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# The Business

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## Women Partners on Rise, Survey Finds

By Drew Combs  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Joanne Caruso, managing partner at Howrey in Southern California, knows firsthand the challenges faced by women attorneys pursuing careers at large, national law firms.

Caruso was married and six months pregnant with her second daughter when she sat for the California bar in 1996. Caruso, already a partner at Howrey in Washington, D.C., had recently transferred to the firm's Los Angeles office.

After giving birth later that year, Caruso was back on the East Coast trying a case in Delaware.

"It stinks. It's awful. But I like what I do, and we are lucky I have this job," she said, referring to the challenges of balancing family and professional demands.

Caruso moderated a recent panel on "Making Partner in Today's Legal Environment" sponsored by the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles. Caruso was among five women partners who shared their experiences at the July 14 event.

The group's president, Judith Seeds Miller, said the panel, which was attended by 30 associates and summer associates, was part of the association's "mission to have full participation of women in the legal profession."

Two days earlier, the Bar Association of San Francisco released the results of its "No Glass Ceiling Initiative," which it described as showing "enormous progress."

The initiative "sought compliance with the goal of at least 25 percent women partners ... by Jan. 1, 2005," among 76 signatory law firms and legal departments.

Though the project did not reach its aim, "there has been a substantial narrowing of the gap," said Angela Bradstreet, managing partner at Carroll, Burdick & McDonough and chair of the "No Glass Ceiling Task Force and Monitoring Initiative."

But a Nov. 5, 2004, study on diversity at large law firms by the National Association of Law Placement suggests that growth in the number of women partners has been limited.

According to the study, women comprise 17 percent of the partners at national firms.

A similar study conducted by the asso-



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Joanne Caruso,  
Managing partner at Howrey in  
Southern California

ciation in 1999 showed that women were 15 percent of the partners at national firms. In five years, the number of women partners increased 2 percent.

At first glance, the partnership picture for women attorneys in Los Angeles and San Francisco appears a little rosier.

The 2004 study revealed that the percentage of women partners in California's largest legal markets exceeded the national average.

San Francisco led with 21.31 percent women partners. Los Angeles' female partnership percentage was 18.62 percent.

The numbers in the 1999 study indicate that over the past five years the per-

centage of women partners has increased 3 percent in San Francisco and 2.62 percent in Los Angeles.

The numbers do not surprise Angela Oh, a member of the American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Profession.

Oh said that initiatives and discussions "offer nothing new."

She linked the small percentage of women partners at large firms to "demands that are not consistent with the way women want to lead their lives."

Caruso agreed that "part of it is the whole work-life balance."

"But that's just too easy an answer," she said.

"You need help forging your way through a law firm," Caruso said, "and a lot of women associates don't make those connections."

She said that it is more difficult for women to form the right relationships because "most partners and senior associates are men."

Caruso said that panel discussions like the one she moderated have value because they allow "women to talk to each other and know that they are not alone."

"There also need to be forums where ... senior men are being sensitized to the issues women face," she said.

In San Francisco, the local bar association contends that these measures are taking place through the "No Glass Ceiling Initiative."

According to the group's press release, the partnership landscape at the city's law firms is becoming more inclusive of women.

Of the 49 signatory firms and legal departments that voluntarily responded, an "impressive" 63 percent of firms reported that women comprised at least 25 percent of partners, the release said.

Two years ago, 22 percent of responding firms met the initiative's goal.

Bradstreet said, "This is the first initiative that created specific percentage goals."

"Substantial numbers of firms [in San Francisco] have over 30 percent of women in management positions."

San Francisco's "No Glass Ceiling Initiative" is expanding.

According to Bradstreet, there are now 80 signatories, and each firm has committed to having at least one female managing partner by 2006.

## Salaries of Paralegals Reflect Trends in Field

By Lorelei Laird  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

You don't have to tell San Diego paralegal Nancy Huebner about the specialization of paralegal work.

Huebner's salary jumped by \$10,000 when she made the switch from a workers' compensation insurance boutique to a litigation firm in September.

That's a bigger raise than the one she received at her previous firm on completion of the paralegal certification program at the University of San Diego.

Huebner said the wide disparity in the pay scales at the two jobs reflects a truth of paralegal work: Those with similar experience can earn very different salaries, depending on what area of law they work in.

As with any field, differences in credentials and experience can translate to different salary levels. But unlike salaries of partners at a big firm, paralegal salaries change according to trends in the law. That means a paralegal in the right field can pull down significantly more than his or her colleague down the hall.

"It's what the client's willing to pay, it's what the market can bear, and it has to do with the complexity of the work," Huebner said.

Her experience is borne out by a salary survey released in May by the International Paralegal Management Association, a group that manages legal assistant or paralegal programs.

The survey says the average salary for a legal assistant or paralegal in the United States varies from \$42,982 at the low end, for a family law paralegal, to \$57,903 for an intellectual property paralegal. (The figure for paralegals with no specialty was \$39,284.)

Kai Ellis of Barbanel & Treuer in Century City is also a litigation paralegal. Ellis echoes Huebner's observations about supply and demand, citing real

estate as another busy area of law.

"I would love to be a real estate paralegal making \$80,000 a year," Ellis said. "I think it has to do with the demand because I've noticed that there's a demand for real estate paralegals."

That's different from when she started in the early 1980s, when corporate transactions were hot, she said.

And bankruptcy might be perennially hot, Ellis added, because not everyone likes working with numbers.

Huebner said the intellectual demands of an area of law also play into compensation. In a field such as bankruptcy that involves a lot of routine paperwork, she said, paralegals can expect to do less research and analysis than their colleagues in litigation.

And in certain areas, like Huebner's former field, workers' compensation law, paralegals can earn certification to argue for clients in hearings, making them more valuable to their firms.

Phyllis O'Dea is president of the International Paralegal Management Association's San Francisco chapter, as well as director of legal assistants at Howard Rice Nemerovsky Canady Falk & Rabkin's San Francisco office.

O'Dea said a paralegal with certification to appear at hearings can command as much as six figures because of the extra education it takes and the extra value to a law firm of having a nonlawyer who can appear at proceedings.

Raul Estravit has a different kind of specialized training. Estravit started out as a litigation paralegal, he said, but is now a litigation support manager at Los Angeles' Munger, Tolles & Olson.

That means he handles the technical end of litigation preparation, preparing presentations of documents, video and other media for trial.

It's a job that didn't exist 15 years ago, Estravit said, but as new presentation

technology became affordable to law firms, a lucrative market developed for legal assistants who knew how to use the technology.

"I don't even really do paralegal work anymore so much as manage cases, and the reason I went that way was for the money," he said. "It's the hottest spot to be in the paralegal world."

Estravit said his compensation went up three times when he made the switch from paralegal work to technical litigation preparation.

And the increased respect didn't hurt, either.

"When you're a paralegal, you're sort of treated like a roach," he said.

Estravit said that no formal certification is available for his job, although paralegals can be certified in the use of some of the software.

But just as important as knowing the software, he said, is litigation experience.

Generally, certification has become more important to paralegals in recent years, Huebner said.

Though California is the only state with guidelines about who may be called a paralegal, the American Bar Association has begun to grant approval to paralegal certification programs, lending legitimacy to such training.

Huebner said many of her colleagues and friends are pursuing such certifications, something she hopes will help law firms take paralegals more seriously and use paralegals' skills to their full extent.

"I just came back from a conference, ... and one of the recurring themes was, How do we get law firms to understand what we're capable of, to actually use us to our full potential?" she said. "The firms that know what to do with paralegals and use them heavily seem to be the exception rather than the rule."

"A lot of the paralegals I know are glorified secretaries."

## Insurers Will Pay \$33 Million in Fines, Refunds

From The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Two of the state's largest title insurers have agreed to halt a kickback scheme that cost home buyers nearly \$23 million and they will pay more than \$33 million in refunds and fines, according to California's insurance commissioner.

John Garamendi said Tuesday that Fidelity National Title and First American Title have agreed to stop the practice known as "captive reinsurance." Talks continued late Tuesday with

LandAmerica Financial, Garamendi said.

Big builders, lenders and real estate firms formed subsidiaries, called captive reinsurers, that were ostensibly formed to share the risk of issuing the title policies. Title firms, in turn, paid these subsidiaries several hundred dollars each time an insurer issued a policy based on a referral from a subsidiary's parent company.

Garamendi began investigating the practice earlier this year. Title companies said the practice was a legal way to share risk and did not increase prices, although

LandAmerica began voluntarily halting the arrangements earlier this year.

But in charges filed in administrative court Monday and revealed Tuesday, the state alleged there is so little risk in issuing title policies that these intermediaries had no purpose other than to skirt the rules.

"These captive reinsurers were formed with blatant disregard for the anti-kickback laws," Garamendi said. "And it cost consumers an average of \$300 on the purchase of their policies."