



Law Firms Are Doing More With Less (Or The Same)

By [Aaron Jodka](#) | DECEMBER 2018

Boston's law employment hasn't varied all that much in recent years, but despite this, the industry is making a lot of changes. Per the latest BLS stats in October, legal services employment in the Boston-Cambridge-Newton NECTA division stood at 21,100. While that total has been incredibly consistent over the past decade, the industry is not at a standstill: Just the opposite.



This summer brought a number of raises for associates, and the eight largest firms raised their pay from \$180,000 to \$190,000, per BBJ reports, including firms such as Mintz, Ropes, Goodwin, and Goulston. Others followed suit, by raising their associate compensation (Sullivan & Worcester) or reviewing compensation as a whole (Nutter

McClennan & Fish). As in many industries, finding and retaining talent is paramount in the field of law. After recent declines in the numbers of people passing the Massachusetts bar exam, these employment issues are even more acute.

And that is why we have seen firms from outside the market set up shop in Boston. Kirkland & Ellis entered the city in 2017 and has since leased two floors at 200 Clarendon Street for a staff of 40.



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Hogan Lovells (which acquired Collora LLP) is set to move into 125 High Street in 2019, joining Hunton & Williams, which grabbed a team from Manion Gaynor & Manning. Others looking to get a foothold in Boston include Orrick and Freeman and Mathis and Gary.

For recent office space leases, however, the trend of less is more is very much alive. Goodwin reduced its space by nearly 100,000 SF when it moved from 53 State Street to new construction in the Seaport, while Nixon Peabody shed more than a third of its footprint (167,000 SF to 105,000 SF) when it recently relocated to 53 State Street. When Mintz renewed at One Financial Center, it restacked by consolidating into 206,000 SF from 258,000 SF. Notably, these changes mean that these firms are using space much more efficiently, not reducing headcount. Law offices feature more collaboration space and smaller individual partner and associate offices (but are using more glass within the office), and are either doubling up at least first-year associates or moving them from perimeter into interior offices. They also continue to reduce or eliminate the traditional law library by repurposing it and outsourcing data centers and support services to lower cost markets. Bucking the trend of using less space, Burns & Levinson is maintaining its current 100,000 SF footprint while moving from 125 Summer Street to 125 High Street. However, its new office will be more open. Others in the market, including Nelson Mullins, Jackson Lewis, Sullivan & Worcester, and Foley Hoag, are likely to keep this more open office trend alive.



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