

# The Bigger the Better? Understanding the Biglaw Salary Scale

“Biglaw is an industry-specific nickname for high-revenue law firms with large headcounts. It can also refer to smaller firms that pay their lawyers a market rate salary, or even a medium-sized outfit with wide, international reach and notoriety,” writes Joshua Holt in Law Fuel’s *blog*.

“All of these types of firms are typically headquartered in major US cities, like Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago, with multiple branches in smaller markets. And, most notably, lawyers who work in Biglaw can expect to be paid based on the Cravath scale.”

“The Cravath Scale, an offshoot of the Cravath system, is named after Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP, the firm which is generally considered the authority on setting associate salaries. Its compensatory functions include factors like the number of years out of law school and particular law school classes, among others.”

“Lawyers on this pay scale not only earn the same salary but can also anticipate receiving the same annual market bonus. Based on the lockstep and closely monitored structure of the scale, if one firm offers an associate a higher salary, other firms tend to follow suit. But while this scale is based on a platform of consistency, changes have been experienced throughout the years.”

***Read the article.***