

CorporateProBono.Org In-House Pro Bono Research Study
Executive Summary

Fall 2001

Introduction

Association Publishers, Inc. was retained by CorporateProBono.Org to conduct a research study among in-house corporate attorneys to collect information about their pro bono activities. Participants in the study were recruited from Fortune 500 Companies and from the American Corporate Counsel Association's membership list.

Four-page surveys were mailed with a personalized letter to 1,000 prospective respondents. A second set of survey packets were mailed to non-respondents. A total of 156 attorneys responded to the survey.¹

The survey was designed to gather the following information:

- Whether corporate legal departments participate in pro bono work;
- Pro bono program structure;
- Scope of pro bono work performed;
- Reasons for non-participation among respondents;
- Legal department policies regarding pro bono work;
- Awareness of CorporateProBono.Org; and
- Professional demographic information.

Nine out of ten respondents to the survey are general counsel/chief legal officers. One in three are Practice Area Specialists. Respondents report an average staff size of eleven, evenly divided between attorneys and support staff.

Following are highlights of the research findings.

¹ Because of the relatively small base of respondents, this data should be used with caution.

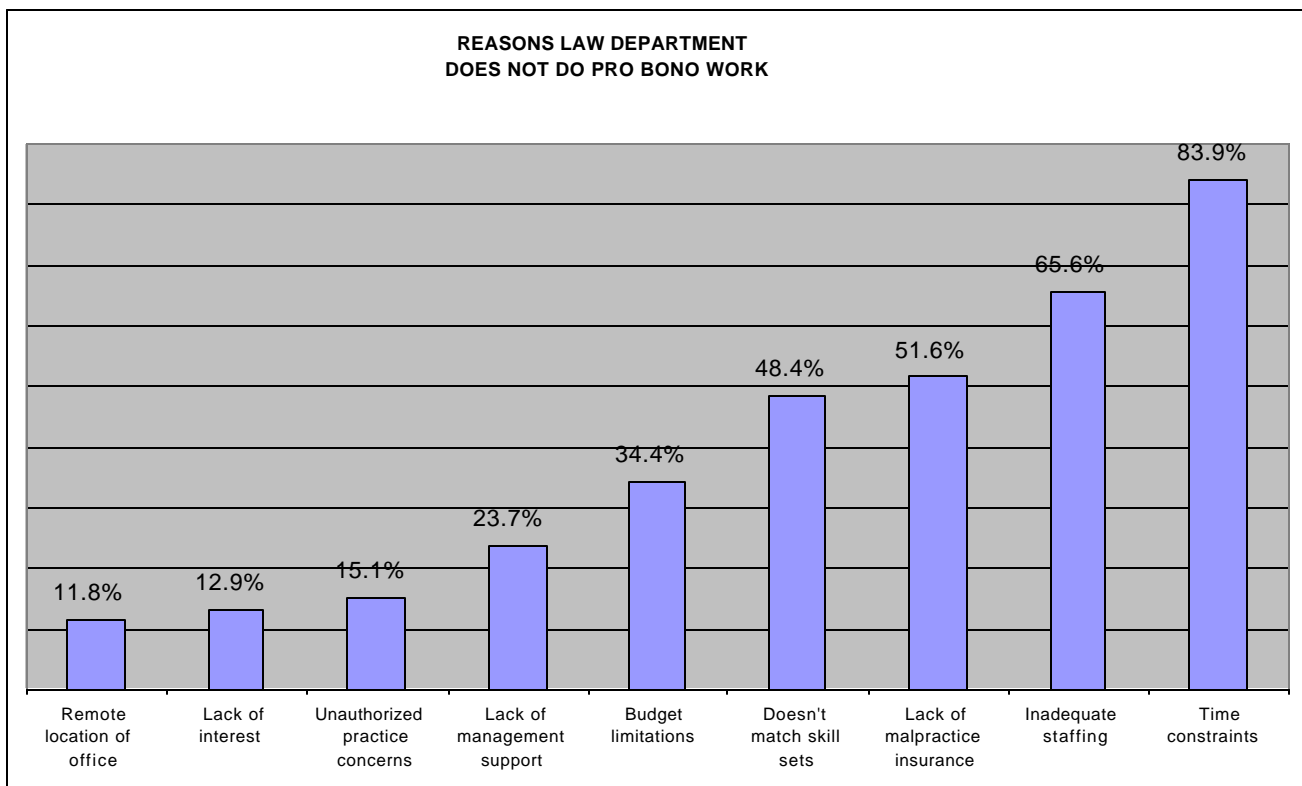
Significant Number of In-house Legal Departments Perform Pro Bono Work and Are Supported by General Counsel

Nearly two-fifths of all respondents to this survey indicate their law departments participate in pro bono work. Ninety percent of these respondents say that their general counsel actively supports and encourages pro bono work. In fact, 83% say that the attorneys in their department may use company time for pro bono work and 22% say that paralegals may use company time for this purpose.

Time constraints and inadequate staffing were cited most frequently as reasons for not participating in pro bono work. Interestingly, very few respondents indicated a lack of interest in pro bono work. (This is discussed in greater detail below.)

Respondents Whose Legal Departments Do Not Perform Pro Bono Work Were Most Likely to Cite Lack of Time As the Reason, Yet Many Are Interested

Those respondents whose departments do not participate in pro bono work were most likely to identify time constraints as the primary reason, followed by inadequate staffing. Interestingly, lack of interest was cited by relatively few as a reason for not doing pro bono work. In fact, of those respondents who do not do pro bono work, 46.7% indicated that they believe their law department has an interest in it. Every respondent who gave this answer indicated that attorneys would be interested in pro bono work and about one-fourth said support staff would be interested.



The Typical In-house Legal Department Handles Twenty-five Cases Annually, Most Work Done by Attorneys

On average, respondents indicated that attorneys and support staff work on twenty-five pro bono cases annually. In a year's time they spend approximately eighty-three hours on these cases, or approximately seven and one-half hours per legal department employee (attorneys, paralegals, and other staff).

Attorneys out-number support staff in participation in pro bono activities by a wide margin. Nearly 40% of attorneys perform pro bono work compared to 7.2% of support staff.

While Most Pro Bono Programs Are Informal, Many Participants Say They Generally Follow a Theme and Are Likely to be Collaborative Efforts

Approximately two-thirds of those respondents who indicated that their legal departments do pro bono work say that it is without a formal program. Yet, more than one-fifth indicate that their law department emphasizes a particular theme or issue in its pro bono work. Nearly all of those (92%) say that the focus reflects the corporate good citizenship/volunteerism efforts of their company as a whole, such as children's issues, domestic violence, and representing the elderly.

Of those respondents whose legal departments do pro bono work, 39% indicated that they had done so with another group, such as a public interest group, legal aid organization, or law firm.

Wide Variety of Substantive Law Areas Included in Pro Bono Activities

Respondents indicated that the pro bono work of their legal departments has been performed in a wide variety of substantive law areas. As noted on the chart below, counseling non-profits leads the list, with more than one-half of the respondents indicating that their departments have offered pro bono support in this area. Nearly one-third say they have worked on children's issues. Educational projects and housing and homelessness follow, at 25% and 23.3% respectively.

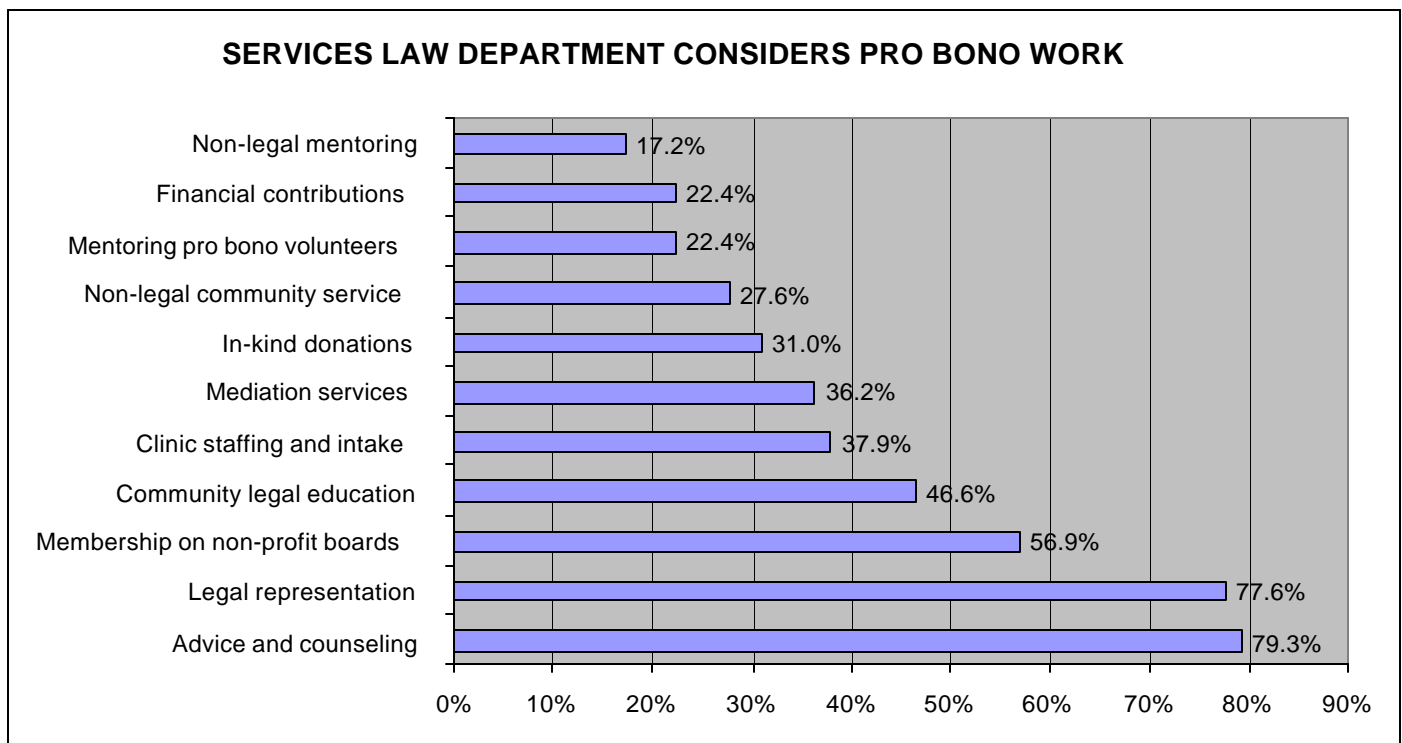
Substantive Law Areas of Pro Bono Activities

Counseling Non-profits	53.3%
Children's Issues	31.7%
Educational Projects	25.0%
Housing and Homelessness	23.3%
Community Legal Education	20.0%

Representing the Elderly	18.3%
Representing Artists and the Arts	15.0%
Family Law	15.0%

**Defining Pro Bono Work: Advice and Counseling
and Legal Representation Lead the List**

Respondents were asked to identify services their law departments consider pro bono work from a list of eleven options. Advice and counseling (79.3%) and legal representation (77.6%) were the top two services identified, followed by membership on non-profit boards (56.9%) and community legal education (46.6%). All other services were identified by less than 40% of respondents.



**Programs Generally Informal, Without Written Policy,
Pro Bono Committee, or Separate Professional Liability Coverage**

As stated previously, approximately two-thirds of those who indicated that their legal departments do pro bono work say that it is without a formal pro bono program. Only 3% indicate that their organizations have a written pro bono policy. Respondents were most likely to say “department is too small” and “informal efforts are sufficient” as reasons for not having a formal pro bono program.

Over 94% of those with formal programs indicated that they do not have pro bono committee.

When asked how pro bono cases are screened, 63.2% indicated that the provider screens the case and 47.4% said that cases are screened by the legal department. Less than 30% of those legal departments that perform pro bono work carry their own professional liability coverage.

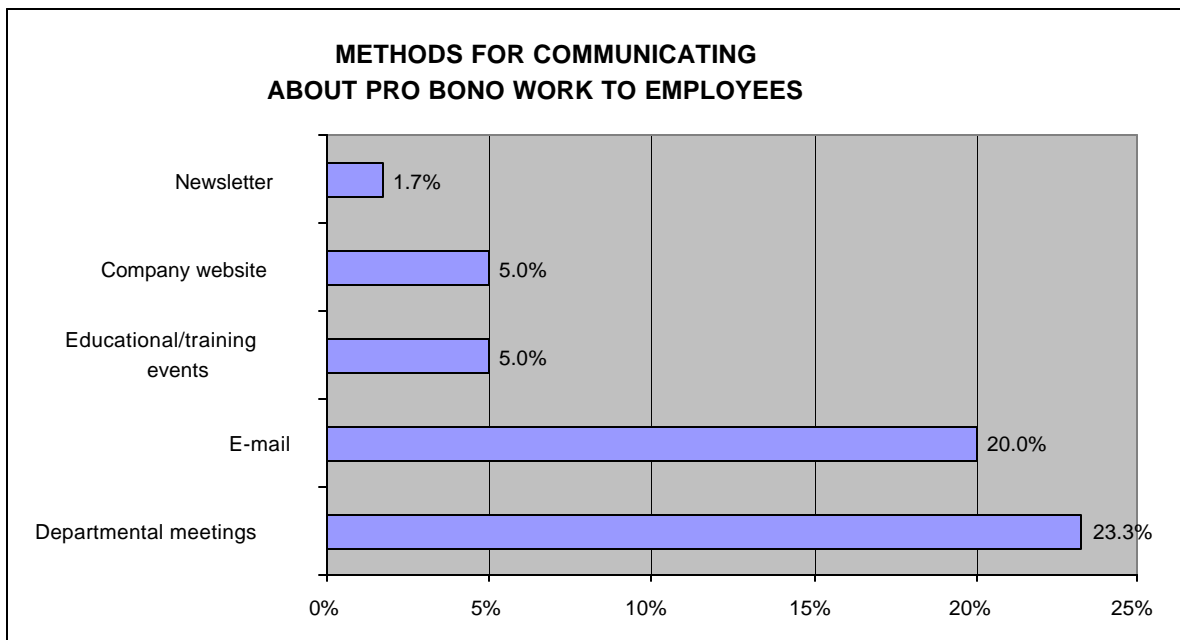
The vast majority of respondents (98.3%) said that their company does not set goals or limits for total dollars or number of hours spent on pro bono work. Almost as many (92%) indicated that their law department does not track or report pro bono time and/or the number of pro bono cases.

Fewer than 14% indicated that pro bono work is considered in law department evaluations and fewer (5%) said it's a factor in compensation. Only about 16% said their companies recognize individuals for extraordinary pro bono work with an honor or reward.

Only 3% said that their law department requests information about the pro bono efforts of law firms bidding for their business or retained by their company. Not one respondent indicated that his company sponsors the National Association for Public Interest Law or other fellowships.

Departmental Meetings and E-mail Are Most Popular Methods for Communicating About Pro Bono Issues

Approximately one-half of those whose departments are involved in pro bono work communicate with employees about it and 24% communicate information about it to non-legal department employees. Departmental meetings are the most popular method of communicating about pro bono activities to employees (23.3%), followed by e-mail (20.0%).



CorporateProBono.Org Enjoys Relatively High Recognition Among In-house Corporate Counsel

Thirty-eight percent of respondents were aware of the CorporateProBono.Org project prior to participating in this survey about pro bono activities. One-third became aware of it through the American Corporate Counsel Association and 4% from the Internet, word of mouth, or a newspaper or magazine article.