



2018 Legal Sales  
Uncovered:  
Salary & Trends  
*Survey Results*



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# About LSSO

The Legal Sales and Service Organization, Inc. was launched over 15 years ago. At that time, law firms were beginning the evolution from marketing to incorporate business development and service initiatives.

Legal departments became ever more demanding of their firms and increased their use of process improvement tools, like Six Sigma and Lean, internally. However, law firms did not have the resources or tools in the areas of business development, service excellence and quality initiatives. LSSO was created to fill those needs.

Then and especially now, law firm leaders have ever-greater responsibilities for the future of their firms. The market is crowded and highly competitive. Clients are sophisticated buyers. As such, lawyers and law firms must employ effective sales and service strategies, whether they are responsible for bringing in new business or developing and retaining clients through service delivery.

[LSSO membership](#) is for legal and business professionals who want access to timely and on point information, are committed to their own professional development and insist on staying on the cutting edge. LSSO supplies the legal marketplace with innovative, groundbreaking events and resources.

LSSO delivers the education and resources that lawyers and those who work with them need to improve their sales and client service skills with a searchable library, exclusive research, tools and information for members only, LSSO's annual RainDance Conference and LSSO's Coaching Certification Programs.

Please subscribe to our complimentary e-Newsletter, LSSO News to receive updates from LSSO. Begin enjoying the benefits of a LSSO membership by [joining today](#).

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the law firm professionals who took time and participated in LSSO's benchmark survey. With your help, we will have made another positive contribution to our industry and beyond.

The notion of uncovering the complicated nuances in the rise of law firm sales and service executives came from LSSO's esteemed leadership, the Board of Advisors. We thank each and every one of you for your guidance and direction:

- David Burkhardt
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- Adam Stock
- Catherine Zinn

We couldn't have undertaken this important mission without the generous support of Hellerman Communications, who not only sponsored, but contributed to this effort with substance and vision. We also salute Jennifer Roberts and Mark Medice, industry experts and data scientists, who examined the results and produced the executive summary and analysis.

A special acknowledgement goes out to Kirsten Lovett, Executive Director, who gave the survey deep commitment from beginning to end.

# Synopsis

During this ever increasing sea of market change, Legal Sales & Service Organization (LSSO) teamed up with Hellerman Communications to develop and distribute a survey to demystify the roles, responsibilities, salaries and important statistics of the emerging sales and service professionals in law firms – or in some instances, the new roles and responsibilities of law firm marketing executives. The survey results reveal both maturation and tension simultaneously. These positions possess high rewards and opportunity, but are also fraught with inconsistent reporting structures and responsibility — too frequently not having direct participation in the c-suite nor holding direct client responsibility.

As noted by Jennifer Roberts and Mark Medice, industry experts and data scientists, “the emerging role of the legal sales professional at the law firm (a majority of firms have only added sales professionals within the last 5 years) is evidence of this evolution. Looking at the

mission of the sales professional, many are charged with growing revenue. No small task. The incorporation of this role and responsibilities on one hand shows growth, but the lack of inclusion in management committees (<15% of respondents are involved in management committees) and little incentive to drive revenue (only about 40% of sales professionals have goals that correlate between firm revenue and salary) suggests room to grow and a great area of opportunity.”

*“These positions possess high rewards and opportunity, but are also fraught with inconsistent reporting structures and responsibility.”*

# Methodology

The survey employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative methodology allowed participants the opportunity to provide context to answers while providing insight into complex reality and the meaning of actions in a given context. The quantitative methodology sought to obtain accurate and reliable measurements that allow a statistical analysis. Both of which will be used as benchmarks for future surveys.

The survey was open from March 12, 2018 to May 31, 2018. Responses were sought from individuals who work within a law firm, regardless of size and geography.

The survey was distributed electronically, via links, emails, and newsletter. With each invitation to participate, language was provided that stated all responses would be confidential and no individuals or firms would be identified in the results.

The survey had a total of 24 questions. Twenty-three (23) used a quantitative approach and nineteen (19) of the questions also had an opportunity to answer qualitatively.

*“The quantitative methodology sought to obtain accurate and reliable measurements that allow a statistical analysis.”*



*Executive  
Summary  
& Analysis*



# *Evolving Role of Legal Sales in Law Firms*

This salary and trends survey sought to understand the common threads that define business development in law firms, as well as the pay structure and level for those professionals.

Approximately 60 individuals responded to the survey, about half of which possessed a c-level title: either business development, marketing, or both. Over half the respondents were from firms with 250 lawyers or higher in number.

Sales is a relatively newer role in the legal profession with a majority of firms only beginning to staff it within the last ten years. On the positive side, these professionals maintain significant responsibilities as the survey revealed that 80% of legal sales professionals are having an impact on revenue through sales, 96% are impacting client service growth, about 70% are directly involved in client teams, and nearly 86% have direct contact with clients and prospects. Lastly, a surprising 44% of the respondents indicated they report to the managing partner of the firm, a very

positive result that can only raise their stature.

*“80% of legal sales professionals are having an impact on revenue through sales....”*

Professionals within these firms face their share of challenges, it all starts with overburdened and wide-ranging workloads (very strategic responsibilities mixed with administrative task execution). This might be regarded as one of the most significant job pressures, calling for a need for more developed organizational structure, as well as for more strategic focus on firm priorities and corresponding role responsibilities.

# *Evolving Role of Legal Sales in Law Firms*

When the survey respondents were asked about the most pressing obstacles getting in their way, they reported the following: attorneys, training, time, lack of resources, role definition, change management, accountability, strategic thinking, industry knowledge, among other factors.

This point is further supported by observing outsourced functions, where except for Media Relations and Lawyer Coaching, little to no work is performed by outside experts, placing the burden squarely on the shoulders of internal resources. It is interesting to note that the survey indicated 90% are doing sales strategy and coaching in contrast to 40% doing outside sales, which invites further consideration about the true sales nature of this role. Finally, in spite of the positive observation related to reporting structure above, few business development professionals (14%) are a member of the firm's management committee suggesting more work to be done there. Moreover, this phenomena appears to

exist regardless of firm size, geography, focus, and likely a cause of significant stress on the position.

*“... little to no work is performed by outside experts, placing the burden squarely on the shoulders of internal resources.”*

Other observations to note include age and gender. The age distribution tracked by the respondents is similar to a bell curve with the highest percentage (+40%) in the age 45-to-54 category and the second largest category (+30%) in the 35-44 group.

# *Evolving Role of Legal Sales in Law Firms*

That suggests that the need for legal sales requires a seasoned and experienced group, which makes sense given that these professionals must not only possess client savvy skills, but also be able to navigate the unique qualities and structure of firms themselves (it also provides support for higher compensation levels). Law firm sales pros need to work well inside and outside the firm -- with demanding clients, and occasionally stubborn firm lawyers. Also since firms are still evolving the “sales” function, the skills of successful business development professionals likely require significant changing management capabilities, calling for individuals with a depth of experience.

On the gender point, roughly 63% of the group is female, which presents no issue on its face, but it might be worth noting and wondering why this is so. Is there some predisposition on the part of law firms related to the role of legal sales and marketing? This statistic is almost opposite the gender demographic

findings for sales professionals in other industries, and so caution should be used to ensure the role avoids negative stereotypes of assumed clerical or other ministerial functions.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding compensation, the survey reported that most business development professionals are paid reasonably well, with 44% of the respondents reporting base compensation over \$200,000, perhaps explained by the seniority of the respondents, the specialty expertise required, and the maturity needed to handle the stress of the position.

*“...most business development professionals are paid reasonably well, with 44% of the respondents reporting base compensation over \$200,000....”*

# *Evolving Role of Legal Sales in Law Firms*

On the other hand, the bonus structure doesn't compete nor sync well with the composition of sales professionals in other industries, where about 56% of the group reported a bonus of less than \$20,000, suggesting a loose coupling between individual performance and rewards. Said another way, in sales parlance, this position is an underleveraged position for most of the group.<sup>2</sup>

In a short period, over the past decade, the role of the law firm sales professional is now becoming commonplace in the industry. The pay is good, but the stress is high, and the variance of responsibilities is wide from firm-to-firm. As firms are facing an increasingly sophisticated client base that is demanding breaks on pricing, high-quality service and response times, clarity in billing, and a requirement to know their business well, firms are in need of true sales professionals to help them anticipate client needs and be proactive in approach. As firms increasingly are

focusing on client service design strategies, it is clear that the integration of the business development function is integral to support the opportunity for greater client success ahead.

*“...firms are in need of true sales professionals to help them anticipate client needs and be proactive in approach.”*

# *Evolving Role of Legal Sales in Law Firms*

1. A recent LinkedIn study reported that the average percentage of female sales professionals in other industries, especially those related to STEM professionals was only 39%, calling for steps to close the obvious participation gap.

<https://business.linkedin.com/sales-solutions/resources/sales/top-trends-of-women-sales-professionals#> .

2. On a technical point, notwithstanding the discussion that commonly arises citing Rule 5.4 of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct (stating that “A lawyer or law firm shall not share legal fees with a nonlawyer.”), most sales professionals receive variable payments in the form of commission, that usually means a payment for achieving a specific sales target, transaction or other commercial event. The point is that sales pros outside legal operate with a highly granular, variable payment structure than an annual bonus, and that little data is present from the survey to suggest this kind of structure exists yet for firms. The traditional thinking is that sales pros are more motivated to sell under a commission-based model, and it provides more direct feedback on their work.

# 2018 Legal Sales Uncovered: Salary & Trends Survey

## Top Statistics



*Roles &  
Responsibilities*

*Top 4  
Roles*

1. *Client Growth*
2. *Sales Strategy & Coaching*
3. *Strategic Planning*
4. *Client Service*

**> 40%** *External Facing Roles*

**\$ 80%** *Impact Revenue Through Sales*



**100%** *Impact Client Growth*

**> 80%** *Have Direct Client Contact*

*Almost 70% Active Member of Client Teams*

**< 15%** *Member of Firm's Management Committee*

**> 40%**

*Correlation Between Firm Revenue & Salary/Bonus*

**%**

**10%**

*Received \$100K+ For Most Recent Bonus*



*Trends to  
Watch*

# *Sales professionals have boomed over the past 5 years.*





# *Most Popular Titles*

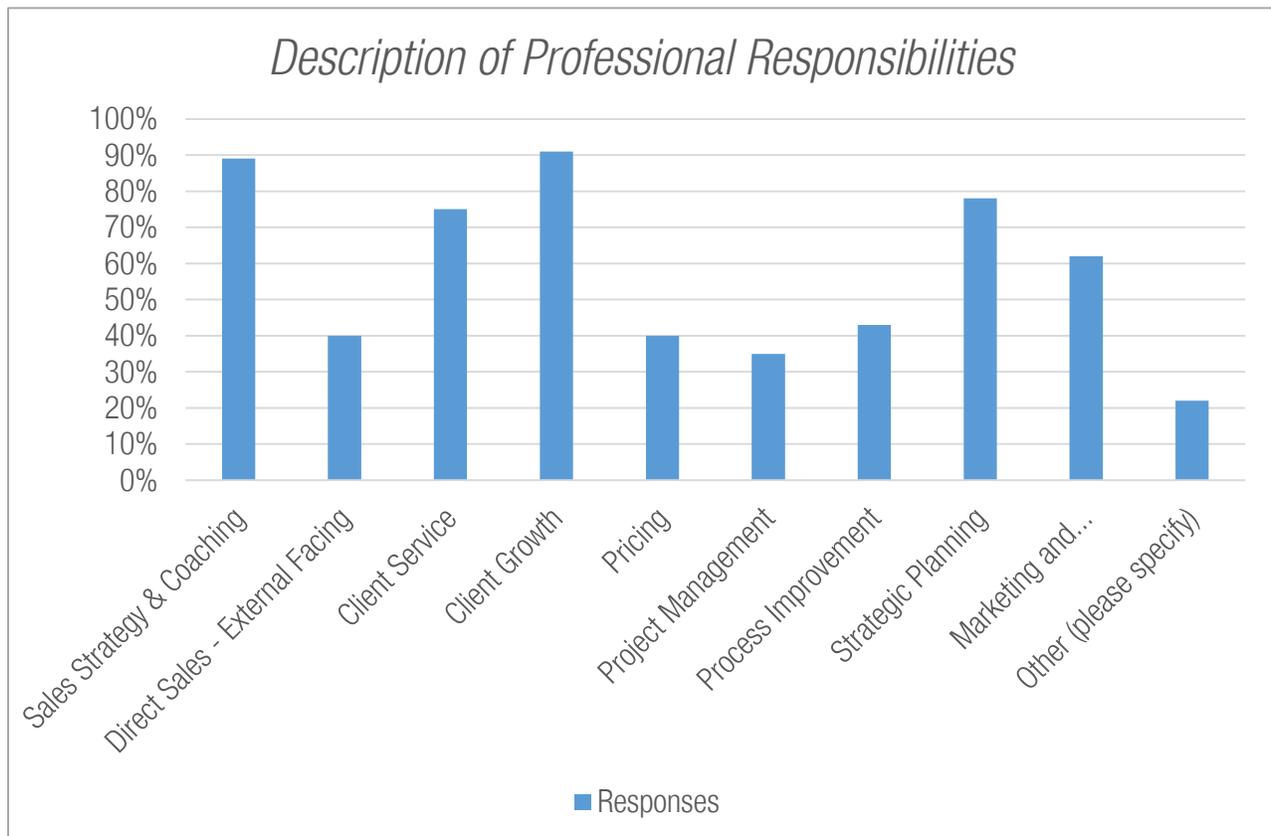
The most significant change in titles hold the word “Client.”

While the most popular titles remain to be:

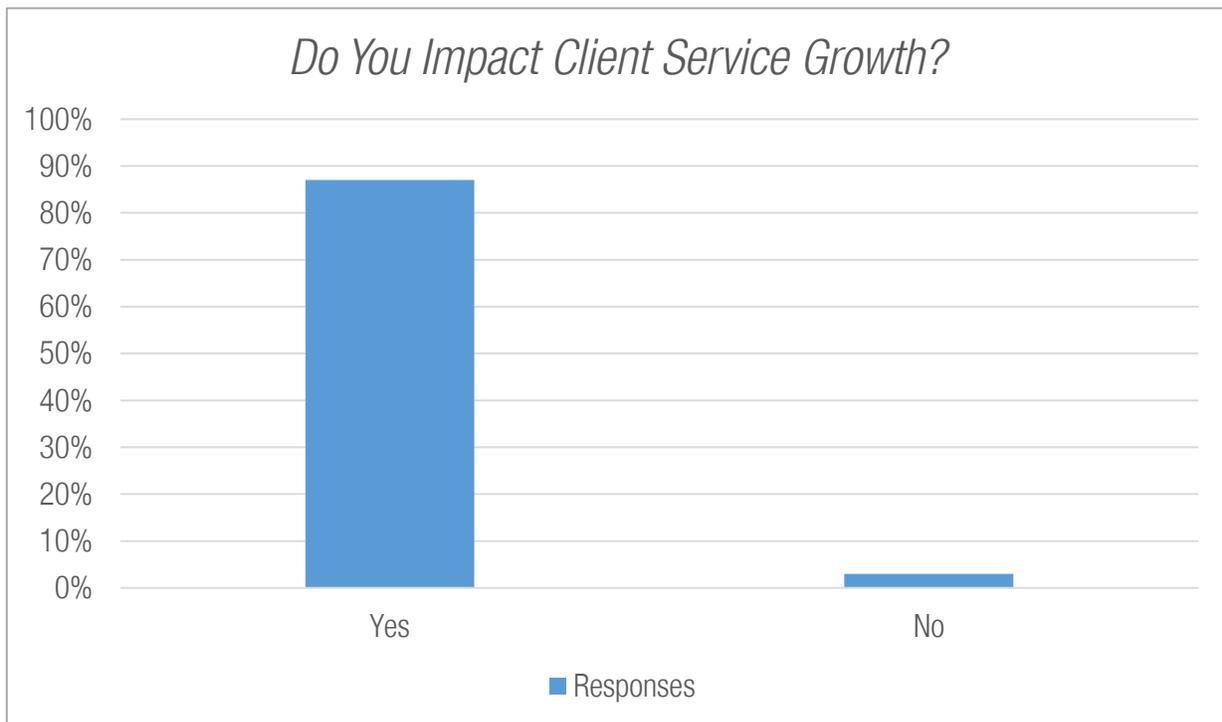
- 1 Chief Business Development & Marketing Officer
- 2 Chief Marketing Officer
- 3 Chief Business Development Officer

# *The 4 most popular roles and responsibilities include:*

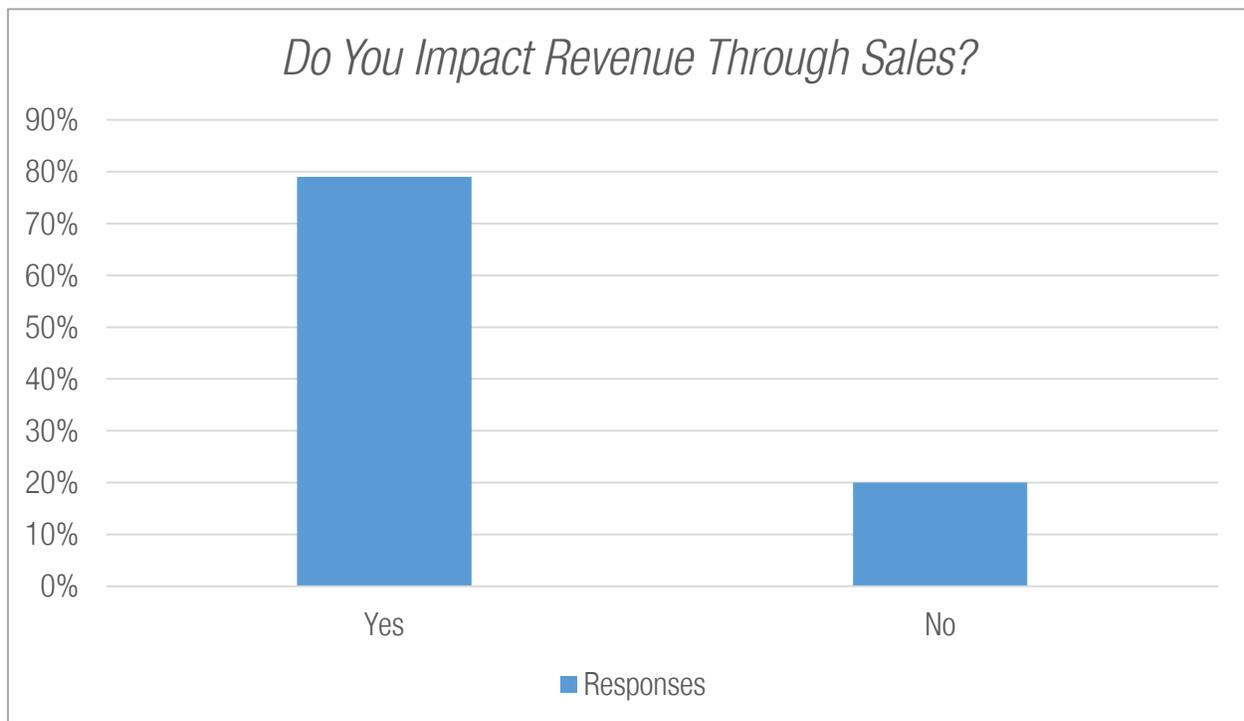
- 1. Client Growth*
- 2. Sales Strategy & Coaching*
- 3. Strategic Planning*
- 4. Client Service*



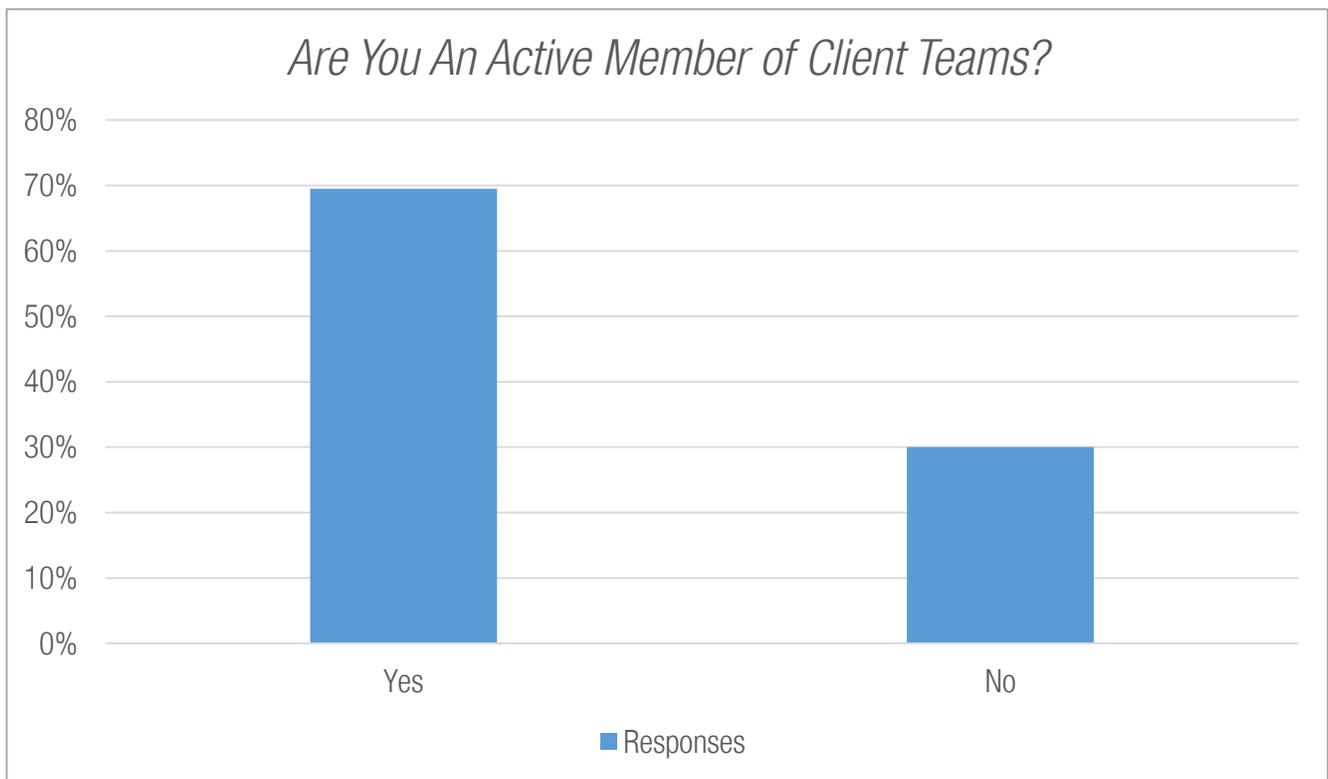
*Almost 90% of survey respondents say they impact growth.*



*Almost 100% of survey respondents say they impact revenue through sales.*



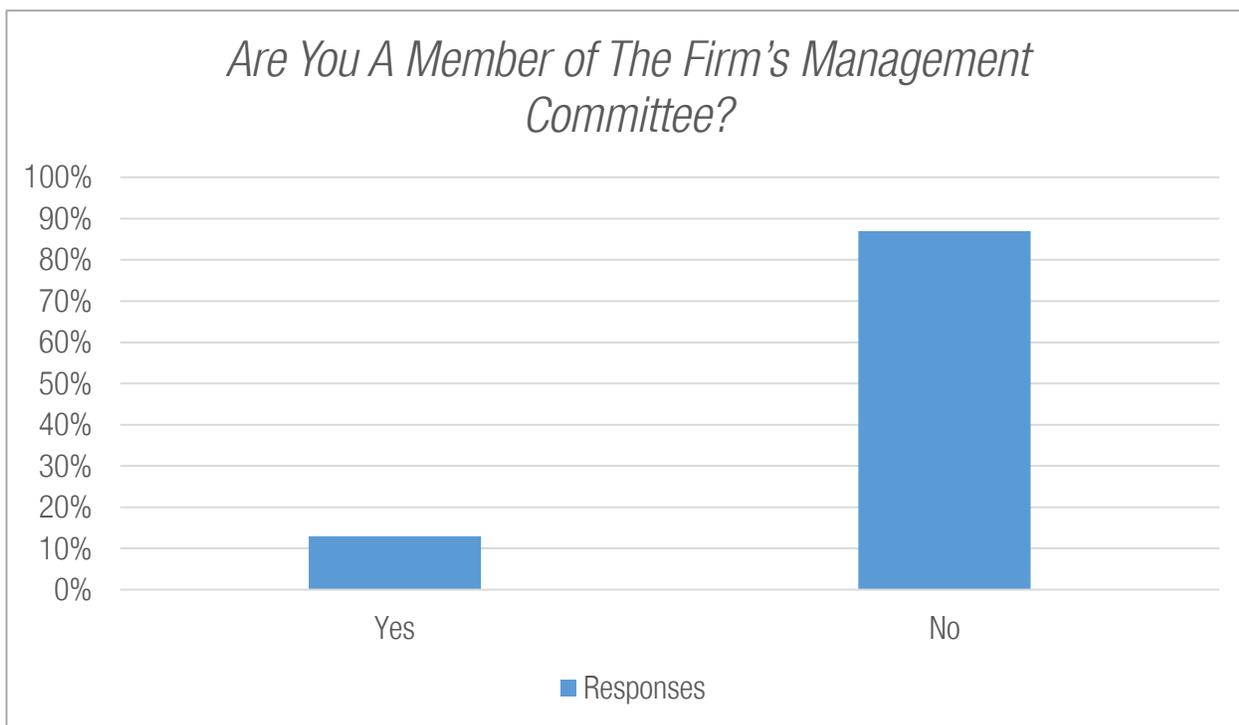
*Nearly 70% of respondents are active members of client teams.*



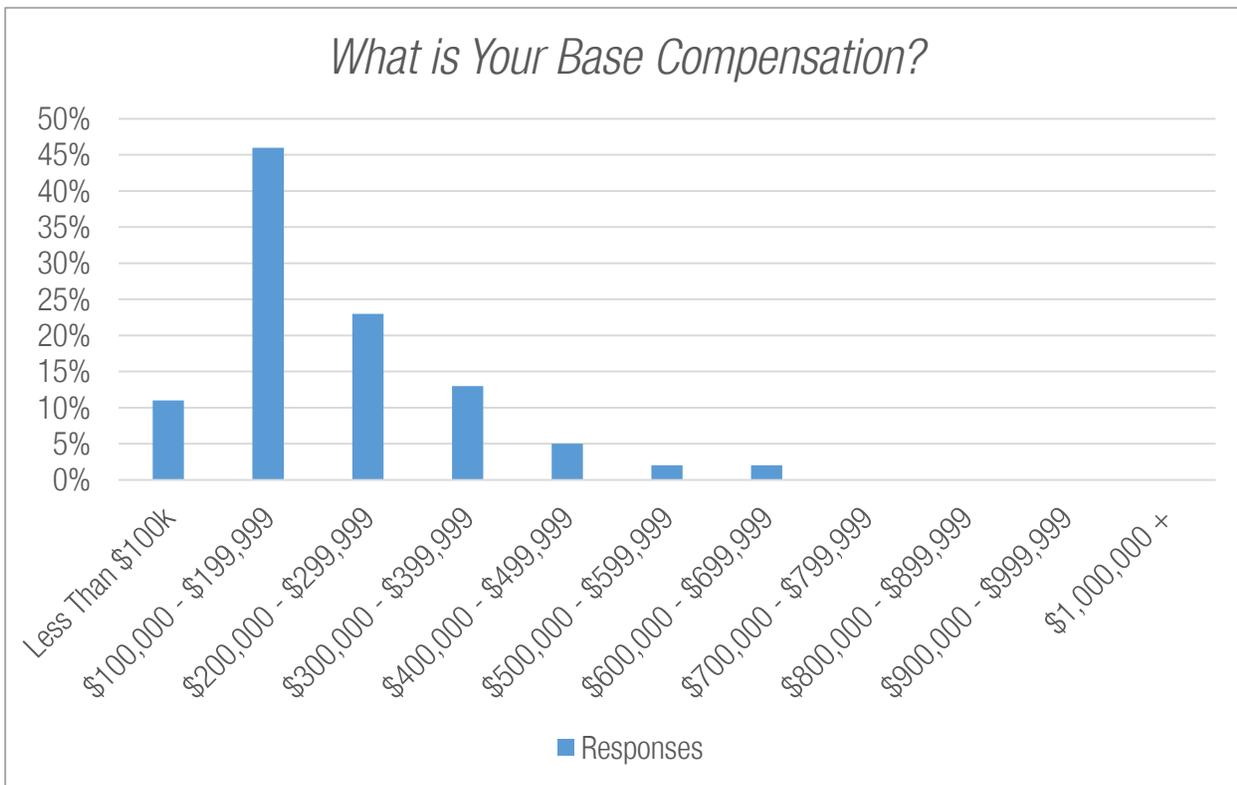
*Nearly 90% of respondents have direct contact with clients and prospects.*



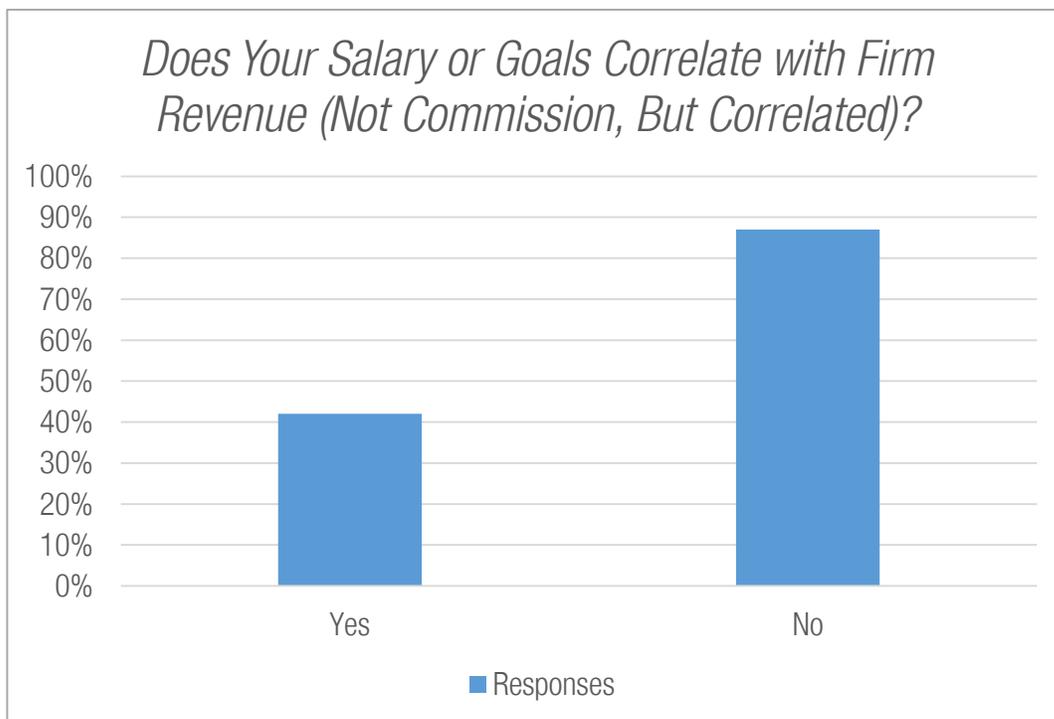
*Only 11 % of respondents are members of firm management committees.*



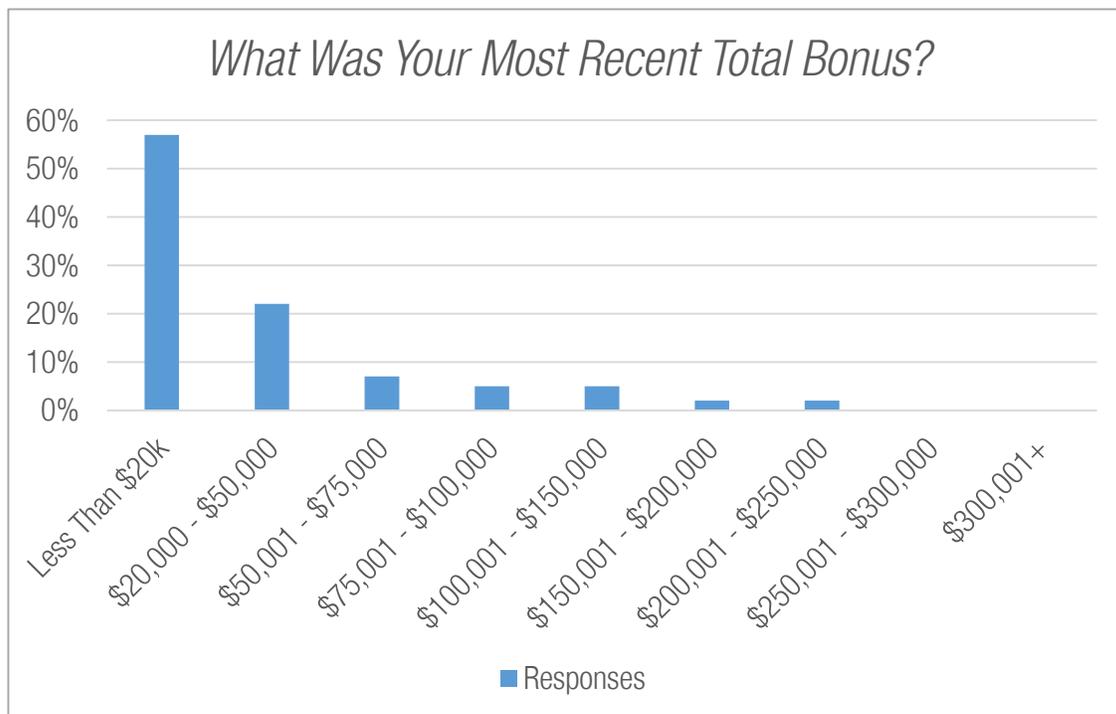
*42% of respondents have a base compensation range of \$100k - \$199,999.*



*41% of respondents' salaries and goals correlate with firm revenue.*

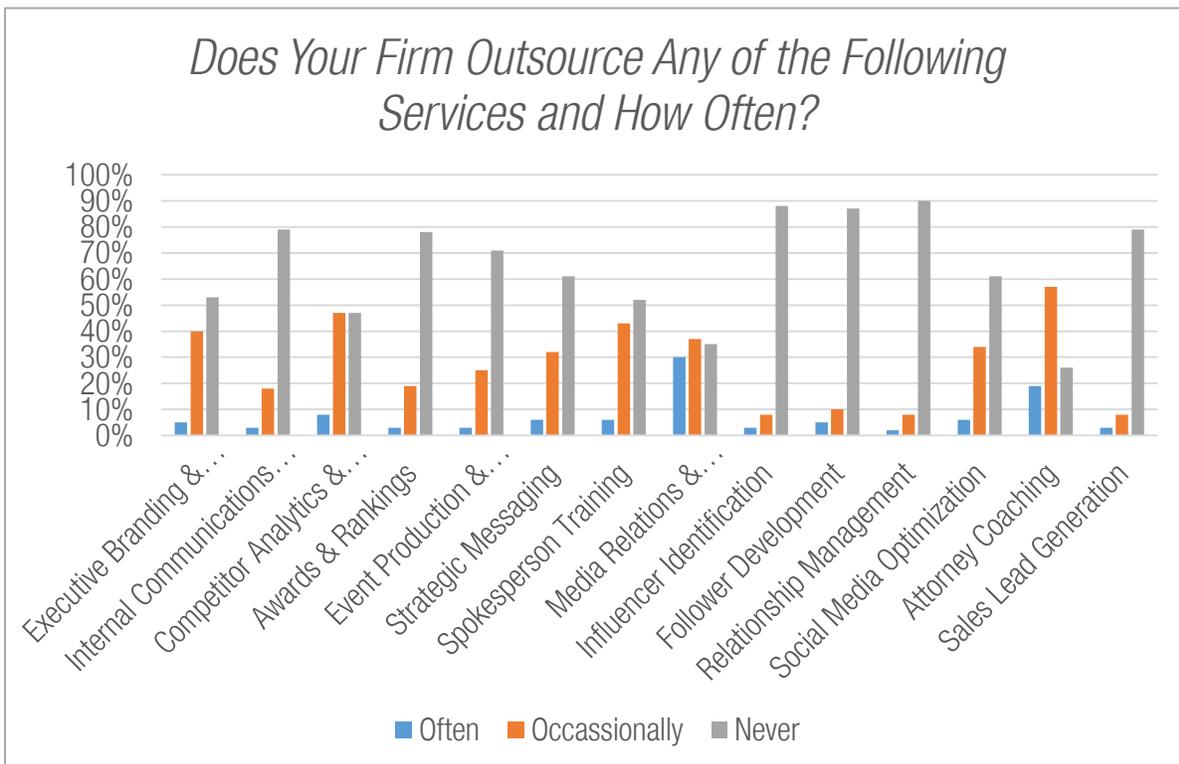


*Almost 60% of respondents' most recent bonuses were less than \$20k.*



# The top three services outsourced by firms are:

1. Media relations & monitoring
2. Attorney coaching
3. Competitor analytics & benchmarking

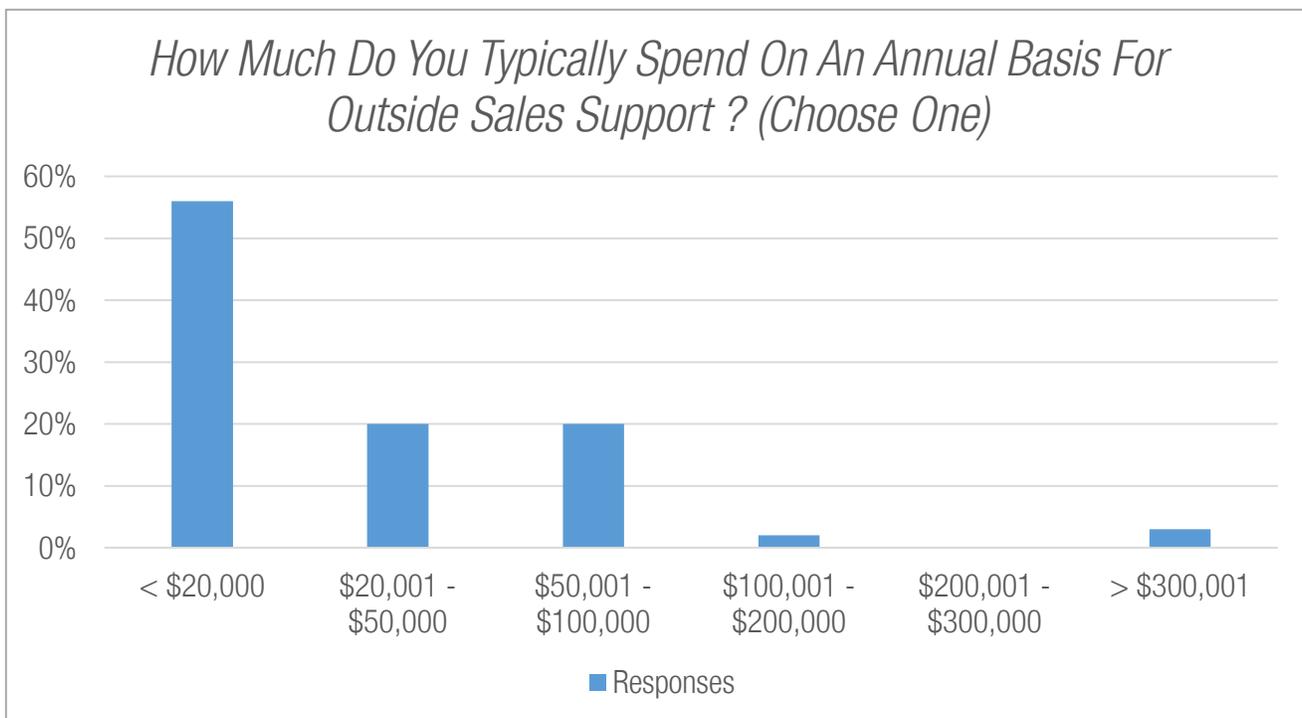


# *In a perfect world, firms would more often outsource these services.*



*\*aspirational*

*Almost 60% of respondents spend more than \$20k annually on outside sales support.*





# *Actionable Insights*

1 Rethink titles

2 Create unofficial client teams

3 Provide compelling reasons to attend management meetings

4 Utilize your champions



# *Actionable Insights*

5 Align with revenue

6 Prepare for account managers

7 Reallocate budget

8 Overcome obstacles proactively

# *Salary & Trends Survey Top Recommended Reading List*

*We asked all respondents to recommend a sales read. Here are their answers:*

- To Sell Is Human, **Daniel Pink**
- Good to Great, **Jim Collins**
- The Like Switch, **Dr. Jack Schafer**
- Give to Get, **Vishal Agarwal**
- Networking for People Who Hate Networking, **Devora Zack**
- Lean Out, **Elissa Shevinsky**
- Clientelligence, **Michael Rynowecer**
- The 10X Rule, **Grant Cardone**
- Rainmaking Made Simple, **Mark Maraia**
- Relationships Are Everything!, **Mark Maraia**
- Rain Making: Attract New Clients No Matter What Your Field, **Ford Harding**
- Business Development for Lawyers, **Sally Schmidt**
- Strategic Selling, Conceptual Selling & Successful Large Account Management, **Robert Miller & Stephen Heiman**
- How to Win Customers and Keep Them for Life, **Michael LeBoeuf**
- SPIN Selling, **Neil Rackham**
- The Challenger Sale, **Brent Adamson & Mathew Dixon**
- All for One, **Andrew Sobel**
- Developing Knowledge-Based Client Relationships, **Ross Dawson**

# Recommendations & Conclusions

As law firms grapple with how to best utilize their sales employees and better define their roles, it is important to note that over the past five years as firms have increasingly employed them, they have had a direct impact on client growth and firm revenue.

With a function that clearly drives business, there is a real disconnect between sales and firm leaders as the c-suite has yet to understand the true value of sales professionals and their role in obtaining firm business objectives.

To correct this wrong and maximize our effectiveness, we need to start evangelizing firms to hire sales professionals, involve them in strategy conversations, and focus their attention on external sales rather than internal and administrative tasks.

*“...start evangelizing firms to hire sales professionals...”*



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Survey

It's time to benchmark the survey results so you have tools and resources to help your firm's sales and service team.

To participate in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Survey

[\*click here\*](#)

