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Susman's \$100K Associate Bonuses Wallop Other Firms

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By Hilary Russ

Law360, New York (December 13, 2010) -- [Susman Godfrey LLP](#) has announced that some of its full-time associates are receiving bonuses of more than \$100,000 — nearly triple the standard going rate this year — as more firms release information about their end-of-year payouts.

The 90-attorney litigation boutique said Sunday that it had paid annual bonuses to full-time associates that ranged from \$45,000 to more than \$100,000 and that 10 associates received bonuses of about 50 percent of their salaries.

"We had another fantastic year, from coast to coast," managing partner Steve Susman said. "We have a great group of young lawyers, and are delighted to be able to pay even bigger bonuses this year."

Susman Godfrey also said it made five new partners and that it would continue growing in all of its markets.

On Friday, the New York Law Journal reported that associates at [Cahill Gordon & Reindel LLP](#) would get initial bonuses of between \$10,000 to \$25,000 and likely an extra bonus in January of up to \$35,000 — in addition to their mid-year bonuses of up to about \$15,000.

Other firms have been paying more modest bonuses, including [Fried Frank Harris Shriver & Jacobson LLP](#), which announced in a Dec. 10 memo that it was paying associates bonuses of "varying amounts up to \$40,000," according to a memo cited on the blog Above the Law on Monday.

Fried Frank's bonuses vary based on seniority, quality of hours and hours worked, client service, and contributions to the firm's pro bono activities, the memo said.

Associate bonus announcements have been coming fast and furious after [Cravath Swaine & Moore LLP](#) set the standard on Nov. 22, saying it would largely match the same levels it produced last year.

Other firms have matched Cravath's rate, including [Dewey & LeBoeuf LLP](#), which promised U.S.-based first-year associates a \$7,500 bonus, while veterans in their seventh year will get \$35,000, according to a memo sent by chairman Steven H. Davis.

Both Cravath and Dewey said associates in the 2008 and 2007 classes will earn \$10,000 and \$15,000, respectively, while those in the 2006 and 2005 classes will pocket \$20,000 and \$25,000, respectively, and sixth-year associates will take home \$30,000 in bonus pay.

Dewey went one step further than Cravath, offering an additional discretionary bonus for associates who demonstrated "exceptional performance" in the past 12 months.

Bonuses for counsel and associates with eight years or more of experience will be decided on a case-by-case basis, the firm said.

Dewey's announcement came a day after [Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP](#) revealed a similar bonus payout, including an extra sum for standout associates.

On Friday, [Proskauer Rose LLP](#) confirmed it had matched the so-called Cravath model, and [Morrison & Foerster LLP](#) reportedly followed suit. Other firms including [Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP](#), [Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP](#) and [Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy LLP](#) have also matched their peers on bonus payouts.

--Additional reporting by Leigh Kamping-Carder





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