

MINING THE SURVEYS: Law Firm Partners Working Harder Than Ever

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Why do law firm partners feel like they are working harder than ever before? Because, they are. According to the Altman Weil *Survey of Law Firm Economics*, average annual billable hours for law firm partners increased by 11.4% between 1984 and 2001. Average billable hours increased from 1,531 in 1984 to 1,706 in 2001. With increased pressure for client development and more time required to manage today's firms, it is now typical for a law firm partner to work a total of 2,400 hours (billable and non-billable) annually.

What about associates? Interestingly, average annual billable hours for law firm associates only increased by 3.8% during the same period. Average annual associate billable hours increased from 1,798 in 1984 to 1,867 in 2001. What does this mean? It is no longer the case that associates "pay their dues" with hard work to be rewarded with an invitation to partnership. To the contrary, law firm partners work harder and have more responsibility than ever before, and there is nothing to indicate that will change any time soon.

Trend Comparison of Annual Client (Billable) Hours

