

LEGAL MARKETING **MENTAL WELLNESS** SURVEY REPORT



LEGAL MARKETING MENTAL WELLNESS SURVEY REPORT
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FOREWORD

Pressures in the legal industry extend to all professionals—not just lawyers. Legal marketers play key roles in the success of firms—including helping pitch and generate new business, maintaining brand presence in increasingly competitive markets, pricing, project management, supporting business development efforts, and much more. And, we perform this wide range of work under high demands, tight turnarounds, and perpetual pressure. I am thankful to Lynn Foley and the fSquared team for initiating this survey to help expand the conversation that the industry needs to be having about the mental wellness of all of its professionals. The ability for any person to be productive, creative, and innovative depends on mental wellbeing. Indeed, happiness and lives depend on it. This report is the beginning of an important conversation and I look forward to more work being done to support the mental wellness of legal marketers and all professionals who work in the legal industry.

Cynthia P. Voth

President - Legal Marketing Association



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stress in legal affects more than just lawyers

Concerns about high levels of stress in law firms and attendant effects on mental health have received considerable attention in recent years, both within the legal profession and in the mainstream media. The focus has, invariably, been on the mental wellbeing of attorneys—the long hours, the student debt, the tyranny of the billable hour.

What about the legal marketing and business development professionals who are tasked with growing firms: how is their mental health? They work in the same high-pressure environment as attorneys, after all, and often under their direct management. Might the traditional pyramid structure, with equity partners at the peak, lead to stress cascading down the hierarchy to fall on the shoulders of the marketing and BD staff?

Chronic work-related stress can significantly impact employee performance in legal, as in every other industry. Those law firms which are able to foster more supportive and lower stress work environments will benefit from teams that are happier, more productive, and in a better position to navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing market for legal services. Stress might spur immediate action, but innovation requires time for employees to breathe, think deeply about complex problems, and work together.

The “Legal Marketing Mental Wellness Survey”

To better understand the current situation for legal marketers, we distributed the “Legal Marketing Mental Wellness Survey” in the spring and summer of 2019. The findings of the survey form the basis of this report. They provide insight into an issue that has too often been overlooked.

We collected responses from 200 professionals working in marketing or business development roles at law firms in the US, Canada, and the UK, as well as from a small number of respondents from other countries around the globe. These professionals work at law firms ranging in size from fewer than 20 attorneys to more than 1,000. Some are part of large, dedicated marketing/BD teams and others are their firm’s sole marketing resource or balance their marketing responsibilities with their primary role (e.g., in administration or HR).

As part of the survey, respondents were also invited to share their thoughts on the topic of stress and mental wellbeing within legal marketing. Excerpts of their comments have been incorporated throughout this report in green callout boxes. These perspectives reveal some common issues, but also show the wide variation that exists between firms; some have reportedly created cultures of respect and support, while other firms could accurately be described as “toxic” workplaces.

There is, however, some room for optimism in this variation of perspectives. It shows that law firms do not necessarily have to be toxic places to work. Some widespread issues may have structural roots, but structures can, and often should, be reimagined. A changing, competitive marketplace for legal services will place pressure on firms to improve their internal culture as much as their client retention programs.

This report, while certainly not comprehensive, is the first step towards identifying pervasive issues in the industry. It is our hope that it will inspire the legal industry to take mental health seriously, and not only for the attorneys.



STRESS AT WORK

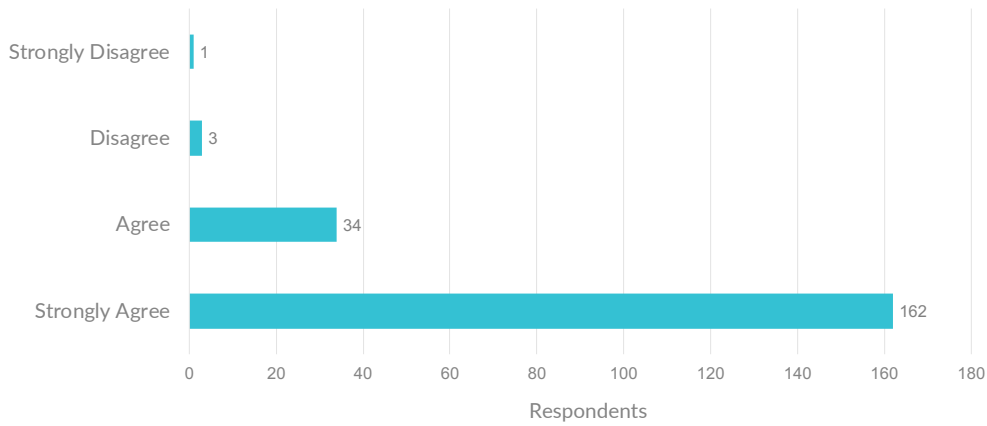
There are no shortages of studies demonstrating that job-related pressures are “the leading source of stress for American adults” (*The American Institute of Stress*). Workplace stress is a global phenomenon. In Canada, a survey by the *Globe and Mail* found that it was a leading cause of mental health or illness (*The Mental Health Experience in Canada’s Workplaces Study, 2017*.)

It’s true that the pace and complexity of modern offices puts a certain amount of unavoidable pressure on employees. It’s also true law firms are engaged in work that is especially information-dense and often high stakes. Legal marketing is always going to be a demanding profession, with deadlines and moving targets to hit; that’s not the problem.

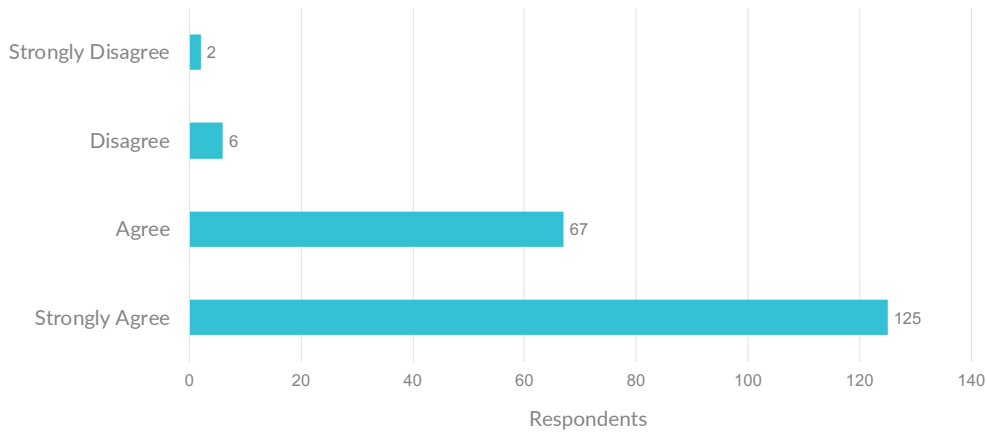
There is a fundamental difference between a challenging career and a stressful job—the former offers motivated employees the opportunity to rise to the occasion, the latter leaves them feeling cynical, exhausted, and estranged from their work. What separates one from the other? Partly, it comes down to how much control employees feel over their ability to manage and meet demands. As the World Health Organization explains, “Research findings show that the most stressful type of work is that which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers’ knowledge and abilities, where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control, and where there is little support from others.” ([Stress at the Workplace, WHO](#))

If that sounds altogether too familiar, then you might work in at a law firm. 98% percent of respondents to the Legal Marketing Mental Wellness survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “there is significant stress in the legal industry”. 96% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is significant stress in legal marketing and related fields.”

Q3(a) Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is significant stress in the legal industry

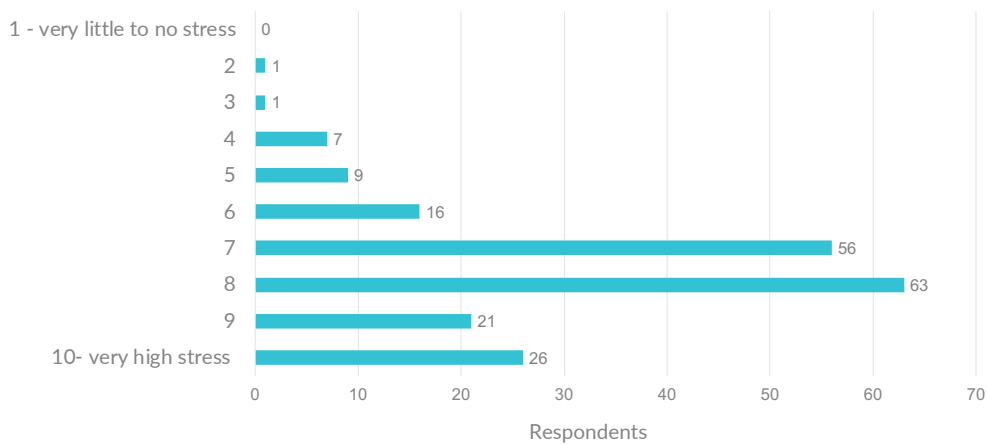


Q3(b) Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is significant stress in legal marketing and related fields



When reflecting on their own experiences, 83% of respondents listed their level of stress as at least a 7 on a scale of 1-10. No respondents reported feeling “very little to no stress”.

Q1 On a scale of 1 to 10, on average, how much stress do you feel related to your job?

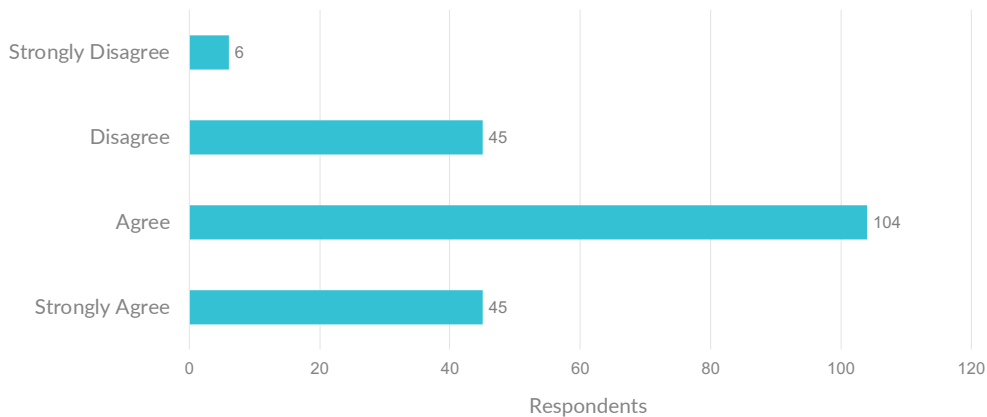


“Legal marketing is incredibly time intensive and stressful. Not only do you take on personal stress from your job requirements and deadlines, but you also take on the stress of the attorneys you work with. If they are having a bad day, it is not out of the ordinary to feel it as well. I have had many attorneys ‘behave badly’ as a result of their stress levels, which then impacts myself, their secretaries, marketing and other support staff. Our jobs are at risk when they are unable to manage stress in a healthy manner.”

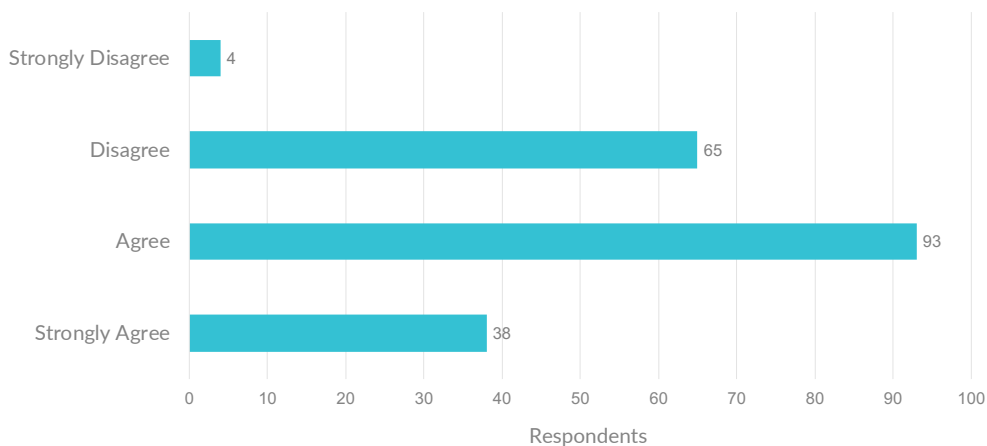
Take a deep breathe and concentrate

When under stress, it can be difficult to think clearly, which is unfortunately ironic, since this is when we most need to have clarity of thought. 75% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I often feel overwhelmed at work.” Asked if stress interferes with their ability to concentrate on tasks, 66% agreed or strongly agreed.

Q2(b) Please state your opinion of the following statements: I often feel overwhelmed at work



Q2(c) Please state your opinion of the following statements: Stress interferes with my ability to concentrate on tasks



It's difficult to assess one's own thinking and performance with objectivity. It may be the case that stress has less of an impact on legal marketers' powers of concentration than this survey suggests. Or it may play an even larger role in undermining the focus of legal marketers, both day-to-day and over the long term.

Effects of sustained stress

Numerous studies have shown that chronic stress has far-reaching consequences for our ability to learn new information. In one study, researchers from the Harvard Medical School found that higher levels of blood cortisol were associated with impaired memory when compared to people with normal cortisol levels (“[Circulating Cortisol and Cognitive and Structural Brain Measures](#)”).

“Following the perception of an acute stressful event, there is a cascade of changes in the nervous, cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune systems,” observe the authors of a paper published in the Annual Review of Clinical Psychology (“[Stress And Health: Psychological, Behavioral, And Biological Determinants](#)”). In the short term, these changes are actually “generally adaptive”, readying the body and mind to deal with threats in the environment and suspending non-critical activities (such as digestion). When this response is chronic, however, our health suffers.

“Adverse effects of chronic stressors are particularly common in humans,” the authors note, “possibly because their high capacity for symbolic thought may elicit persistent stress responses to a broad range of adverse living and working conditions.”

Our minds and bodies react to stress by preparing for fight or flight. This is hardly a helpful reaction in a law firm environment; you can't outrun a deadline or fight a misbehaving photocopier (or senior partner).

Stressful situations lead to a spike in adrenaline levels, which can temporarily improve alertness, but, if persistent, they leave us feeling exhausted.

Work-life balance

“Management needs to do more than pay lip service to burnout. It's very real at this firm.”

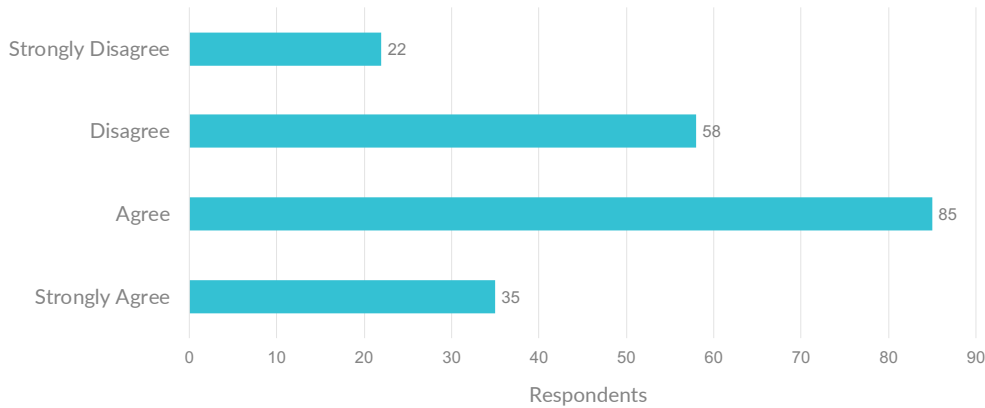
At work, legal marketers take on the demands of specific roles, whether as key members of the business development team, marketing communications specialists, or part of the digital marketing team, for example. But, even if we love our jobs, our formal organizational roles are only one part of who we are as individuals. We each have other roles to fill, that of parents, friends, partners, family members, and members of our community.

When the demands of work threaten our ability to fulfill and enjoy all the other parts of life, burnout is a real possibility.

In this survey, 40% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I have work/life balance”.

60% did, however, agree or strongly agree with this statement. This indicates that many law firms are succeeding in creating cultures that allow for work-life balance. Given what the research shows about the costs of burnout, and the benefits of engaged and empowered employees, these law firms are likely to enjoy a competitive advantage over the long term.

Q2(a) Please state your opinion of the following statements: I have work/life balance



The high costs of burnout

The costs of employee burnout are significant. According to an article in the Harvard Business Review, work-related stress accounts for an estimated \$125 billion to \$190 billion in US health-care spending each year ("[Employee Burnout is a Problem with the Company, Not the Person](#)", HBR). The problem is also widespread; a 2018 Gallup study of nearly 7,500 full-time employees found that 23 percent report feeling burned out at work very often or always.

Not surprisingly, when employees feel emotionally, mentally, and physically drained, it's not only their happiness that declines: their performance suffers, too. Burned-out employees are disengaged employees, prone to absenteeism, health issues, dissatisfaction, and depressive symptoms.



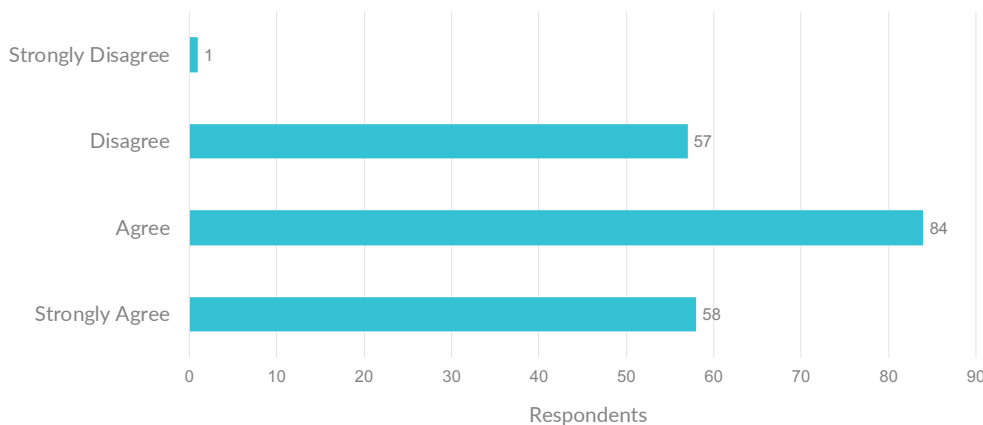
EQUIPPED FOR SUCCESS/STRESS

Taking on large, complex projects can be a surprisingly enjoyable experience. Yes, there are complications to be worked out, but there is also a great deal of satisfaction in having a clear objective and reaching a goalpost. It's always satisfying to launch something new, whether that's a website or a new client seminar program.

Stress often comes not from the inherent difficulty of the work, but from too much of it, short notice, unclear expectations, and a lack of supporting resources.

71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I have too much work assigned to me." 76% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "There is a lack of resources in my department/assigned to marketing."

Q4(a) Please state your opinion of the following statements: I have too much work assigned to me

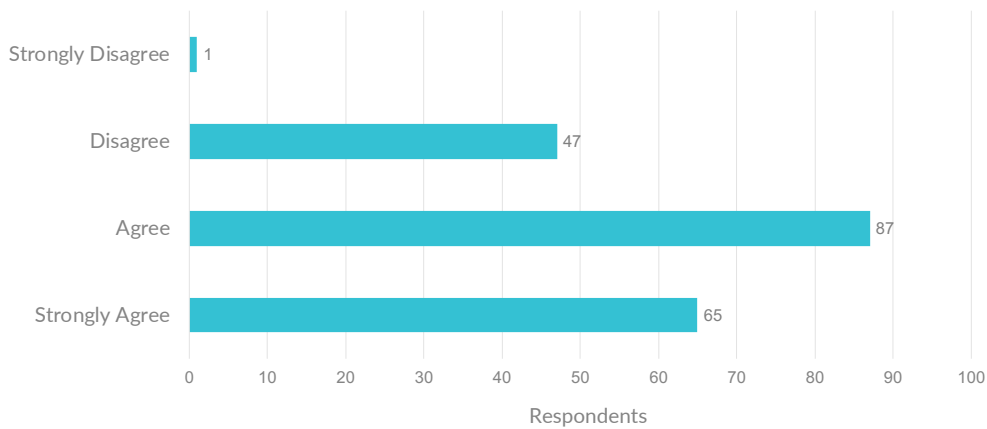


As one respondent commented: "We aren't surgeons, but we do carry a tremendous amount of our own stress as well as the stress of others... There are no resources and there are very few people who would ever admit to needing them anyway for fear of appearing weak – stigma is an issue for everyone in the legal industry, not just lawyers."

Keep up, keep up

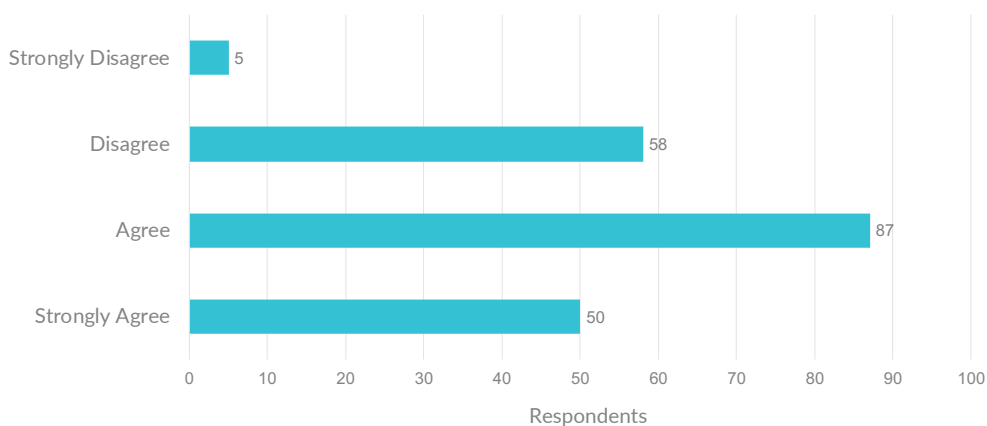
The field of legal marketing is also changing, placing more of an emphasis on technical skills, even as marketing technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace.

Q4(c): Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is a lack of resources in my department/assigned to marketing



The majority (69%) of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is a lack of technical marketing training in my department.”

Q4(d) Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is a lack of technical marketing training in my department



On the bright side, most (59%) respondents did not feel that there was an unrealistic expectation of their abilities/knowledge. The majority of respondents (56%) also disagreed with the statement: “There is a lack of guidance from my immediate manager.” The setting of clear goals gives marketing teams something to shoot for. It also makes it possible to celebrate successes and evaluate set-backs in a more measured fashion.

“Much of the stress would be alleviated with stronger leadership from firm management, as well as from growing the marketing/business development team.”

All Things to All People

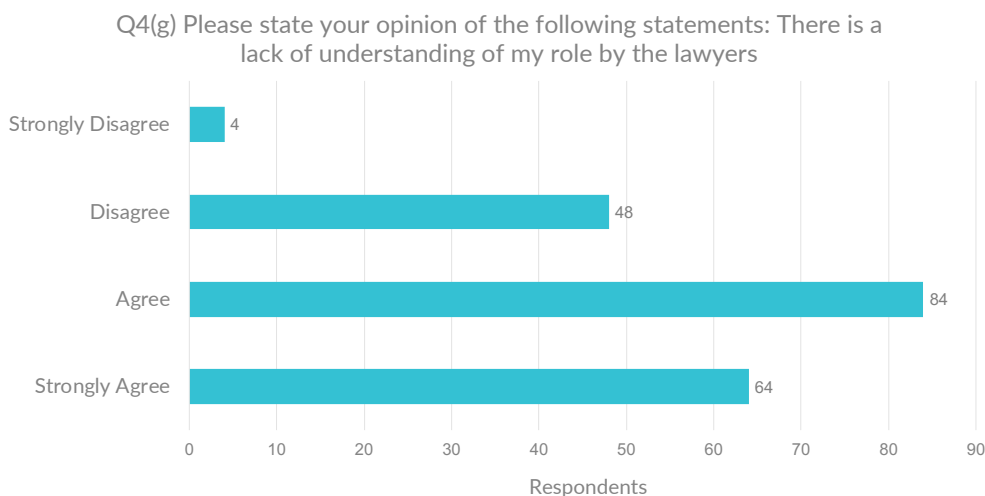
Legal marketing is, in many ways, a field that calls more for problem-solving generalists, who are able to pivot quickly, than for specialists with a deep knowledge of one area.

Taking a broad view, technology may be accelerating the prioritization of agility over specialization across the economy, as an article in the *Atlantic* (“[The End of Expertise](#)”, July 2019) observed. “The phenomena is sped by automation, which usurps routine tasks, leaving employees to handle the nonroutine and unanticipated”. In occupations where the rules keep changing, “specialization is no longer the coin of the realm”.

Marketing is especially interdisciplinary and fast-changing. Marketers are often required to wear many hats: project manager, team lead, editor, analyst, designer, client relationship liaison. They are also responsible for having a working knowledge of many different technologies, from websites to CRM to social media. In the right environment, this can be exhilarating; in others, it can be immensely taxing. As one respondent noted, “There is especially a high level of stress placed on me in a senior role to be all things to all people.”

Another respondent noted that much of their stress came from “an expectation that I have other skills that get lumped into marketing (like photography, graphic design, website development)... I really stress when I have to use Photoshop or am asked to turn a pixelated thumbnail into a professional quality photo.”

While the majority (60%) of respondents might not feel the stress of unrealistic expectations of their abilities/knowledge, most (74%) did agree or strongly agree with the statement: “there is a lack of understanding of my role by the lawyers”.



One respondent framed this in the form of an equation: “Lack of strategy at the firm level+lack of focus at the marketing level=stress for marketers. No choice but to be all things to all people.”

“In my role as a practice group BD person for multiple, non-related practices, I have to perform tasks that range from admin level to being able to read, understand and write (limited) on a practitioner level. The constant switching of hats/roles/practice knowledge/working and communication style to accommodate those I support is never ending and almost always overlooked by lawyers and management. I am never just the strategic thinker or marketer; to them, I am an abled body that can solve problems and make things happen – I am their catch-all. This also means I am my lawyer’s punching bag, therapist, advocate, chief of staff, etc. but not a friend.”

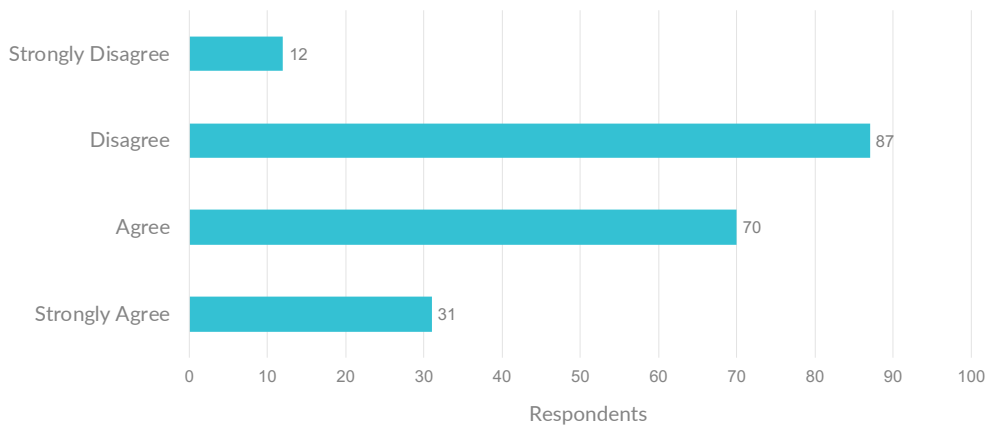


RESPECTED, VALUED

Do legal marketers feel respected at work and valued in their roles?

51% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is a lack of respect for me/my role by the lawyers.”

Q4(h) Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is a lack of respect for me/my role by the lawyers



What does the research say about the effect of respect (or lack thereof) in the workplace? In one study, Christine Porath, a researcher and management professor at Georgetown University’s McDonough School of Business, polled 20,000 employees around the world to find out what they most wanted from company leadership. “We found the answer was simple: respect,” Porath noted in a TedTalk (“[Why being respectful to your coworkers is good for business](#)”, 2018) “Being treated with respect was more important than recognition and appreciation, useful feedback, even opportunities for learning. Those that felt respected were healthier, more focused, more likely to stay with their organization and far more engaged.”

“Too many lawyers in my AmLaw 100 firm treat marketing staff like second class citizens. They speak to them rudely, send mean emails, drop work on them with last minute deadlines or expect them to work nights and weekends because of their own poor planning, Top Management is told but they do nothing...and some of them are the biggest offenders.”

One issue may be that some legal marketers feel that they have as many bosses as there are attorneys at their firm. Many survey respondents (58%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There are too many lawyers who believe I work ‘just for them.’”

In the 1999 comedy Office Space, cubicle drone Peter Gibbons explains to a management consultant his grief with having too many bosses.

Bob Porter: I have eight different bosses right now.

Bob Slydell: I beg your pardon?

Peter Gibbons: Eight bosses.

Bob Slydell: Eight?

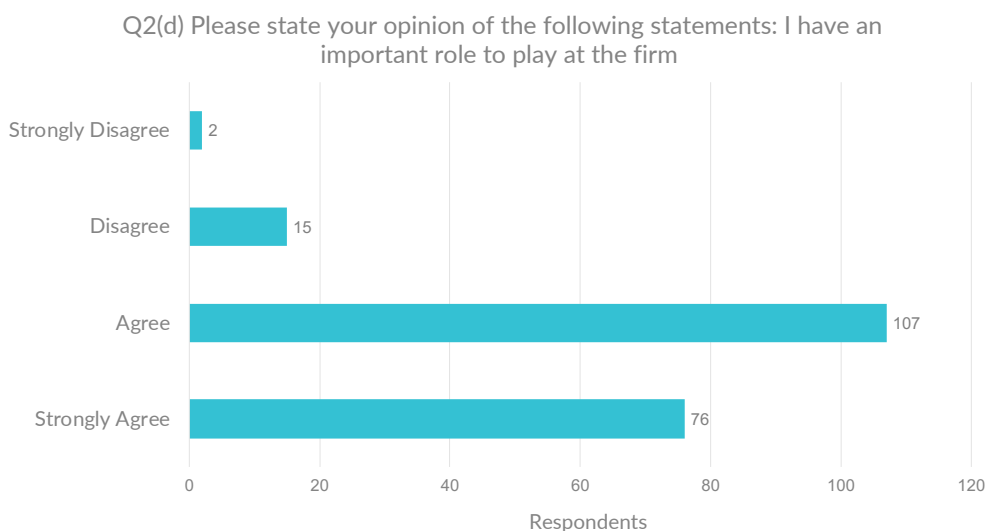
Peter Gibbons: Eight, Bob. So that means that when I make a mistake, I have eight different people coming by to tell me about it. That’s my only real motivation is not to be hassled; that, and the fear of losing my job. But you know, Bob, that will only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired.”

Having to report to so many “bosses” can make it difficult to set priorities and manage work loads. Marketing professionals might find themselves constantly trying to chase down busy attorneys for approval, all while trying to juggle deadlines and priorities.

As one respondent explained: “It’s difficult to convey the stress to attorneys of what we do. Because we may not have an active project for them or just one, they tend to think that’s all we are working on. To try and convey how many balls we are juggling sounds defensive and lame, so we suck it up and consequently stress. The amount of effort it takes to get BD projects off the ground is significant and completely disregarded and not properly appreciated. I’m not whining, it’s just a fact.”

An important role to play

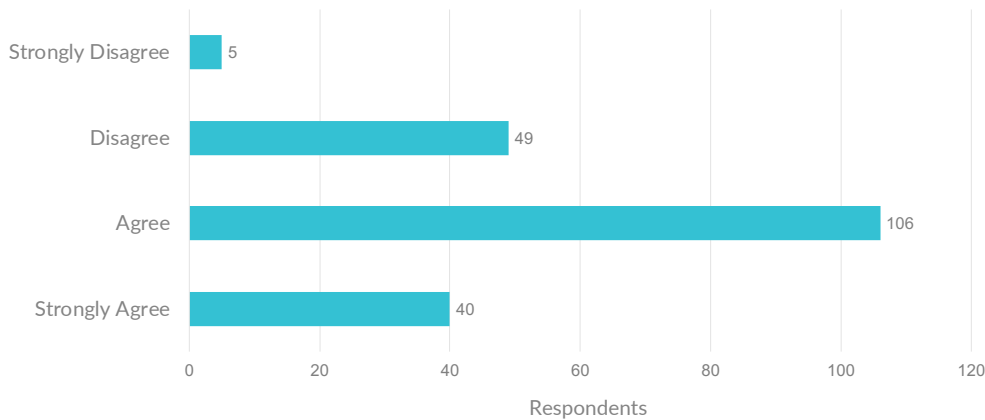
Despite many respondents reporting a lack of respect from the lawyers of their firm, 92% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I have an important role to play at the firm”.



As one legal marketer noted: “we are working just as hard as the lawyers to help them grow their business and the firm’s revenue.”

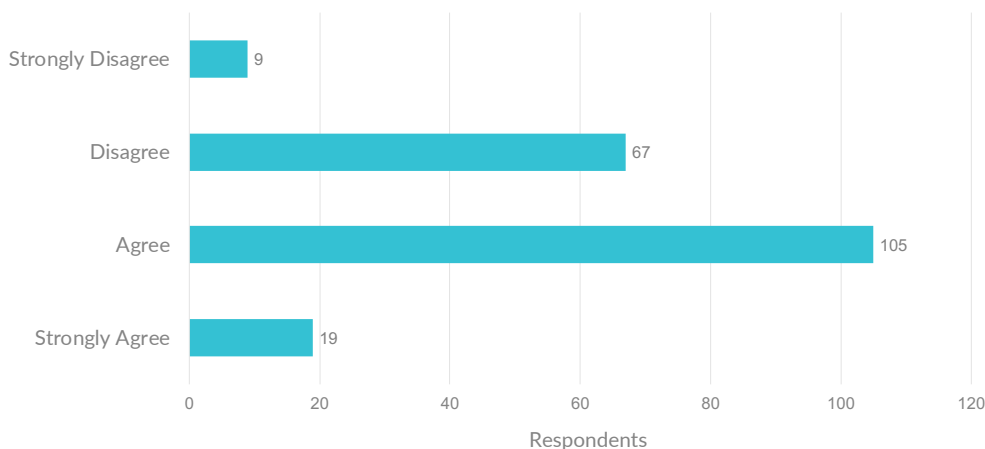
Many respondents (73%) also agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “My ideas are often heard, valued, and put into action.” One legal marketer had this to say: “The level of stress varies significantly from firm to firm. Even though I am very busy at my firm, my work is appreciated and that goes a long way toward feeling good about my job.”

Q2(e): Please state your opinion of the following statements: My ideas are often heard, valued, and put into action



Many respondents also reported that their team’s successes were celebrated. 62% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “My team’s ‘wins’ in marketing are celebrated”.

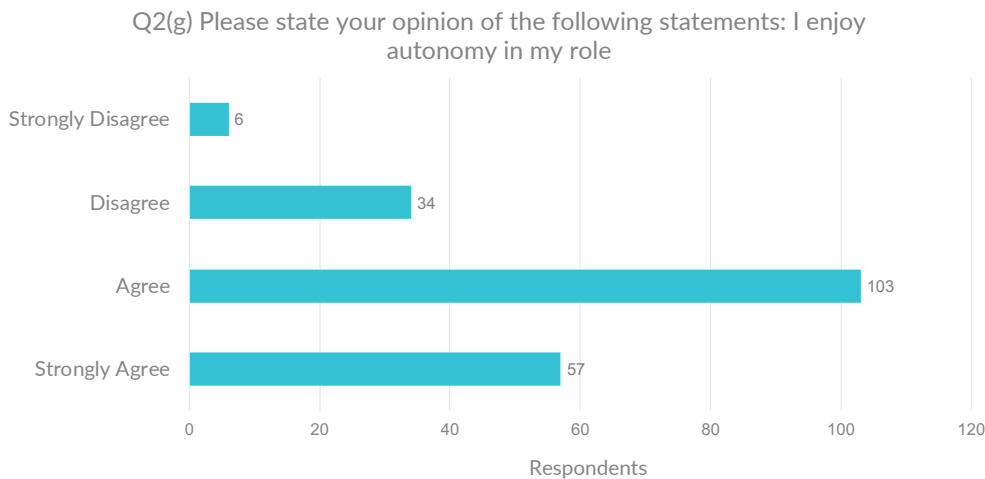
Q2(f) Please state your opinion of the following statements: My team’s “wins” in marketing are celebrated



A team that is able to recognize achievement is one that is likely to be motivated and engaged. In “The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work”, authors Teresa M. Amabile and Steven J. Kramer, discuss the importance of celebrating wins, especially smaller wins. As Amabile explained in an interview with *Harvard Business School Working Knowledge*: “big breakthroughs at work are really rare. But small wins are something people can experience pretty

regularly if the work is chunked down to manageable pieces” (“How Small Wins Unleash Creativity”, HBS).

As well as recognition, autonomy in one’s role can be an important source of job satisfaction. “People need to know what goal they’re trying to reach, but they have to have autonomy in order to get there,” Amabile says. This survey would seem to indicate that many legal marketing professionals do enjoy a level of independence in their role; 80% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I enjoy autonomy in my role”.



Several respondents pointed out that levels of autonomy, as well as respect, vary widely between firms. As one respondent said, “I am now in a role that is very well balanced, I have a lot of autonomy and I feel my opinions are heard and valued. This wasn’t the case in my previous role... it really does depend on who your manager is or how closely you work with lawyers and the type of lawyer they are. I mean some do care about your wellness if you ask them until they are in a crunch, and then everything goes out the window.”

In terms of compensation, 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “My compensation is fair in relation to the amount of work I do.”

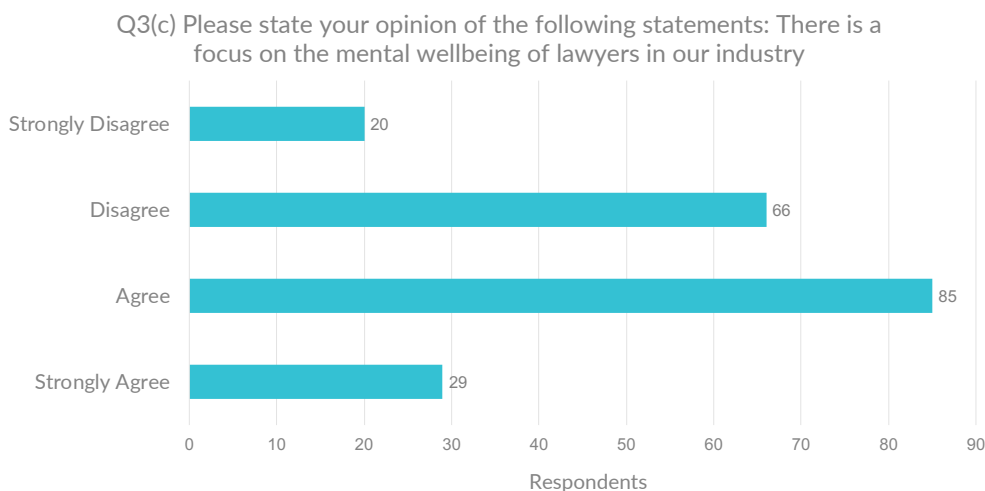
“I have worked at three different firms, all with their own approach. Only one has been good at dealing with mental health in my opinion, and they did that by expecting their lawyers to be polite and respectful of all business services staff, actively encouraging the “two sides” to mix. My first experience in the legal industry was horrendous. That firm stripped me of all my confidence. Nothing I ever did was good enough. I was expressly told by my manager that I didn’t work for the clients, I didn’t work for the firm, I worked for the lawyers. Any mistake had to be pinned on SOMEONE, and as the most junior member of the team (yet given no technical support), that someone was usually me. I ended up walking out. I was already experienced in marketing, but they made me feel like a school child, and then there was a vicious cycle when my performance suffered thanks to my lack of confidence. When I told my manager, I was suffering from depression, she told me to eat more fruit.”

Our attorneys' wellbeing is important to us

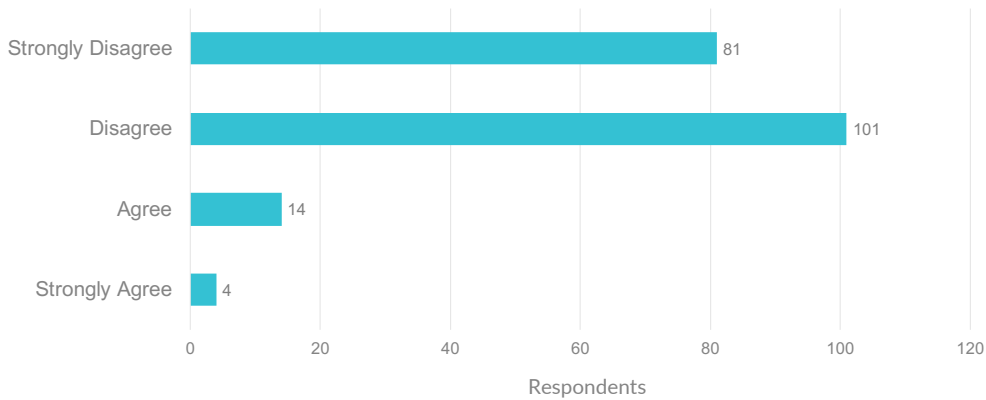
There is no question that lawyers are under significant stress. As the American Bar Association describes it, “stress affects all people and all professions. Stress in the legal profession, however, is well-documented. Lawyers work in an adversarial system with demanding schedules and heavy workloads, which may contribute to increased stress levels.” In recent years, issues of stress and mental health in the legal profession have received considerable media attention. *The Guardian* has described the work culture for junior lawyers in the UK as “punishing” (“[‘Toxic, Cut-Throat’: The Work Culture Awaiting Junior Lawyers](#)”).

As an article in *Above the Law* notes: “It’s no secret that members of the legal profession struggle with mental-health and wellness issues thanks to the near-constant stress that they face on a daily basis.” (“[Stressed-Out Lawyers In First 10 Years Of Practice More Likely To Have Mental-Health And Wellness Issues](#)”) The legal industry deserves some credit for recognizing this issue and, in some firms, taking concrete steps to improve the situation for lawyers. But, in the scramble to improve the situation for attorneys, are non-lawyers being overlooked?

58% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is a focus on the mental wellbeing of lawyers in our industry.” Compare this with the 9% who agreed with the statement: “there is a focus on the mental wellbeing of non-lawyers in our industry.”



Q3(d) Please state your opinion of the following statements: There is a focus on the mental wellbeing of non-lawyers in our industry



“Stress and mental health is mostly addressed for the lawyers and not the ‘non-lawyer’ roles, in my opinion,” one respondent noted. Another respondent put it this way: “It is unfortunate that law firms segregate mental health awareness between lawyers and non-lawyers. Somehow they feel that staff (with whom they work directly) do not suffer from the same level of stress that the lawyers do.”

Legal marketers and business development professionals occupy a unique niche at law firms. While medium to large firms have dedicated marketing/BD teams, smaller firms often depend on a sole resource or administrative or HR staff to fulfill marketing duties. 21% of respondents to the survey stated that their marketing/business development department consisted of one individual (with 3% indicating that this was less than a full time role). One respondent described their position as that of the “odd duck in the firm. I’m not a lawyer, I’m not an LAA, and I don’t belong to any particular team. It is a bit lonely here.”

In prioritizing attorney health, law firms could be seen as taking steps to protect their most fundamental asset: the minds of their attorneys. Yet, this approach fails to recognize the many essential contributions non-lawyers make to the ongoing success of their firms. This includes the role legal marketers have in attracting new clients, market positioning, and branding. The value of this type of work is rarely as obvious as that of a rainmaker, but in this competitive market, it is necessary for long term success.

Indeed, it is the very complexity of legal services that makes the position of legal marketer so important. They act as a bridge between the firm and its clients, understanding firm expertise while anticipating client needs. To quote Steve Jobs, the role of the marketer is to “master the topic, the message, and the delivery.”

“I think the majority of legal marketers suffer at some level. Generally speaking, staff are considered to be second-class citizens, generally without a voice, compared to the lawyers. That means there is no real opportunity for stress relief and no real consideration for the poor marketer.”

The JD divide

Despite disruption due to technological innovation and the entrants of other alternative legal service providers (ALSPs), law firms remain built around the partnership model. Traditionally, this model has resembled a pyramid, with senior partners at the apex, associates forming the economic engine, and non-lawyers working to keep the foundations stable.

Many respondents to this survey pointed to an intractable divide between attorneys and marketing and BD professionals in their comments.

As one respondent put it: “The ‘fixes’ presented (for the lawyers) right now are band-aids and I don’t think people are addressing one core cause, which is a perfectionist culture and one where the lawyers are the decision makers at the end of the day and marketing and support staff are merely there to ‘serve’ them’... It’s also stressful when law firms hire ‘smart’ and ‘well-respected’ professionals who really want to do what’s best for the overall business, but then their ideas are brushed aside because they aren’t part of the partnership or don’t have a J.D.”

Numerous other respondents observed that this divide within law firms was a source of significant stress. “I believe professional staff, a critical arm of a law firm, are often viewed as “the help” depending on the culture of the firm,” said one legal marketer. “They are expected [to] produce quality results but are not treated as an integral part of the firm when it comes to mental health, stress management, and work/life balance.”

A changing market demands new models

“Legal marketing is a very narrow specialized field of work. It takes a certain amount of humbleness and resilience to stay in the field for the long-term, however I do wonder when the time is to move on to other more advanced industries. Having expertise in other industries and sharing that expertise within law firms is critical. There are terrific opportunities to help the firm advance in their marketing and business development. There are big challenges however, which require senior marketing people who hold the level of respect to coach lawyers and make progress. The perception lawyers have of themselves is still traditional in most cases, however there is a transition underway with the next generations that is causing an evolution where new ways of behaving and expectations are changing for the better.”

Competitive realities are forcing law firms to “jettison some long-held assumptions” according to a 2019 report from Georgetown Law and Thomson Reuters Legal Executive Institute (“[2019 Report on the State of the Legal Market](#)”).

“For many years, it was largely assumed by both firms and clients that legal work was labor intensive, could only be performed by lawyers, and that law firms controlled the delivery of legal services,” said James W. Jones, a senior fellow at the Center on Ethics and the Legal Profession at Georgetown Law and the report’s lead author. “That no longer reflects the realities of the marketplace for legal services, where new competition, technology and innovative legal service delivery models are rapidly transforming how legal services are provided. Most importantly, these forces are

changing who can provide these services and at what price.”

When information was difficult to source and sort, attorneys and their firms were able to charge a premium on their reservoirs of specialized information. With easily searchable data and the advent of legal AI, information is becoming more readily accessible, and thus less valuable. When information is cheap, value shifts to the ability to provide insights efficiently and conveniently.

Legal buyers are also driving change by placing an emphasis on cost-efficiency. In response to these demands, it is likely that we will see more focus on pairing legal acumen with cost-cutting technology, and new business models evolve to transform the delivery of legal services. Innovative firms will also invest in the creation of legal products and hire diverse workforces with skills in business, product development, programming, data analytics, and, of course, marketing to build and sell these products.

Attorneys will, of course, remain essential, but they are likely to find themselves working as part of a team of experts, much in the way that a surgeon might be supported by a team of nurses, anesthesiologists, physical therapists, and orderlies all working together to ensure the best possible outcome for the patient. If this is the case, law firms that can foster an environment of team-building across roles are likely to be the most successful.

Experiments in team-building

Google has spent years studying how to build the “perfect team” and they’ve used their findings to become one of the most successful companies in the world. In a study of more than 180 teams, called “Project Aristotle”, researchers identified five key components of highly effective teams:

Psychological safety: Psychological safety refers to an individual’s perception of the consequences of taking an interpersonal risk or a belief that a team is safe for risk taking in the face of being seen as ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. In a team with high psychological safety, teammates feel safe to take risks around their team members. They feel confident that no one on the team will embarrass or punish anyone else for admitting a mistake, asking a question, or offering a new idea.

Dependability: On dependable teams, members reliably complete quality work on time (vs the opposite - shirking responsibilities).

Structure and clarity: An individual’s understanding of job expectations, the process for fulfilling these expectations, and the consequences of one’s performance are important for team effectiveness. Goals can be set at the individual or group level, and must be specific, challenging, and attainable. Google often uses Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) to help set and communicate short and long term goals.

Meaning: Finding a sense of purpose in either the work itself or the output is important for team effectiveness. The meaning of work is personal and can vary: financial security, supporting family, helping the team succeed, or self-expression for each individual, for example.

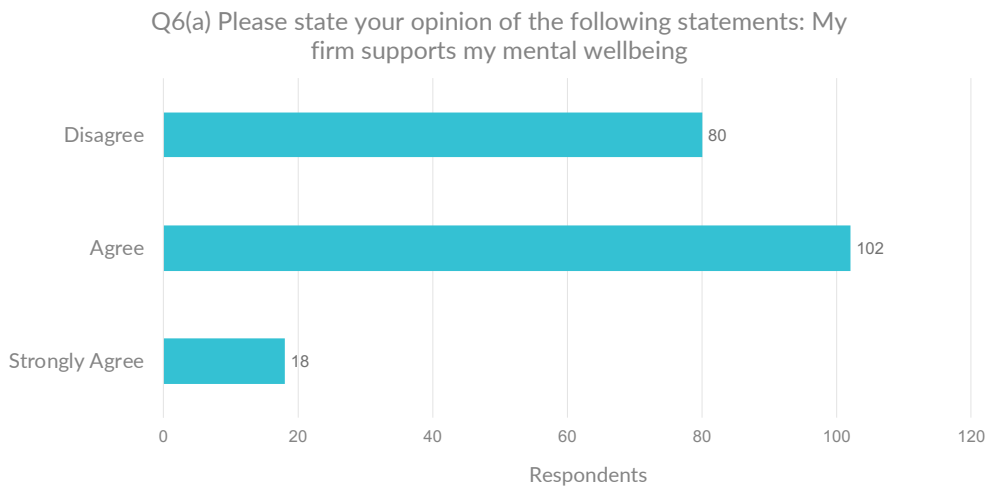
Impact: The results of one’s work, the subjective judgement that your work is making a difference, is important for teams. Seeing that one’s work is contributing to the organization’s goals can help reveal impact.

(Guide: [Understand Team Effectiveness, re:work](#))

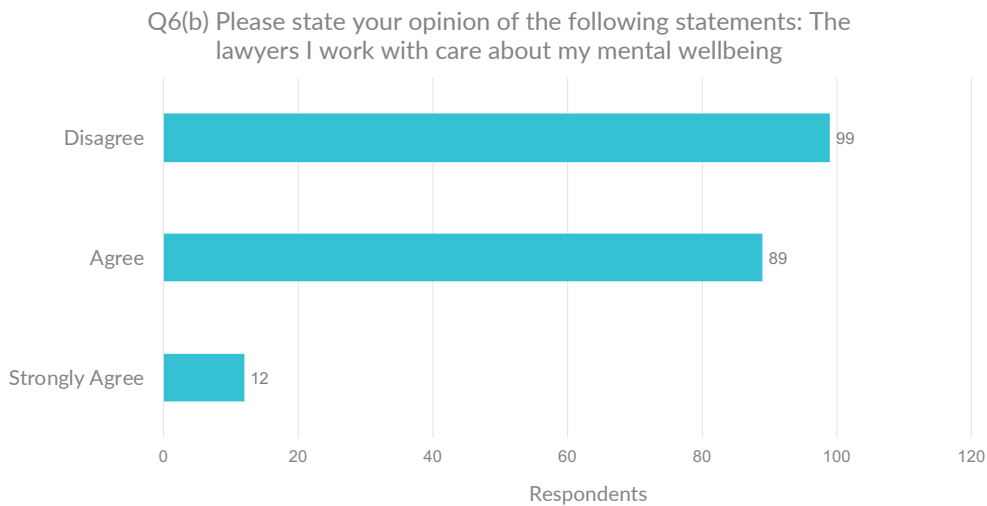
Support from the Firm

Given that many legal marketers report feeling stressed and often overwhelmed, how much support are they receiving from their firms?

60% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “My firm supports my mental wellbeing.”



A slightly smaller share (51%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “The lawyers I work with care about my mental wellbeing.”



Caring is one thing, but what about concrete measures and support? Asked, “Do you feel you have enough support from your employer to handle any stress you may experience in your role?” the majority of survey respondents (56%) answered “No.”

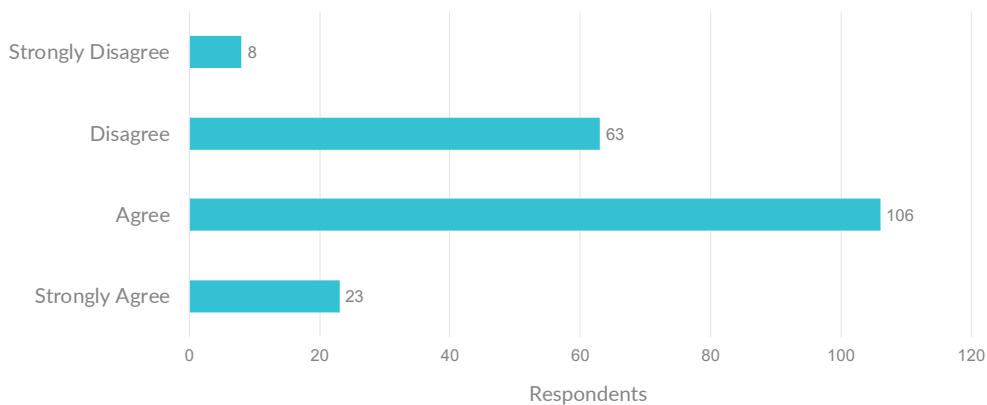
68% also disagreed with the statement, “My firm tries to find ways to limit the stress associated with my job.”

Resources to Relieve Stress

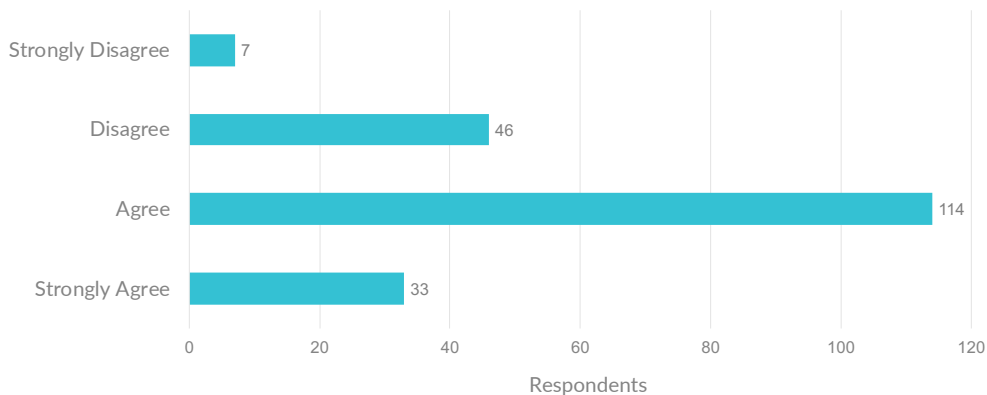
The survey asked respondents to share their opinion on whether access to different types of resources would help to relieve work-related stress.

65% agreed or strongly agreed that access to mindfulness coaching would help. 74% agreed or strongly agreed that access to mental health professionals would be beneficial.

Q7(a) Please state your opinion of the following statements. Access to the following resources would help me to relieve stress associated with my job: Access to mindfulness coaching

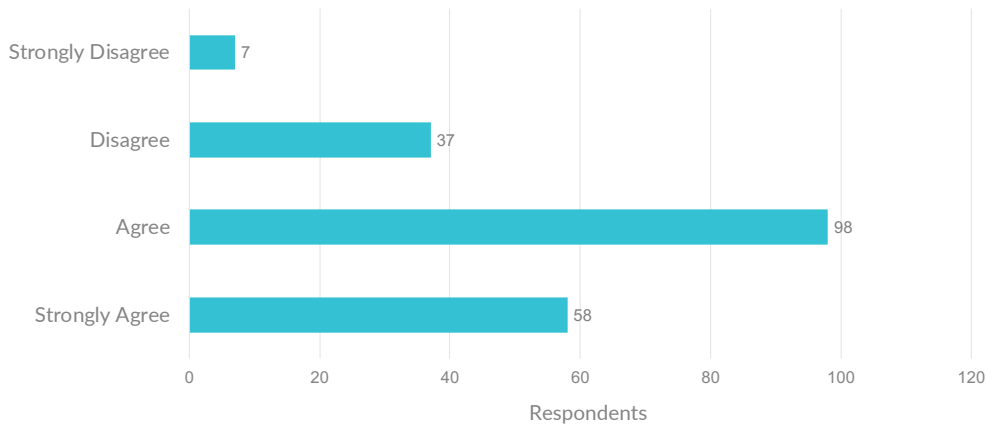


Q7(b) Please state your opinion of the following statements. Access to the following resources would help me to relieve stress associated with my job: Access to mental health professionals

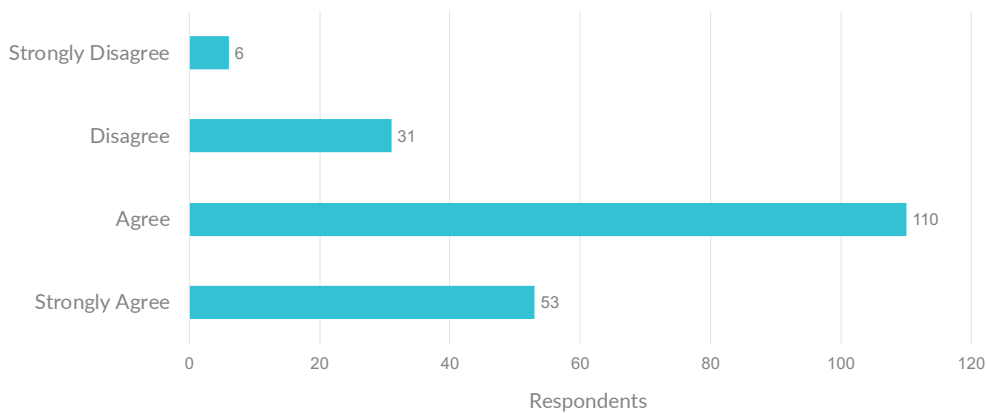


78% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “access to outside marketing resources to assist your team on a project basis” would help to relieve stress. Skills training was also viewed as the most helpful resource; 82% agreed or strongly agreed that “access to marketing/business development/technical training” would be valuable in mitigating stress.

Q7(c) Please state your opinion of the following statements. Access to the following resources would help me to relieve stress associated with my job: Access to outside marketing resources to assist your team on a project basis

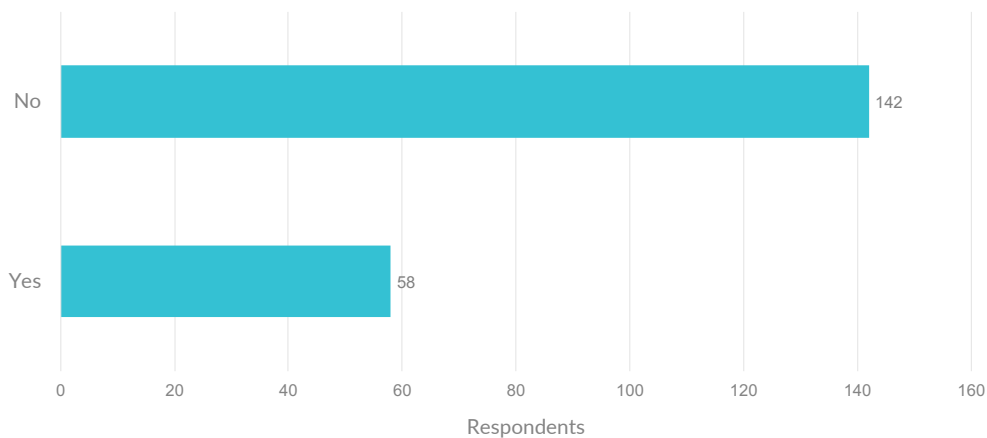


Q7(e) Please state your opinion of the following statements. Access to the following resources would help me to relieve stress associated with my job: Access to marketing/business development/technical training

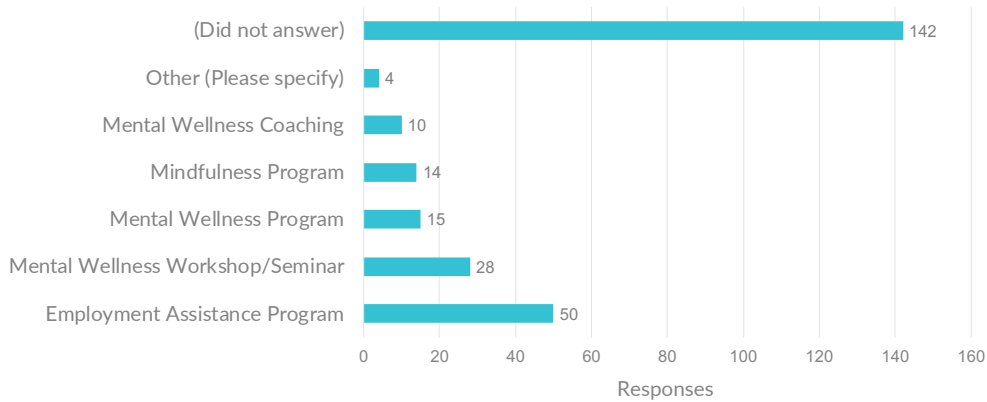


29% of respondents said that their firms provide formal support related to stress management and mindfulness. Of these, employment assistance programs were the most common (25%) followed by mental wellness workshops/seminars (14%). 5% of respondents reported their firms providing mental wellness coaching.

Q8. Does your firm provide formal support related to stress management and mindfulness?



Q9. Please select all of the formal support programs/resources that your firm provides:



Multiple answers per participant possible. Percentages added may exceed 100 since a participant may select more than one answer for this question.

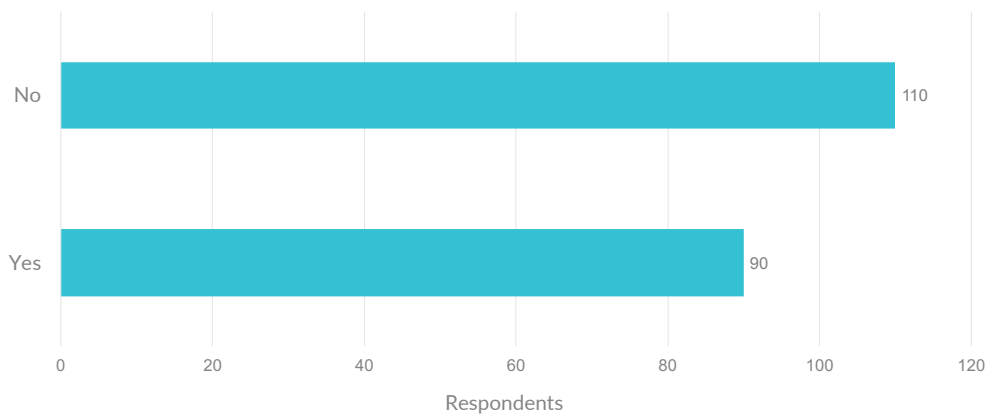
2% of respondents indicated that their firms provided other types of formal support including:

- “mental health therapy provided by insurance”
- “a mental health hotline”

A larger share of respondents (45%) said that their firms provide informal support related to stress management and mindfulness. Examples provided by respondents include:

- Internal communication programs, e.g., one respondent mentioned biweekly wellness emails
- Employer-paid insurance plans that offer mental health resources
- Massage therapy
- Firm social events
- Staff recognition programs
- Firm support to attend LMA conferences and events
- Fitness classes (e.g., yoga) and access to gym facilities
- Discussions with HR and other management

Q10. Does your firm provide informal support related to stress management and mindfulness?



“There are individuals in the firm that have a good awareness and do their bit. A good, friendly culture goes a long way. I was previously at a firm that threw all the massage and yoga sessions they possibly could at you, but the environment was so brutal and the culture so full of the blame game that I would often end up crying at my desk.”

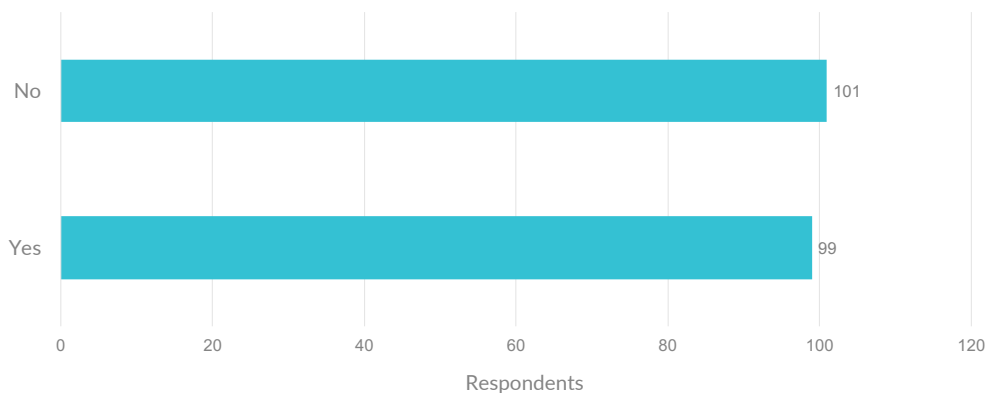
“Our firm offers a program where we can talk to mental health professionals free of charge and confidentially.”

Let's talk about stress

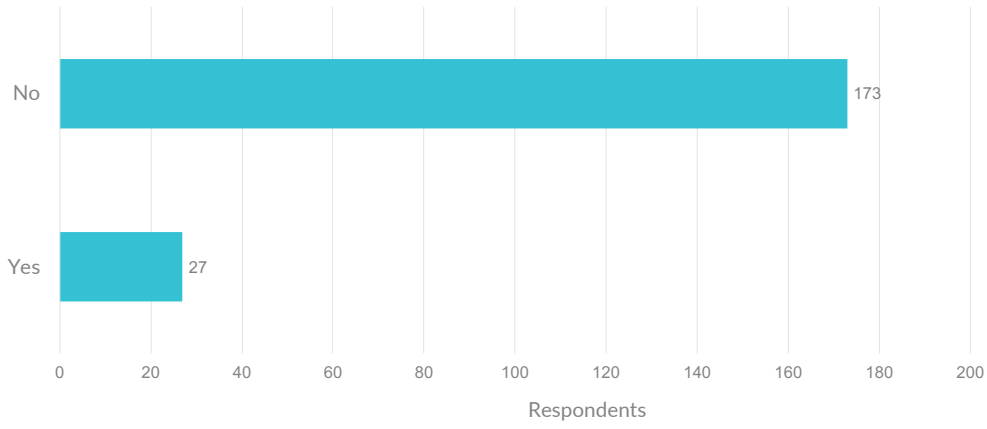
Respondents were nearly split in whether they felt that they could (or could not) discuss their mental health with their immediate manager with a small majority (51%) saying that they did not feel that this was an option.

A clear majority (87%), however, felt that they could not discuss their mental health with the lawyers at their firm.

Q12. Do you feel that you can discuss your mental health with your immediate manager?



Q13. Do you feel that you can discuss your mental health with the lawyers with whom you work?



RESPONDENT DETAILS

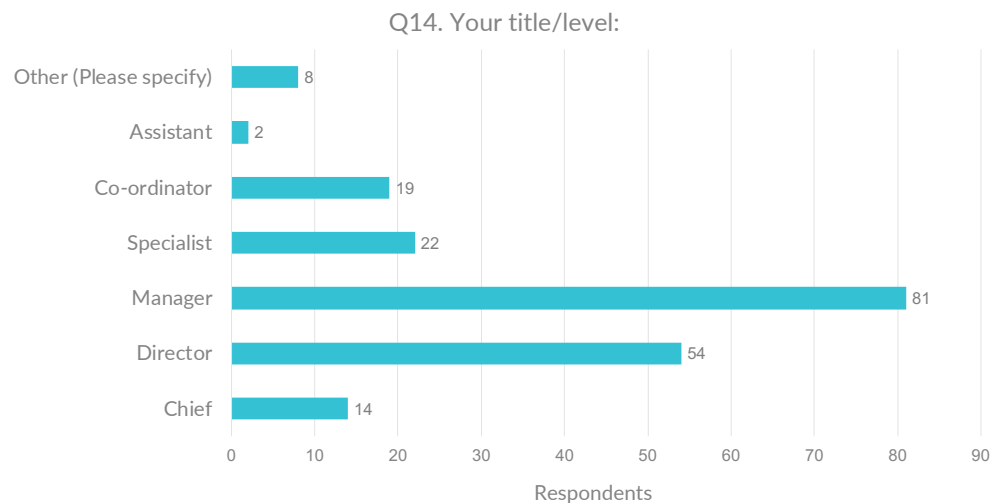
The most common title/level for survey respondents was “Manager” (41%), followed by “Director” (27%) and “Specialist” (11%).

Many respondents are quite experienced in legal marketing with 55% having more than 8 years of experience (and 42% having more than a decade of experience).

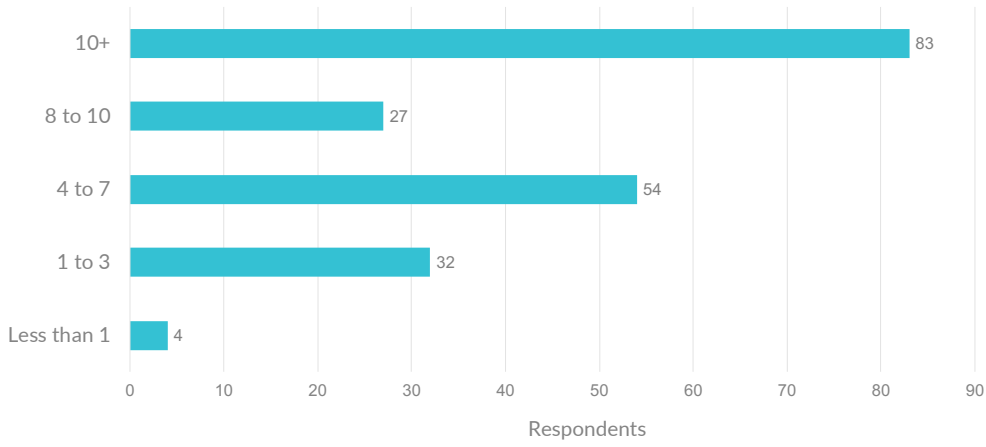
For most (93%), their primary role could be described as marketing, BD or client relationship management. Of those respondents who said otherwise, one third are administrators and 13% work in HR. The rest combine legal marketing with a variety of primary roles including:

- Intelligence/Research
- Finance
- Proposal Specialist

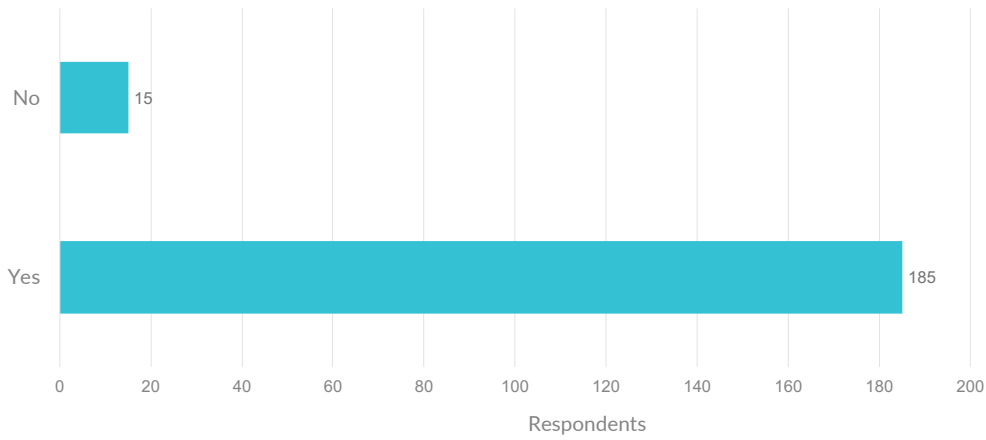
80% are members of the Legal Marketing Association and several mentioned the LMA in their comments. The vast majority (85%) of respondents gave their gender as being female. According to the US Census Bureau’s 2019 report, 62% of attorneys in America are men (the effect of this gender imbalance on mental wellbeing and stress in legal is a topic that merits further research).



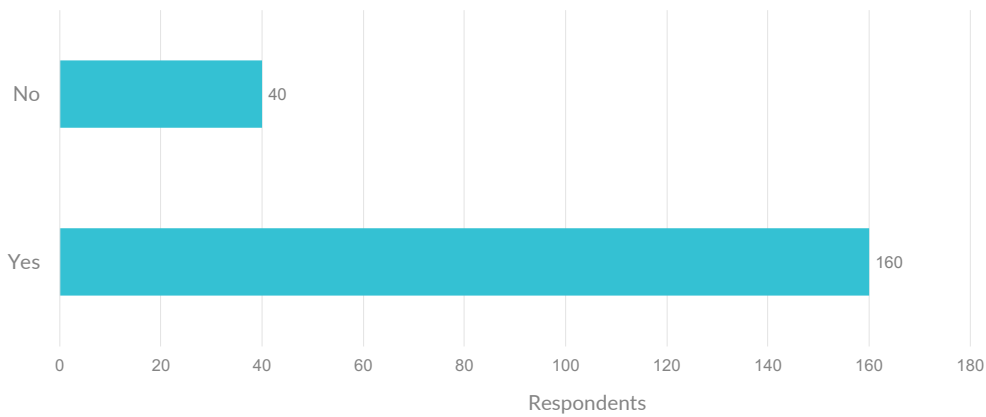
Q15. How many years have you worked in legal marketing?



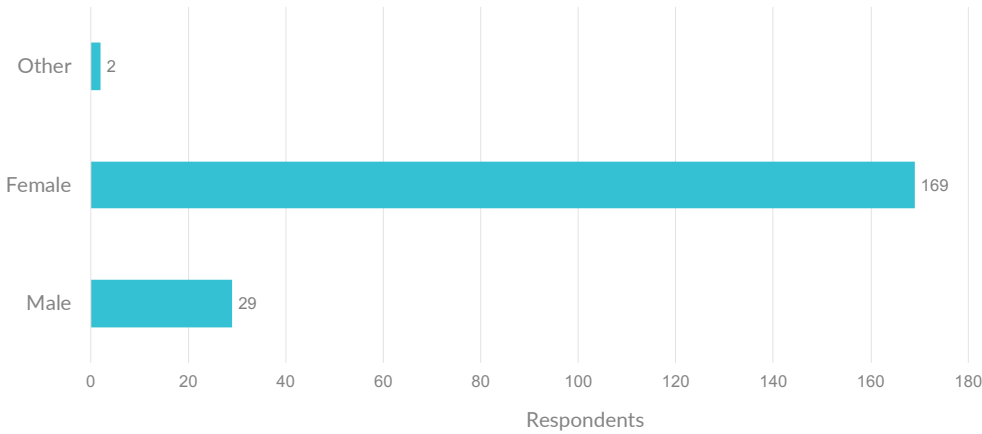
Q16. Is your primary role within your firm marketing/business development/client relationship management?



Q18. Are you a member of the Legal Marketing Association?



Q21. Your Gender



Firm Size and Geography

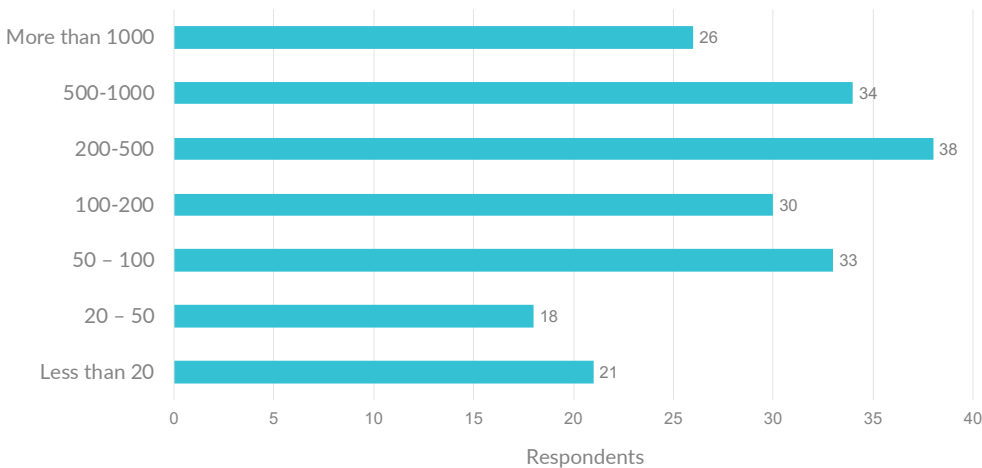
This survey received responses from marketers working across a range of firms, from those with fewer than 20 lawyers (11%) to those with more than 1,000 (13%). 64% of respondents work at a firm with more than 100 attorneys.

Accordingly, respondents work on marketing/business development teams ranging in size from less than one full time employee (3%) to more than 50 (13%). The most common team size reported was between 2-5 (26%). However, a total of 48% of respondents work on marketing/BD teams composed of more than 10 professionals.

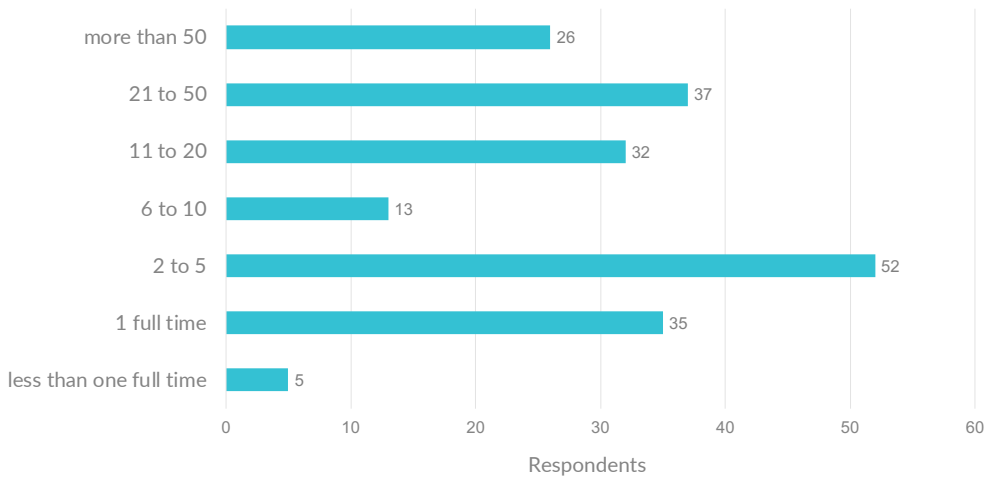
72% of survey respondents work in the United States. 24% work in Canada and 2% in the UK. A small number of respondents came from other countries including:

- Belgium (1)
- Dominican Republic (1)
- India (1)
- Italy (1)

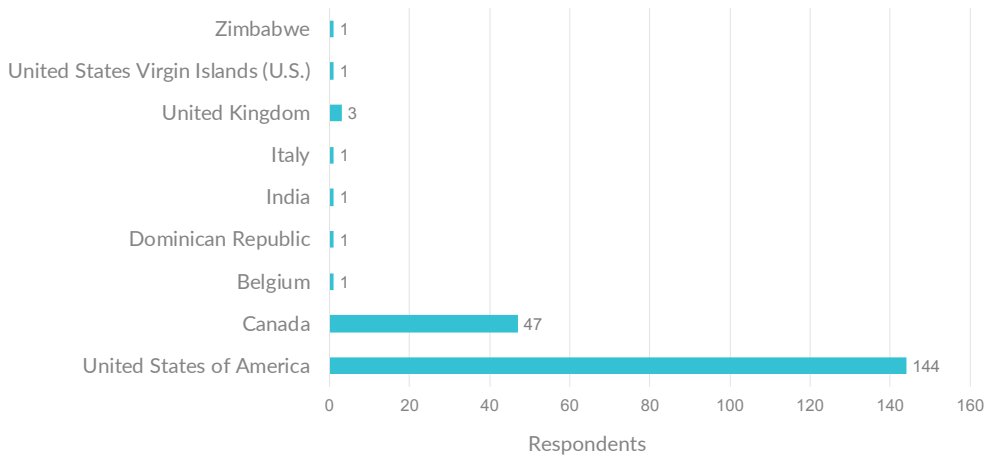
Q19. Size of your law firm by the number of lawyers



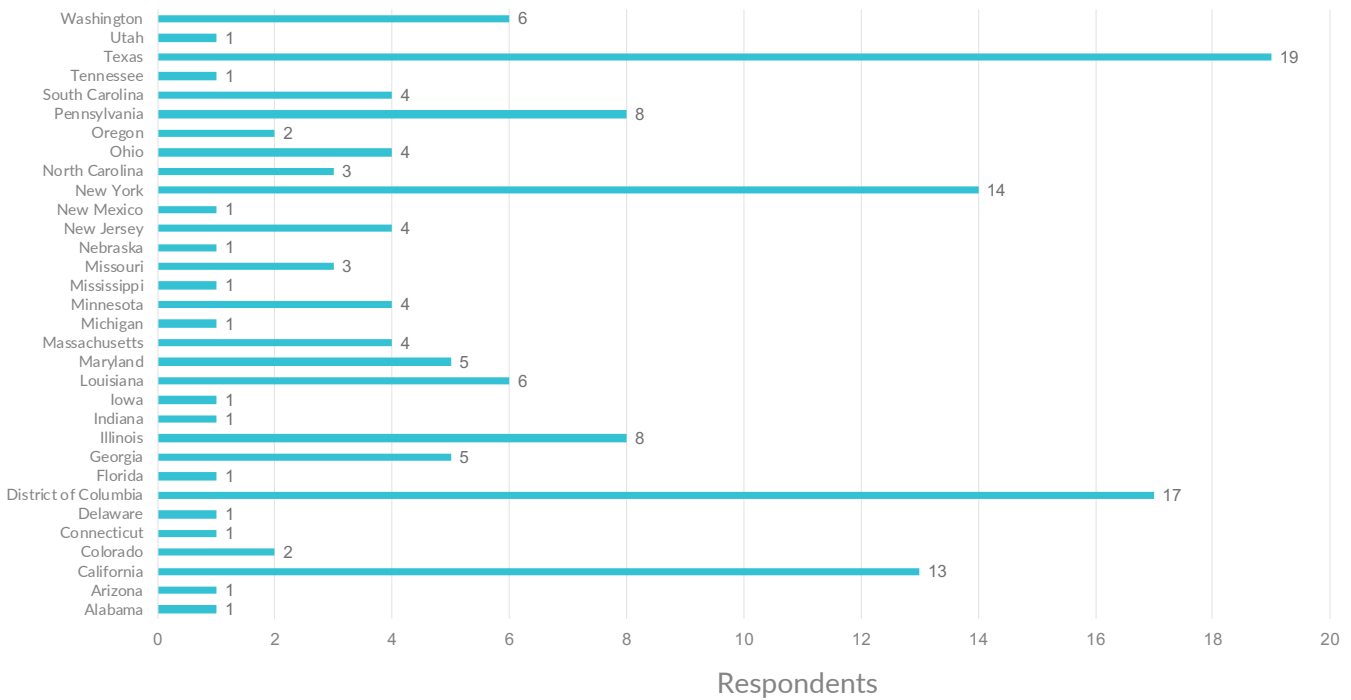
Q20. How many people make up your firm's marketing/business development team?



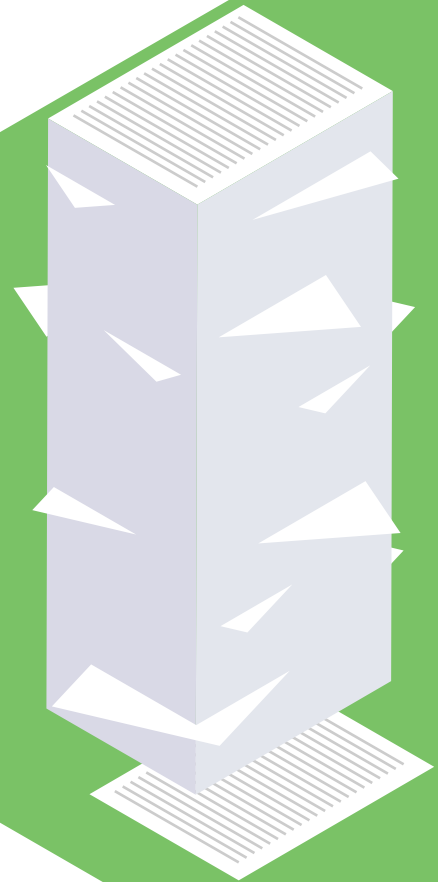
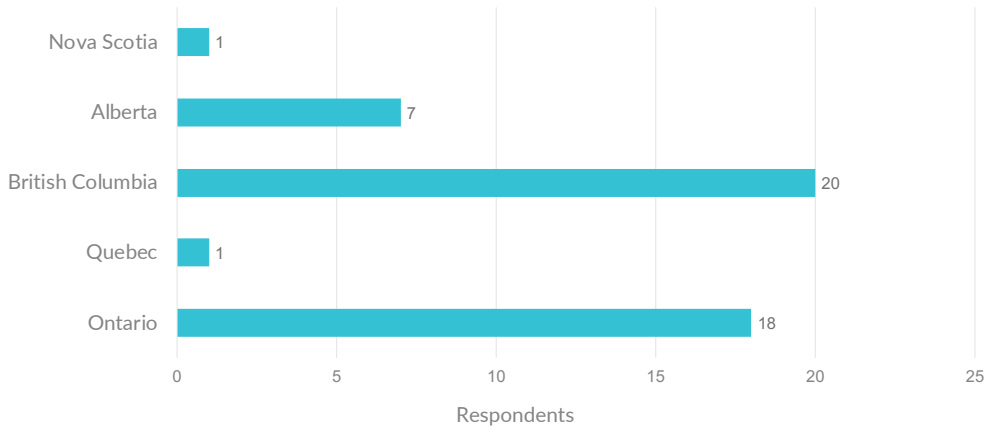
Q22. Country



Q23. Unites States of America - State



Q24. Canada - Province or Territory



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Over the course of the spring and summer of 2019, fSquared Marketing distributed the Legal Marketing Mental Wellness Survey to legal marketing and business development professionals located, primarily but not exclusively, in the US, Canada, and the UK. A link to the survey was distributed at the fSquared Marketing booth at the 2019 LMA Annual Conference and to members of the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) through regional chapters and Special Interest Group (SIG) forums. The survey was also shared on fSquared Marketing's social media channels and within legal marketing groups on LinkedIn. A total of 200 responses were collected before the survey was closed in June 2019.

Note, some graphs may add up to more than 100% due to rounding.

A note on privacy: survey respondents were given an opportunity to share their insights on this topic in written comments with the caveat that they try to refrain from sharing details that might be used to identify them or their employer due to the sensitive nature of this topic. For our part, we have not included specific details if given (such as law firm or respondent names) in this report. We have also avoided any matching of comments to details of a respondents' location, firm size or job title.

A note on survey structure and bias: research for this survey was conducted through what statisticians call "convenience sampling", in which respondents came from those who happened to be willing to participate. This is not so different from the many psychology studies that take undergraduate volunteers as their representative population. This method of collection can however lead to a level of sampling bias.

There is also the problem of nonresponse bias; those who responded might have different opinions about mental wellbeing in legal than those who did not participate. It is certainly possible that strong feelings about this issue could motivate some to take the time to share their perspective.

This survey and this report should, therefore, be taken as indicative but not conclusive. More research remains to be done. It is fSquared Marketing's hope that, with the involvement and support of the LMA, we can engage in more statistically valid survey research, including probability sampling, into this important topic in the near future.

RESPONDENTS' STORIES

"I don't think people are addressing one core cause, which is a perfectionist culture and one where the lawyers are the decision makers at the end of the day and marketing and support staff are merely there to 'serve' them."

"There is all stick and no carrot, so stress is naturally going to result."

"Most of my work stress comes from boredom at work or an expectation that I have other skills that get lumped into marketing (like photography, graphic design, website development) so I either do things very quickly and well, or struggle to do things that are outside my wheelhouse."

"The stress is mostly due to unclear work objectives, the lawyers demands (they are the "center of the universe"), and overall job/career frustration."

"Law firms... take more of a band-aid approach - in other words, dealing with stress after it sets in rather than focusing on how to prevent it in the first place."

"I think mental illness is an issue like many others in law firms: if there's any attention paid to it, it's as it relates to attorneys—not staff."

"I am never just the strategic thinker or marketer; to them, I am an abled body that can solve problems and make things happen — I am their catch-all. This also means I am my lawyer's punching bag, therapist, advocate, chief of staff, etc. but not a friend."

“When are law firms going to operate like other businesses where everyone is viewed as part of one organization?”

“There is massive stigma and judgement against mental illness and stress related issues in this industry. It is extremely toxic and creates anxiety and fear in people. This inevitably contributes to many people having to hide their authentic selves and focus on constantly pretending to be ‘normal.’”

“While my firm offers mindfulness, it does not create the culture to support it.”

“The lack of sufficient resources is astounding, which compounds the issue for legal marketers.”

“Discussion of this topic with mental health professionals at the annual LMA conference would be amazing.”

“I have found that work/life balance is so important to my mental health.”

“We need to have the power to take a time out/restructure priorities and the tools to navigate how to do so.”

“Firms could be a better job of integrating BD/marketing individuals into the team rather than just considering [them] ‘staff.’”

“Thankfully, the newer/younger generation of lawyers are seeing sooner what BD does and being considerate of their role and what they ask of teams.”

“Our firm decided to do ABA’s pledge of mental health. My Board asked me to put together a plan for implementation and I made sure to include staff along with lawyers in the plans. So far, no one has responded to the plan I sent.”

“Curating resources to provide a better understanding of my role within the organization would greatly help my personal stress level at work.”

“I have a genetic predisposition for depression, and I take anti-depressants. Working in an environment where there’s little to no support or feedback from my 40ish shareholders takes its toll. I often think my job, while I like it, often contributes to my depressive episodes. And I’m not sure how to address that at work.”

“The BD role is evolving, and I don’t believe that the legal marketing profession is keeping up.”

“Even though I was hired as an expert and am praised for my value it is quickly overshadowed by the ever present dynamic of not being a lawyer.”

“I also am lucky to have a close group of partners who appreciate my life circumstances and I can be authentic around what I need.”

“The level of stress varies significantly from firm to firm. Even though I am very busy at my firm, my work is appreciated and that goes a long way toward feeling good about my job.”

“We are expected to be available after hours for the lawyers who get to “marketing” after hours because it is non-billable.”

“The perception lawyers have of themselves is still traditional in most cases, however there is a transition underway with the next generations that is causing an evolution where new ways of behaving and expectations are changing for the better.”

“It’s difficult to convey the stress to attorneys of what we do. To try and convey how many balls we are juggling sounds defensive and lame, so we suck it up and consequently stress. I’m not whining, it’s just a fact.”

“The stress is NOT just at the lawyers - it’s especially marketing/BD that constantly need to be showing value and outcomes but not being provided the lawyers time, any tools to make our roles easier, budgets or staff but more so because they way we are treated by many of the lawyers.”

“For some, there is an expectation that perfection is the only standard and anything below that is unacceptable. It becomes overwhelming knowing this and trying to strive for ‘perfection’.”

“It would help if lawyers and management knew when to delegate and when to not. A big thing also is last minute requests to get things done.”





LEGAL MARKETING MENTAL WELLNESS SURVEY

Everyone knows that **lawyers** are stressed out.

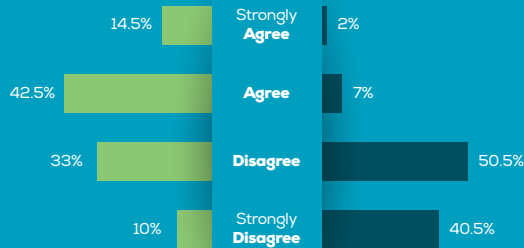
But what about **legal marketers**?

Please state your opinion of the following statements

There is a focus on the **mental wellbeing** of **LAWYERS** in our industry



There is a focus on the **mental wellbeing** of **NON-LAWYERS** in our industry



THERE IS **SIGNIFICANT STRESS** IN LEGAL MARKETING AND RELATED FIELDS

96% STRONGLY AGREE OR AGREE



On a scale of **1 to 10**, on average, how much **stress** do you feel related to your job?



2 out of 3

feel that **stress** interferes with their ability to **concentrate** on tasks



CHECK OUT THE INFOGRAPHIC HERE

FSQUAREDMARKETING.COM/ MENTAL-WELLNESS

SHARE WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES!

About fSquared Marketing

fSquared Marketing provides strategic consulting and marketing services to law firms. We offer clients a full spectrum of services, including strategic planning, digital strategy, business development, client management, branding, website design, and lawyer training.

fSquared Marketing's expertise comes from our thorough understanding of the North American legal marketplace and our detailed knowledge of the particular needs of law firms. We take pride in offering practical, measurable, and proven solutions to the challenges our clients face. The team at fSquared Marketing can both develop strategic plans and implement them, with a focus on growth. We know law firms, and we get results.

To learn more about fSquared Marketing and the services we offer, visit fsquaredmarketing.com.

