



# 2023 Administrative Services Flash Survey Results

FLASH SURVEY



## Market Overview

**Administrative support has been a challenged operational area for firms since before COVID. Firms have been steadily reducing staff focused on library & research, administrative, secretarial & word processing, and operations since 2017<sup>1</sup>.**

The lawyer-secretary function as a relationship has been eroding for years; the lawyer-to-secretary ratio is expected to double to 13-1, and remote work is challenging firms' abilities to monitor, manage, and train staff. Legal secretaries are an aging (and well-compensated) pool of existing support staff, 20-40% of whom are expected to retire in the next five years and their replacements are becoming hard to find.

Because they either do not have capable support or do not have available support, almost half (47%)<sup>2</sup> of lawyers have reported burnout from a heavier workload during the pandemic and have noted longer working hours caused, in part, by increased administrative duties.

Junior and mid-level associates are the most affected (67%), citing heavier workloads and work related responsibilities causing a decline in their well-being<sup>3</sup>.

Many of these administrative duties can and should be taken on by a more cost-effective resource, but instead, the current administrative model has unintentionally shifted these duties to associates, and firms are beginning to see the impact.

It should come as no surprise, then, that in 2023 and beyond, redesigning the support model for attorneys is one of the top 3 objectives for firms, industry wide, according to the most recent data from Thomson Reuters.

In 2022, our colleagues at BigHand surveyed over 800 law firm operations professionals to find that most firms (89%) have restructured administrative support.

We asked in this flash Survey, how successful are firms that have restructured and, conversely, how are firms doing that have not?

1. 2023 Thomson Reuters State of the Legal Market

2. "ANALYSIS: Attorney Burnout Abating, But Not Extinguished". 2022. News.Bloomberglaw.Com. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-attorney-burnout-abating-but-not-extinguished>.

3. "ANALYSIS: Survey Finds Lawyer Burnout Rising, Well-Being Falling". 2022. News.Bloomberglaw.Com. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/analysis-survey-finds-lawyer-burnout-rising-well-being-falling?context=article-related>.

# Administrative Support Services Survey

## Restructured



**89%**  
Have Restructured  
Administrative  
Support

In 2022, BigHand surveyed over 800 law firm operations professionals to find that most firms (89%) have restructured administrative support.



Of firms that have restructured their administrative support model, **62.5%** are in-house centralized, **37.5%** are in-house decentralized and none have outsourced these services. **75%** are in the office 2-3 days a week with **25%** of the firms allowing employees to select the days they are in the office.



**HOWEVER**, on a scale of 1-10, they rated their success an average of **6.875** with **70%** having the ability to right-task work to the most cost-effective resource, **38%** report that the administrative burden on attorneys has increased while **50%** report it has stayed the same.

**6.9** Average Success Rate  
on a scale of 1-10

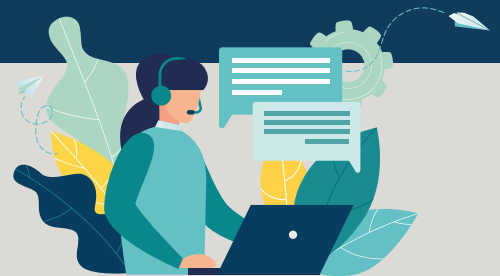
**38%** Increase in Administrative  
Burden on Attorneys

The greatest obstacle to change was relationships (**44%**) and, very closely related to this is the lack of change management (**22%**) and time to assess and then implement (**34%**). **85%** of respondents said the greatest obstacle to success was buy in/resistance to change.



## Not Restructured

Of firms that have not restructured their administrative support model, 100% still have the traditional secretary to attorney ratios in place. **65%** are in the office 2-3 days a week and **35%** are in the office five days a week.



**7.6**  
Average Success Rate  
on a scale of 1-10

On a scale of 1-10, these firms rate their success an average of **7.6**, but only **60%** can right-task work to the most cost-effective resource, and the vast majority (**68%**) report administrative burden on attorneys has increased.

**68%** Increase in administrative  
burden on attorneys



## Conclusion

In summary, while the majority of firms have restructured their administrative services, there is room for improvement with decreasing the administrative burden on attorneys, improving the change management process, and making sure the right person is doing the right tasks at the right costs.

## How Mattern Can Assist

Mattern helps firms assess the effectiveness of their administrative support models, understand the data and apply it to restructure and realign administrative support services to optimize the business needs of law firms in a new, hybrid world.

We take a holistic approach to helping our clients optimize administrative support in a post-pandemic reality. Our end-to-end approach includes:

- **Benchmarking.** We leverage technology to create invaluable, one of a kind, data as to who is performing what work, where, and how much it is costing your firm.

- **Modeling.** Armed with this data, Mattern's expertise can advise innovative support models in line with your firm's culture and business goals.
- **Measuring.** Once the new model is in place, we use technology to measure ongoing costs to the firm and create output reports that can be used by management for visibility of key metrics like work type, volume, capacity and utilization for informed resourcing and productivity decision making.
- **Managing Change.** Mattern assists firms with the biggest challenge of a new administrative model: change. Mattern designs a roadmap with rollout strategy, arms Marketing with a communications plan, and, if needed, participates on steering committees.

If you would like to improve the success of your firm's administrative modification or are considering it for the first time, contact Mattern at [info@matternassoc.com](mailto:info@matternassoc.com) or visit our website at [www.matternassoc.com](http://www.matternassoc.com). It may mean the difference between success and failure.

