



RESEARCH INSIGHTS

in Recruitment:
Legal Sector



RESEARCH INSIGHTS IN RECRUITMENT: LEGAL SECTOR

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INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Solicitors, barristers, patent agents, notaries and bailiffs carry out legal activities on behalf of private and corporate clients.

From 2019-20, industry revenue is expected to expand at a compound annual rate of 1.4%. Widespread business uncertainty following the EU referendum, a decline in merger and acquisition (M&A) activity and falling residential property transactions are expected to result in limited industry revenue growth.

In the current year, however, revenue is forecast to rise by 1.4% to £35.7 billion. An increasingly large number of client firms have required legal support to comply with changing laws and regulations in a post-EU environment.

Improvements to M&A activity during the second half of the period will drive demand for commercial law work. While in the short term the M&A market is expected to be subdued in an environment of depressed business activity, contingent upon a gradual economic recovery from the current crisis, a pick-up in business sentiment and M&A deal-making is expected to support the demand for legal services in the future. A rise in property transactions is also expected to contribute to revenue.

Employment agencies that offer law recruitment services can help hire Legal staff or place experienced professionals into jobs within the Government Legal Services, Crown Prosecution Service and public/private law firms.

(IBIS World, "Legal Activities in the UK")
(Agency central, "Legal recruitment agencies directory")

2 | RECRUITMENT

The UK Legal Sector is a highly competitive field of work that can prove to be both personally and financially rewarding to candidates. More than 500K people across the country are employed in law jobs, and this includes Solicitors, Paralegals, Lawyers and Barristers.

Due to the high work rate, perseverance, and communication skills needed, many firms work with recruitment agencies when looking to make new hires.

Firms today use AI to increase their attraction and retention rates by offering specialist training to junior lawyers. Encouraging innovation also helps businesses attract new recruits. Additionally, businesses use programmes to make the recruitment process faster, easier and more streamlined.

A new necessity in recruitment due to lockdown is the investment in video interview software, such as Hinterview. The platforms conduct the preliminary stage of the screening process and interview for their clients by preparing basic questions with the firms and recording the candidate answers with their CVs alongside the footage.

Although many in the sector are employed in small firms, some of the largest employers in the UK are Allen & Overy, Clifford Chance and Slaughter & May.

Top skills for the industry:
<https://www.michaelpage.co.uk/our-expertise/legal/top-10-skills-2020-legal-sector>

(Michael Page, "AI and automation: how the legal sector is utilizing new technology")
(Agency central, "Legal recruitment agencies directory")



3 | SALARIES

The lowest earners in the profession make between £15K and £20K annually, while the highest salaries for senior solicitors and partners can exceed £40K-£50K. Overall, the average income is about £25K.

Legal assistant

The average legal assistant salary is on the rise with corporate legal assistants and legal practice assistants expecting above-average gains in the coming year.

Senior legal assistants working with commercial property, private client and conveyancing are increasingly in short supply and companies are increasing salary offers to attract and retain staff.

Legal secretary

Legal secretary salary expectations can vary by seniority, with starting salaries from £16,000 and increasing based on tenure, company size and location. While London still offers the highest remuneration, regional legal secretary salaries have seen strong year-on-year gains.

Paralegal

The average paralegal salary in the UK is 5% higher than one year ago, rising to as much as £35,000 in London. Job titles can vary, with paralegals often advertised as case handlers, fee earners, legal executives, legal assistants.

Chartered legal executive

Salaries for legal executives who have completed their Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) qualification are on the rise, particularly those specialising in corporate law, commercial property and conveyancing law, or employment law. Chartered legal executive salaries are highest for those professionals within corporate law.

Solicitor

Solicitor salaries have risen across the UK with newly qualified solicitors seeing starting salaries increase by as much as 70% over the last four years. Average solicitor salaries remain consistent, with those with five years of Post-Qualified Experience (PQE) seeing the strongest gains. In May 2019 there was a rise in newly-qualified (NQ) salaries within some of the larger top City and UK firms with salaries rising to in excess of £100,000 excluding bonuses and extra benefits.

Associates

Associate solicitor salaries can vary widely, with the highest offers for those who are self-starting, independent and client-oriented and those who provide legal guidance to other legal associates and secretaries.

Partner

Law firm partner salaries in the UK are experiencing much fluctuation, largely caused by talent shortages and value of the pound. As a result, many UK firms are introducing salary caps, with others increasing pay to keep pace. While there exists a disparity between London and the regions, there were increases to regional law firm partner salaries across the UK.

(Agency central, "Legal recruitment agencies directory")
(Heatreruitment, "Legal Salaries")

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INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

Job vacancies in the UK legal sector plunged by a whopping 75% between March and April 2020, as law firms across the country suspend recruitment in response to the financial uncertainty caused by the coronavirus crisis.

The latest figures from job board CV-Library show applications for legal roles also dropped significantly in April - 45% compared to March and 36% year-on-year.

The site also found an increase in competition among candidates for the legal roles that are available, with the application to job ratio rocketing by 208% in April compared to the previous year. The data shows that there was an average of 30.18 applications per legal role in April 2020, as opposed to just 9.8 in April 2019.

According to the founder and CEO of CV-Library, thousands of companies have put a pause on their hiring plans until there's more certainty in the market.

Law firms earn fees for services related to initial public offerings and other capital raisings. When economic conditions are tough, as for example, during the coronavirus crisis, fees from capital raisings tend to fall because business decisions are postponed until trading conditions improve.

(Legal cheek, "UK legal vacancies plunge 75% during pandemic")
(IBIS World, "Legal Activities in the UK Market size 2008-2026")



5 | SOURCES

- **Michael Page - AI and automation: how the legal sector is utilizing new technology**
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