

News Releases

Robert Half Legal Survey Reveals One in Three Lawyers Plans to Add Staff in First Quarter

MENLO PARK, Calif., Dec. 15, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Approximately one in three (**31 percent**) lawyers interviewed for the quarterly *Robert Half Legal Hiring Index* plans to add legal staff in the first quarter of 2012, while **4 percent** plan reductions in personnel. The net **27 percent** increase in projected hiring activity is up three points from the previous quarter's forecast. Law firms are expected to do the majority of the hiring in the next three months.

The survey was developed by Robert Half Legal, a premier legal staffing firm specializing in lawyers, paralegals and other highly skilled legal professionals. It was conducted by an independent research firm and is based on telephone interviews with 100 lawyers at law firms with 20 or more employees, and 100 corporate lawyers at companies with 1,000 or more employees. All of the respondents have hiring authority within their organizations.

Key Findings

The net **27 percent** of lawyers expecting to hire is up three points from a net **24 percent** increase in hiring activity projected last quarter. Lawyers interviewed plan to add an average of two full-time positions.

Lawyers, paralegals and legal secretaries are the three most in-demand positions.

Bankruptcy and foreclosure, litigation, and labor and employment law are the practice areas expected to see the most growth in the first quarter.

More than half (**51 percent**) of lawyers said it is challenging to find skilled legal professionals, up two points from the previous quarter.

Seventy-three percent of lawyers are somewhat or very confident in their companies' prospects for growth in the next three months; this represents a nine-point drop from the fourth quarter of 2011.

Hiring Trends

"Although law firms continue to have a cautious hiring outlook, they're optimistic enough about their prospects to want to add full-time staff in key legal and support positions that bolster growth," said Charles Volkert, executive director of Robert Half Legal. "They continue to focus on hiring senior- and partner-level lawyers with

substantial books of business and expertise in high-demand practice areas, such as bankruptcy and foreclosure, litigation, and labor and employment law."

Twenty-nine percent of lawyers identified bankruptcy and foreclosure as the area of law that will experience the most growth in the next three months. Litigation received **23 percent** of the response, followed by labor and employment law (**12 percent**).

"Corporations are hiring full-time legal staff and project professionals in an ongoing effort to bring more work in-house and reduce outside legal spending," said Volkert. "General counsel are handling more matters internally in areas such as corporate transactional, labor and employment, intellectual property, litigation and regulatory law."

Law firms and corporate legal departments expect to hire an average of two full-time positions in the first quarter of 2012, according to survey respondents. Those interviewed indicated they will most likely hire lawyers (**88 percent**), paralegals (**39 percent**) and legal secretaries (**35 percent**).

"Law firms and corporate legal departments place a premium on candidates with proven skills and relevant experience who can fill gaps in expertise and make immediate contributions," Volkert added. "Experienced lawyers continue to have a hiring edge, while employers also value seasoned paralegals and legal secretaries."

About The Robert Half Legal Hiring Index

The Robert Half Legal Hiring Index is based on 200 telephone interviews with lawyers: 100 of the respondents are employed at firms with 20 or more employees, and 100 are employed at companies with 1,000 or more employees.

The interviews were conducted by an independent research firm. Information from the study is featured in *The Robert Half Professional Employment Report*, launched in 2010 and the first study of its kind to monitor the hiring environment for professional-level positions exclusively. Based on more than 4,000 telephone interviews with executives throughout the United States, it provides insight on employment trends to help businesses and job seekers prepare for the upcoming quarter. To see how hiring within the legal profession has changed since last quarter and how it compares to other sectors, please visit www.roberthalf.us/per.

About Robert Half Legal

Robert Half Legal is the legal staffing division of Robert Half International. The company provides law firms and corporate legal departments with highly skilled professionals, including lawyers, paralegals and legal support personnel, on a project and full-time basis. Robert Half Legal offers online job search services at www.roberthalflegal.com.

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