

Survey Measures Lateral Partners' Satisfaction With New Firms

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The good news is that lateral partners are happier at their new firms than they were 10 years ago.

The bad news is that their expectations about a firm's ability to expand and support their practices are still not being met -- a leading factor in why many chose to jump ship in the first place.

That's according to a new [survey](#) of more than 1,000 partners who have made lateral moves in recent years, released last week by legal recruiters Major, Lindsey & Africa.

As more and more law firms base their business and growth strategies around lateral hires, the stakes have become ever higher to attract and retain talent. And partners are increasingly willing to pick up and leave their law firms.

"The legal industry has become something like baseball," said Jonathan Lindsey, managing partner of the recruiting firm's New York office and the author of the survey. "It's an era of free agency."

The survey recorded which firms met expectations and satisfied their lateral partners the most. Among those at the top of the list -- the survey did not rank firms explicitly, but noted which finished in the top quartile -- were some big California firms, like Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, as well as Cooley Godward Kronish and Sedgwick, Detert, Moran & Arnold.

Lindsey said a difference-maker between firms is their amount of emphasis on integrating new partners.

"There are firms that have no integration program at all. They just give you a desk and a phone and say good luck," said Lindsey. "And then there are firms where [there is] a team that is responsible for everything involved with integration, from getting you new business cards to introducing you to clients."

The survey also found that women were far more likely than men to be disappointed in their expectations, in a number of ways. Lindsey said that has to do with the fact that the law is still somewhat of a male-dominated profession. When entire groups move laterally, the lead partner will often be a man.

"To a certain extent it's because, of women who responded to the survey, far fewer of them were leaders of the group," Lindsey said. "If you're a service partner, you have much less say in where the group goes."

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