

## In-House Counsel Salaries for 2016 Are on the Rise

*By: Leslie White*

In-house counsel salaries for 2016 are on the rise, with an increase of 2%-3% from 2015 depending on level of experience of the lawyer and company size. In 2016, in-house counsel salaries range from \$130,750 to \$259,750 for lawyers with 10+ years of experience. The lower range reflects salaries for smaller private companies, and the higher range for large publicly traded companies. For lawyers with 4-9 years of experience, we are looking at a range of \$111,500 to \$217,750. Lastly, for the more junior-level lawyers with 0-3 years of experience the range is \$82,250 to \$160,250. It looks like our earlier predictions published in October 2015 were right on target " In-house Counsel Salaries for 2016." This is good news for in-house lawyers everywhere!

What is boosting these rising in-house counsel salaries for 2016? It looks like companies may be fighting over the same seasoned and highly skilled in-house attorneys. This means increasing competition amongst companies and legal departments, which fortunately for the lawyer can lead to better compensation. According to a report by Laurence Simons, when it comes to recruiting talented and well-qualified in-house counsel in North America, the salary wars are on.

While companies and legal departments seem to be vying for the same type of candidates, leading them to compete for talent in an increasingly smaller pool of available candidates, the risk of key attorneys being poached by rival companies is also driving In-house counsel salaries up. To protect against this poaching, which not only involves a cost of replacing the departing lawyer, but also the cost of taking institutional knowledge which takes time to rebuild, companies are offering more lucrative base salaries and bonuses to retain their existing legal talent.

Poaching legal talent is a high risk to companies. As the legal market recovers and business picks up, the specter of star lawyers defecting to rival companies – and a substantial portion of the specific legal skills and institutional knowledge going with them – is becoming a reality to legal departments once again. In-house lawyer defections can also tend to lead to faster pay inflation for lawyers. Replacements costs are not only high, but also with increasing demand for a shrinking pool of talented in-house lawyers, it can also mean a longer time frames before a replacement can be found.

Check out our legal recruiting services to see how ESQ Recruiting can help identify and replace departing legal talent.