

# Briefs

PRO BONO ■ CONTROLLING EXPENSES ■ GIFT CARDS ■ EFFICIENCY ■ IN MEMORIAM

## Pro Bono Work on the Rise for One-Third of Lawyers

**O**ne in three lawyers (33 percent) recently said the number of hours they work on a volunteer basis has risen over the past five years. In fact, 45 percent of lawyers said they dedicate 50 or more hours of their time each year to pro bono service. The average number of pro bono hours reported was 56.

“Helping others” was overwhelmingly cited by lawyers as the greatest benefit of pro bono work, followed by “developing skills or legal expertise” and “enhancing professional reputation or career,” the research found. The survey was developed by Robert Half Legal. Lawyers in the U.S. and Canada were asked, “Has the number of hours you work on a pro bono or volunteer basis increased or decreased in the last five



years?” Fifteen percent said their hours significantly increased; 18 percent noted a slight increase; 10 percent said there was a slight decrease; 6 percent noted a significant decrease; and 51 percent reported no change.

“While many lawyers provide legal services on a volunteer basis for goodwill, establishing a formal pro

bono program within a law firm can yield added benefits,” said Charles Volkert, executive director of Robert Half Legal. “Pro bono work not only boosts associates’ morale and enhances the development of important skills, it also can help improve a firm’s reputation and increase its ability to attract clients and prospective associates.” ■

## Chief Legal Officers Wield Buying Power to Control Outside Counsel Expenses

**C**orporate law departments are wielding their buying power to drive down expenditures on outside counsel, and innovating from within to further control costs, according to a survey by Altman Weil.

“The impact of the recession on in-house law departments has been twofold,” said Daniel J. DiLucchio, survey author and Altman Weil principal. “Internal department resources have been constrained in many cases, but at the same time law departments have gained more leverage over external resources. Chief legal officers (CLOs) are buyers in what is currently a strong buyers’ market.”

The two methods CLOs used most frequently to control costs in the last

12 months are direct price reductions from outside counsel, and alternative or fixed fee arrangements, according to the survey. The most common price reduction – received by half of all law departments surveyed – is between 6 percent and 10 percent. The number of departments receiving average discounts of more than ten percent is 36 percent this year, a jump from 28 percent in the 2013 survey.

Along with targeting outside counsel pricing, CLOs also manage costs by managing the distribution of work to law firms. This year, 40 percent of those surveyed have shifted law firm work to in-house lawyer staff; 36 percent shifted work to lower-priced firms; and 34 percent reduced the total amount of

work sent to outside counsel. Of all cost control efforts undertaken in the last 12 months, CLOs report that shifting work in-house is the one that yielded the greatest cost reduction.

“Law departments usually can do work less expensively in-house if they have the resources in place,” said DiLucchio.

Two-thirds of CLOs said they have increased their departments’ use of technology tools to increase efficiency in the delivery of legal services.

More than half have undertaken a restructuring/reorganization of internal resources, and 45 percent have made greater use of paralegals and other paraprofessionals. ■

# FTC Rules Protect Consumers Who Receive Gift Cards

**M**ore people are getting gift cards, particularly over the holiday season. Gift cards are purchased from retailers, restaurants, and banks or other financial institutions.

In response to various abuses, the Federal Trade Commission passed rules more than three years ago to protect consumers. These are worthwhile revisiting this time of year.

- Money on a gift card cannot expire for at least five years from the date the card was purchased, or the date additional money was loaded onto the card.

- The expiration date of the gift card must be clearly disclosed on the card or its packaging.

- A fee can be charged for the purchase of a card, which amount must also be disclosed on the card or its packaging.

- An “inactivity” fee can be charged, nor more than once a month, if a card has not been used for a year.

- States may add their own rules but Pennsylvania has not done so.

Note that these rules do not apply to loyalty, reward or promotional cards issued directly to a consumer, such as those based on frequent customer or points status. ■

– By David I. Grunfeld

# Cautious Women Business Owners Focus on Efficiency

**A**mid a mixed outlook for sales and profits during the next six months, U.S. women business owners plan to focus on cash flow, improved efficiency and customer experience.

The PNC Women Business Owners Survey found 44 percent expect their sales to increase and 47 percent expect them to remain the same. As for profits, 35 percent forecast an increase while 47 percent foresee no change, according to the findings announced in conjunction with National Women’s Small Business Month.

This caution is driven by uncertainty about the U.S. economy as 54 percent are optimistic about the performance of the national economy in the next six months while 43 percent are pessimistic.

On the hiring front, three out of four say their number of full-time employees will remain the same, while only 9 percent plan to hire and 5 percent expect to reduce staff in the next six months.

Their focus is on increased efficiency and using technology to improve customer experiences. Among those not hiring, one in three choose to do more work with fewer employees. Further, when asked about the role of technology in their business, they are most focused on improving their company’s online presence (29 percent) and customer experience (23 percent).

### THREE LIKELY ACTIONS

The three actions women owners are most likely to take in the next six months are:

- Focus on ways to improve cash flow (68 percent)
- Upgrade technology to improve efficiency (48 percent)



## IN MEMORIAM

Dante Mattioni  
May 5, 2014, Age 83

William H. Buckman  
Oct. 14, 2014, Age 61

Howard M. Goldsmith  
Aug. 15, 2014, Age 69

Brandi Brice  
Oct. 16, 2014, Age 37

William T. Windsor Jr.  
Sept. 8, 2014, Age 87

Gloria Casarez  
Oct. 18, 2014, Age 42

Judge Meyer C. Rose  
Oct. 1, 2014, Age 96

Andrew Touchstone  
Oct. 21, 2014, Age 51

Marilyn L. Walder  
Oct. 7, 2014, Age 69

Margaret Mary Flores  
Oct. 29, 2014, Age 43

Please send In Memoriam notices to  
tplmag@philabar.org.

*Have you considered a contribution to the Philadelphia Bar Foundation in memory of a deceased colleague? For information, call Jessica Hilburn-Holmes, Executive Director, at 215-238-6347.*

- Improve the customer experience with technology (44 percent)

Women-owned firms are influential. Women own more than 9 million businesses in the United States, employ nearly 8 million people and generate more than \$1.4 trillion in sales nationwide (source: The National Association of Women Business Owners). ■

#### Methodology

The PNC survey of women business owners was conducted as part of our biannual Economic Outlook survey. Surveys were conducted between July 24 – Sept. 12, 2014, by telephone within the United States among female respondents representing small to mid-size businesses with annual revenues of \$100,000 to \$250 million and more than 50 percent female ownership. The results given in this release are based on interviews with 154 businesses nationally. Sampling error for the women business owner results is +/- 7.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey was conducted by Artemis Strategy Group ([www.ArtemisSG.com](http://www.ArtemisSG.com)), a communications strategy research firm specializing in brand positioning and policy issues. The firm, headquartered in Washington D.C., provides communications research and consulting to a range of public and private sector clients.

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THE PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION

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