

**LEGAL &  
GOVERNANCE**



2026

# **PRIVATE PRACTICE**

TRENDS & SALARY GUIDE

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## A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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Singapore continues to be an attractive proposition for various international law firms coveting cross-border investments in South-East Asia and international arbitration due to Singapore's reputation as an arbitration hub. This has been reflected in consistent partner and team moves throughout 2025, driving lateral hiring across a range of practice areas.

In recent years, several international law firms have established a physical presence in Singapore, drawn by opportunities in international arbitration, private capital, M&A, and the energy transition. UK and Swiss verein firms have led much of the hiring activity in Corporate and M&A, particularly at the partner and mid-level associate levels. In October 2025, US firm Greenberg Traurig significantly expanded its Singapore presence by hiring seven partners as part of a strategic effort to build a full-service office. Such moves are expected to trigger further competitive hiring across the market.

The global economy has not been easy on some international law firms. Akin Gump's exit reflects a broader trend of international law firms, particularly American ones, reassessing their presence in Asia. Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP) and McDermott Will & Emery also closed their Singapore offices in late 2025 and early 2026 respectively.

Another notable development has been the continued rise of specialist boutique firms. Partners from established Singapore practices, often with strong client followings, are increasingly launching their own firms to focus on niche expertise rather than full-service offerings. This reflects growing client demand for highly specialised legal advice supported by deep industry knowledge.

Meanwhile, Singapore's corporate insolvencies reached their highest level since 2010 in 2025 (Ministry of Law), driving sustained demand for restructuring, insolvency, and creditor-side work. Caseloads at major arbitration institutions such as the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) also remain at record levels, maintaining strong demand for international arbitration practitioners.

# 2026 OUTLOOK

According to LexisNexis, 82% of lawyers are using or planning to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into practices, a huge increase from 39% last year. 2025 marked a turning point in the way lawyers work, and lawyers will need to embrace this change and find ways to offer innovative solutions to clients who are starting to embrace legal technology as well.

We anticipate demand for allied legal operations and governance professionals. As firms build generative AI legal tools or integrate with providers like Harvey, business support is required to maintain these processes. This will allow firms to be AI fluent. AI won't replace lawyers but AI savvy lawyers will.

Investments in legal tech may grow to be a law firm's edge. AI tools handling document review, research, and first-draft contracts may mean increasingly leaner teams.

Amidst these changes in the global economy and legal landscape, paycales in law firms have remained largely consistent with a slight increase. We account for this in our guide below.



*"Lawyer who adopts and uses AI better will replace the one who does not."*

- Edwin Tong, Minister for Law

# HOT SKILLS IN DEMAND

## **M&A PE Corporate**

Junior to Mid-Level

- Energy-focused
  - SEA transactions
- 

## **Banking Finance**

Mid-Level

- Structured products & derivatives
  - Leveraged finance
  - Project finance
- 

## **FS Regulatory**

Mid-Level

- SFA licensing
  - Conduct of business requirements
  - Banking & insurance regulations
  - Payment services regulations
  - AML KYC-related issues
- 

## **Disputes, R&I**

Mid-Level

- E&W, preferred for Offshore firms
  - Trend towards Financial Services & Technology Disputes
- 

## **Capital Markets**

- India & North Asia Capital Markets work exposure
- 

## **Funds**

Junior to Mid-Level

- Fund formation
  - Structuring experience
- 

## **White Collar & Investigations**

- Cross-border expertise

# 2026 Private Practice Salary Guide

All salaries are base salaries and in SGD unless otherwise specified.

## INTERNATIONAL FIRMS

Experience	Intl UK Firm	Silver Circle	Magic Circle
NQ	\$120,000 - \$150,000	\$165,000 - \$180,000	\$190,000 - \$200,000
1 PQE	\$130,000 - \$155,000	\$175,000 - \$190,000	\$195,000 - \$210,000
2 PQE	\$140,000 - \$160,000	\$185,000 - \$210,000	\$210,000 - \$230,000
3 PQE	\$150,000 - \$170,000	\$190,000 - \$220,000	\$230,000 - \$250,000
4 PQE	\$165,000 - \$175,000	\$200,000 - \$240,000	\$250,000 - \$280,000
5 PQE	\$170,000 - \$200,000	\$220,000 - \$260,000	\$280,000 - \$300,000
6+ PQE	\$190,000 & above	\$245,000 & above	\$310,000 & above

Experience	Mid Atlantic US Firms (USD)	Cravath Class of 2025 (USD)
NQ	\$200,000 - \$250,000	
1 PQE	\$220,000 - \$270,000	\$225,000; total bonus \$21,000
2 PQE	\$240,000 - \$290,000	\$235,000; total bonus \$26,000
3 PQE	\$260,000 - \$310,000	\$260,000; total bonus \$40,000
4 PQE	\$290,000 - \$330,000	\$310,000; total bonus \$72,500
5 PQE	\$310,000 - \$360,000	\$365,000; total bonus \$95,000
6 PQE	\$340,000 - \$380,000	\$390,000; total bonus \$115,000
7+ PQE	\$360,000 & above	\$420,000; total bonus \$130,000

## SINGAPORE LAW FIRMS

Experience	Big 4 Firms	Mid-Sized Firms	Boutique Firms
1 PQE	\$7,500 - \$8,000	\$7,000 - \$7,600	\$5,500 - \$6,800
2 PQE	\$8,500 - \$9,000	\$7,500 - \$8,300	\$6,000 - \$7,500
3 PQE	\$10,000 - \$10,500	\$8,500 - \$9,400	\$7,000 - \$8,500
4 PQE	\$11,500 - \$12,800	\$9,000 - \$10,500	\$8,000 - \$9,500
5 PQE	\$12,500 - \$13,500	\$11,000 - \$12,500	\$9,000 - \$11,000
6+ PQE	\$14,000 & above	\$12,000 & above	\$10,000 & above

## BUSINESS SUPPORT ROLES

Experience	Paralegals	Legal Secretary	Risk & Compliance
1 PQE	\$45,000 - \$55,000	\$35,000 - \$48,000	\$40,000 - \$45,000
2 PQE	\$48,000 - \$60,000	\$48,000 - \$55,000	\$45,000 - \$55,000
3 PQE	\$55,000 - \$70,000	\$55,000 - \$60,000	\$55,000 - \$65,000
4 PQE	\$65,000 - \$80,000	\$60,000 - \$65,000	\$65,000 - \$72,000
5 PQE	\$75,000 - \$90,000	\$65,000 - \$72,000	\$72,000 - \$85,000
6 PQE	\$85,000 onwards	\$72,000 onwards	\$85,000 onwards

Experience	Corporate Secretary	Knowledge Management/PSL Lawyer
1 PQE	\$35,000 - \$45,000	\$70,000 - \$80,000
2 PQE	\$45,000 - \$55,000	\$80,000 - \$90,000
3 PQE	\$55,000 - \$60,000	\$85,000 - \$95,000
4 PQE	\$60,000 - \$65,000	\$95,000 - \$100,000
5 PQE	\$65,000 - \$80,000	\$115,000 - \$130,000
6 PQE	\$90,000 onwards	\$140,000 onwards

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING ROLES

Senior BD Executive	BD Manager	Senior BD Manager	BD, Director
\$6,000 - \$8,500	\$9,000 - \$15,000	\$15,000 - \$20,000	\$18,000 - \$25,000

# Market Intelligence

Insights drawn from our ongoing conversations with clients and candidates, capturing the latest hiring trends and developments in Singapore's private practice market.



## **The Partnership Timeline in Local Firms has Stretched**

Macro headwinds and billing model pressure have caused multiple firms to quietly extend partnership timelines. The cohort that expected partnership at 6 years is being retained with 'counsel' or maintaining at "SA" designations. EBC sees elevated lateral movement from this frustrated cohort — they are open to partner-track offers with boutiques, mid level moves to international law firms or in-house moves.

## **Flexibility Is Now a Hard Close Criterion**

Singapore's mandatory Flexible Working Arrangement framework (Dec 2024) has shifted market expectations. Candidates at 3-8 PQE are declining offers requiring 5-day office attendance. EBC's data shows firms offering 3-4 day hybrid close lateral hires 35% faster than those requiring full in-office attendance.

## **The Bilingual Premium Is Widening Beyond Mandarin**

Mandarin-English practitioners at 5+ PQE command 12-22% premiums in corporate, M&A, and finance. As Indonesia deal flow accelerates, Bahasa Indonesia fluency is emerging as a genuine premium at senior levels. EBC is tracking growing demand for top ASEAN legal professionals seeking to relocate back to home country.

## OUR LEGAL & PRIVATE PRACTICE TEAM

Strategically located across offices in Singapore and Hong Kong, our consultants are seasoned search professionals. Access their industry expertise, skills and networks that are both deep and broad in both local and regional markets.



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