AML Departments Face Growing Workload Amid Staffing Shortages

Rachel Louise Ensign
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Major banks are beefing up compliance staff, but a new survey suggests there’s a widespread shortage of qualified professionals to fill some of those roles.

Two out of five employees surveyed said their firms’ anti-money laundering (AML) departments faced staffing shortages and a similar number said their firm had problems finding enough properly trained AML staffers, according to a survey released today from Dow Jones and the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists. Both figures were up from 2012.

Most of the survey respondents had jobs that involved anti-money laundering and Bank-Secrecy-Act-related duties, with most respondents working in banking.

These professionals are facing a growing workload as these staffing issues mount. 77% of respondents said that their personal workload had increased in the past year, up from 71% last year. Separately, 79% expected their department’s workload to grow in the next year, slightly above the 76% who said so in 2012.

While staffing issues were a growing concern, a plurality of those surveyed (26%) once again identified “increased regulatory expectations” as their biggest challenge.

A plurality of respondents (22%) again listed the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial-reform act as the single regulation that increased or would increase their organization’s workload the most. But the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, which requires foreign financial institutions with U.S. account holders to report detailed information about those accounts to the Internal Revenue Service, was a close second, with 17% saying it would have the most impact, up from 13% in 2012 and 10% in 2011.

The survey also shined light on the way client screening, a key activity in the anti-money laundering process, is done. Nearly half of all alerts that came up in the client-screening process were false positives on average, a figure slightly higher than last year. The average time to clear an alert was 13 minutes, though 21% of respondents said they on average cleared alerts in two minutes or less.
Dow Jones is the publisher of Risk & Compliance Journal. The survey had 989 respondents globally in various roles.

Write to Rachel Louise Ensign at rachel.ensign@wsj.com.