



Feature

## The State of Boston Law Firm Jobs

*As like many other areas of the country, lateral hiring for Boston law firm jobs continues, but has slowed and become more selective than in previous years. Those in possession of strong academic records and good credentials will have little trouble finding law firm jobs in Boston, particularly if they specialize in the realms of corporate or tax law, or if they are intellectual property specialists with strong science backgrounds.*

All areas will find that selectivity has increased, and that significant experience and good records are being required. Environmental, bankruptcy, and litigation attorneys may have difficulty in the Boston area, as these are particularly soft realms for hiring. However, the right candidates may still be able to find positions in these areas. Compensation for the Boston area is approximately the same as the rest of the Northeast, with salaries between \$130,000 and \$160,000 per year for first year associates.

### Overview of the Market for Law Firm Jobs in Boston

At many major Boston firms, lateral hiring continues, but much more selectively than in the past. Candidates with strong academic achievements and transactional experience with large firms will remain in demand. Litigation, however, is growing much more slowly, and those seeking jobs in this area may be disappointed.

Most firms continue to report demand for corporate Boston law firm jobs for junior to mid-level attorneys. The best area for associates is for those with good investment management experience, though attorneys familiar with mergers and acquisitions and private equity will also find good opportunities for employment, provided they have good credentials. In the current market, venture capital deals continue, creating a demand for corporate associates experienced with these deals.

### Specialties Needed for Boston Law Firm Jobs

Unsurprisingly, given the state of the market, hiring for real estate law firm jobs in Boston is substantially slower than it was a year or more ago. There is still an occasional demand for candidates at the top of their field, associates with real estate credentials are not in strong demand. Instead, lateral hiring remains stronger in the intellectual property realm. Patent prosecution jobs are particularly common, and candidates with experience in electrical engineering will do very well.

In general, patent attorneys with good credentials are still in significant demand. Electrical engineering backgrounds are strongly favored, but life sciences credentials (particularly for associates who possess a Ph.D. in the field) of chemistry, biotechnology and computer science are also desirable. This is because the Massachusetts economy is still strongly influenced by biotech and software concerns, generating significant work for firms that specialize in intellectual property and general firms taking patent work alike.

Another area where there are Boston law firm jobs available is for attorneys who have fund formation experience and leveraged buyout experience, with the majority of jobs occurring at single and multi-office firms based out of Boston. Branch offices of national firms are also looking for people with these types of experiences.

Litigation hiring remains soft, though there are some jobs available for litigation associates who have very fine credentials. Employment and labor are also a weak area, even though they are often strengthened by economic downturns.

Partners who are looking for better positions will find a receptive marketplace, particularly corporate partners with portable billings in excess of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars. In other practice areas, partner opportunities are also available, and there's willingness to consider partners in smaller practices that have marketing potential. Branch offices of national firms trying to expand into the Boston market are the most likely to be looking for partners.

An increase in demand for experienced tax associates is coupled with the fact that associates with strong experience in corporate transactional matters are hard to come by. Associates with ERISA experience are also desirable. So far, bankruptcy lawyers have not experienced the increase in work they've been expected, with hiring staying weak. Environmental lawyers are also finding hiring to be infrequent for Boston law firm jobs.



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### Compensation for Law Firm Jobs in Boston

Benefits and salaries for attorneys in Boston are generally consistent with the New England area. Summer associates tend to be offered between \$2,500 and \$3,000 per week, and first year associates may make between \$130,000 and \$160,000 each year. As with all areas, the exact compensation package will depend on the firm and on the experience and specialty of the attorney.

Attorneys who have been judicial clerks may be compensated more, according to their experience under the clerkship, and a stipend or other compensation for bar exam and course expenses may be given to new lawyers joining a firm. In some cases, associates working with the firm for six months will receive a bonus. Common benefits include purchase of all

needed technology for work, retirement plans and appropriate insurance plans for the attorney and his or her family.

### Conclusion

The nationwide economic uncertainty has affected the Boston area as well as others, with law firm jobs in Boston becoming more difficult to find. Litigation and environmental law are particularly difficult to find positions in, and bankruptcy lawyers may also be disappointed.

However, attorneys specializing in intellectual property law, particularly those with an electrical engineering background, and corporate and tax lawyers will find that there are many Boston law firm jobs available. In general, all firms are becoming more selective about candidates, and prefer to have those with very good credentials.

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