing fairly. First and foremost, take turns. Follow the rules of the game. Don't make up new rules as you play. Be nice. DON'T BE A SORE LOSER. If we follow these rules, we can pretty much ensure that the play will be fair. Right? Wrong. The problem with this philosophy is that life isn't fair and no matter how you may try to follow the rules about playing fairly, someone is going to be treated unfairly. The recent Report of the Seventh Annual NAWL National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms shows decidedly that someone is NOT playing fairly.

When you read the survey, and please do, you will discover that in-house female lawyers earn less than their male counterparts. Over the course of seven years woman still have lower annual salaries than their male counterparts, still have lower annual bonuses than their male counterparts, and that as you move up the legal food chain there are less and less females. Females are distinctly in the minority of equity partners and partners in law firms. Here's the worst part, the report states that 70% of staff lawyers are females. So many women in the legal profession would lead you to believe that, out of sheer numbers, women would at least see equal pay.

So what are we going to do about this? Are we going to form some coalition to force firms and companies to pay and promote women equally? Are we going to somehow develop a louder voice? Maybe send copies of the NAWL survey to every firm and company to shame them into equality? Here's an idea...Let's work harder and longer than our male counterparts. Surely someone will notice our unbelievable commitment to our careers. Still not fair is it?

The truth of the matter is that we can't force law firms and companies to play fairly. Life isn't fair. Does this mean we should give up and settle for unequal pay and promotion? Emphatically NO! Our hearts should beat hard in our chests at the injustice. There's no real way to avoid the sting.

Now take a deep, cleansing breath. While pay and promotion isn't fair for female lawyers, it is getting better. Slowly, but surely, pay for females is inching closer to equality. While the intent of this commentary is not to completely take your focus off the inequality of pay in the legal profession, it is intent on helping you focus on the important things in the interim.

So what are the important things? First of all, know there are better jobs out there for females. If you feel you aren't getting paid as much as your male counterparts and you are dissatisfied, do your research. Back yourself up with some hard and fast evidence that proves your worth. Present this information to your current firm. If they are unwilling to change your rate of pay, then be prepared to start a new job search.

Also know that making your firm aware that YOU are aware of pay inequality can take some time. Start by keeping track of the good work you do by adding important cases to your portfolio. Make sure this record of your good behavior gets to the desk of a partner in your firm, even if this means engaging in self-aggrandizing behavior.

Finally, if you are currently happy with your firm and you know that your pay is not equal, then consider statistically quantifying the pay difference and then working that much less. For example, if your pay is

15% less than your male counterpart, consider working 15% less. Yes, that's a bold step and possibly a necessary one to make your serious intentions known.

As a parting thought, consider this: What is it in your life that brings you joy and contentment? Let's face it, when we are too old to work, and we will be one day, our annual salary isn't going to mean anything to us if we don't have joy and contentment in our lives. Often joy doesn't cost us a penny and is simple. It lowers high blood pressure, relieves stress headaches, and keeps stomach ulcers at bay. If you don't have joy and contentment in your life right now, reassess quickly.

Don't give up the fight for equal pay and promotion. Know your worth and don't be afraid to ask for it. But also remember to find your source of joy and pursue it with tenacity.

Go to <http://nawl.timberlakepublishing.com/files/NAWL%202012%20Survey%20Report%20final.pdf> for the complete Report of the Seventh Annual NAWL National Survey on Retention and Promotion of Women in Law Firms.

*© 2015 ESQ Recruiting LLC. All rights reserved.*