



CLMs Share Their Reasons for Attaining Certification

Certification elevates the standing of legal managers within the legal community and the community at large. It identifies qualified practitioners, ensures recognition of their expertise, and assists in their development and self-improvement.

As **Dorothea M. Downey, CLM**, Head of Operations at GTC Law Group in Westwood, MA, told us: *“Working towards my CLM certification was the best thing I’ve done for myself in a long time. The wide range of knowledge that you will cover while studying for this exam, makes you feel like you can take on any task, even if you have never done it before. It was a lot of work, but well worth it.”*

Certification also helps junior-level professionals gain top-level management approval, while enabling senior practitioners to remain current in the field and improve their performance and proficiency.

“Studying for the CLM exam was a great experience for me,” says **Virginia Zingg, CLM**, Human Resources Manager at Farleigh Wada Witt in Portland. *“I was able to use my business management background outside of the legal field and combine it with my experience at my current firm to pull together a solid picture of what it takes to be a principal administrator. It gave me a greater appreciation for all aspects of law firm administration, which makes me a better management team member.”*

Regardless of the stage of your career, becoming certified adds a valuable dimension to your professional development, as **Travis Armstrong, CLM, CPA**, Firm Administrator for English, Lucas, Priest & Owsley, LLP in Bowling Green, KY, explains:

“Having already earned the CPA designation, my financial capabilities were well established and never questioned by my firm. Once I earned the CLM designation, it demonstrated my knowledge in areas where I had not received formal education or extensive training, such as Human Resources, Information Technology and Facilities Management. The CLM addresses all of these and lends additional credibility to my abilities.”

Additionally, survey results of CLMs and their managing partners indicated these top reasons for seeking certification:

Benefits of certification to the individual:

- Increases knowledge of all areas of legal administration
- Increases your value to your organization
- Increases respect and recognition in the industry
- Increases opportunity for upward mobility
- Increases marketability and ability to compete in the job market
- Increases remuneration and job benefits
- Increases professional credibility

Benefits of certification to the employer:

- Increases the level of competency of the individual to manage a law office or department
- Encourages and improves job performance
- Increases client confidence knowing the firm or legal department is being run by a certified professional
- Provides opportunity to acknowledge an individual who has developed a high level of professionalism
- Serves as an aid for retention and recruitment

Hear what others have said about why they pursued certification:

“Preparing for the exam helped me to learn many new things while adding clarity to the things I already knew. My specialty was Finance, but I ended up taking a position that utilizes my new CLM skills. I’m thankful that the CLM properly prepared me for it.” *David Glicksman, CLM, Chief Financial Officer, James Mintz Group, New York*

“Although the process was a long and stressful one, I do not regret my decision to pursue certification. Even if I had not passed the exam, I learned a great deal throughout the process that has benefited me in my day-to-day career. In addition to the certification, I met several chapter members that I otherwise may not have had the opportunity to get to know.”

Heather McConnell, CLM, Firm Administrator, Legge Farrow Kimmitt McGrath & Brown, LLP, Houston

“Becoming a CLM is one the most rewarding accomplishments I have experienced, both on a professional and personal level. It has provided me with a sense of confidence, pride and renewed excitement for my career and the legal profession. I am grateful for the support, encouragement, and assistance I received throughout the process from my friends and colleges in ALA, our local chapter, and my firm.”

Barbara J. Paige, CLM, PHR, Regional Director, Dorsey & Whitney LLP, Seattle.

“As the firm administrator of a small multi-practice law firm over the past 30 years, my job description has always covered all areas of law office management: Human Resources (including Profit Sharing and Savings Plan administration and Investment Committee participation), Finance, Operations and Facilities. When one is such a "Jane of all trades", we hope that we do indeed master most, if not all, work in these areas. However, I can truly say that I was not absolutely sure about that until I achieved the CLM certification. Studying for and passing the CLM exam validated for me that I do indeed possess a high level of knowledge in the many facets of law office administration. It's a terrific feeling and I would encourage other ALA members with similar tenure to do the same!”

Mary Hilcoske, CLM, Executive Director, Manley & Brautigam, PC, Anchorage.

“Passing the CLM exam was not easy. But that makes the CLM designation even more valuable. When I received my ‘congratulations’ letter, I couldn't have been more thrilled. I think I grew 2 inches taller that day. The study material tied together all the areas of law firm management for me, areas that are typically handled by our firm's HR, Finance, Marketing and Technology Departments. I'm proud of my CLM designation and don't regret a minute of study time. This process made me a better law firm administrator.”

Cheryl Igler, CLM, Administrator, Guilday Schwartz Simpson West Hatch & Lowe, PA, Tallahassee.

“Having the certification gives me an advantage in the marketplace that is needed in these tough economic times. If you want to stand out from the crowd, take on the challenge of attaining certification, and prove to yourself and others that you have what it takes to contribute to a firm's success.”

Don Anderson, CLM, Executive Director,,Williams Montgomery & John, Ltd, Chicago

“Earning the CLM designation is the crowning achievement that, combined with my education and years of experience, provides confirmation of my mastery of those competencies needed to be considered among the top professionals in the legal management field. Not only has acquiring the CLM increased my own confidence, but it has also provided me with increased appreciation, recognition, and confidence of the partners in my firm. I believe that having the CLM designation gives legal managers a competitive advantage over those with equal experience and educational backgrounds. It also affords the Law Firms employing CLMs with opportunities to save substantial amounts of money on insuring against malpractice risk that wouldn't be available to them otherwise. Additionally, my path to earning the CLM created opportunities for expanding my own professional network and growing life long friendships. An experience I will be forever grateful for.”

Dawn Kowalski, CLM, Firm Administrator, Smith Hood Loucks Stout Bigman & Brock, PA, Daytona Beach

“Thank you so much for offering me the opportunity to express my feelings in becoming certified, but after reviewing some of the comments made by others, I don't know that I can express it any more eloquently than anyone else has before me. In addition, the attainment of that designation and reaching that goal touches on so many aspects of your life, it is hard to focus on one area.”

Deborah J. Smith, CLM, Legal Administrator, Jacobs & Goodman, P.A., Altamonte Springs, FL