



Creating & Sustaining a Diverse and Inclusive Culture at a Law Firm: A Case Study

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Early History

- Client message at Firm retreat in 2006
- Formation of Diversity Committee
- Search for a Consultant
- Consultant's Assessment of Leadership Commitment
- Assessment of Firm Culture: Focus Groups and Individual Interviews
- Presentation of Findings

Issues Identified

- Retention and progressive promotion (e.g., advancement to senior associate status, then ownership) of attorneys of color;
- Associates' concerns about the need for full knowledge of the options for work/life balance and the consequences of exercising these options for career advancement.
- The experience of some staff of less respectful treatment than that accorded to attorneys.

Goal of Diversity Initiative

A workforce of attorneys and staff with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, all of whom provide the highest quality services to B & D's clients and have equal opportunity to live up to their individual potential for success and feel included as valued members of Beveridge & Diamond.

Three key objectives:

- ✓ Retain and promote women attorneys
- ✓ Recruit, retain and promote minority attorneys
- ✓ Engage all lawyers, managers and staff

Obstacles to Addressing Issues Identified and Moving Toward Goal

- Assumption that fair-minded people who want diversity will be able to create and sustain a diverse organization by bringing in and assimilating people from diverse backgrounds and that nothing else needs to change, at either an organizational or individual level.
- Assumption that “colorblindness,” while regarded as a valued aspiration by a majority at B & D, has the potential to discount “in-group” and “out-group” experiences that occur and are reinforced in countless ways every day.

Obstacles, cont.

- Assumptions about meritocracy (i.e., that everyone who works hard has an equal chance to live up to their potential to succeed.)
- Implicit/unconscious (and unintentional) bias that favors similar (and disfavors dissimilar) individuals and groups.
- Implicit/unconscious (and unintentional) bias that negatively affects behavior toward and judgment of stereotyped groups, most prominently women and people of color in high-status positions.

Training

- All attorneys
- All staff
- Four 4-hour sessions
- Conducted by consultants in all offices

Training Plan Developed with Consultants

- **Part I :**
 - What Does It Mean to Have a Diverse Law Firm?
- **Part II:**
Unexamined/Implicit Bias and the Implicit Association Test (IAT)
- **Part III:**
 - Micromessaging
 - Self-fulfilling prophecies
- **Part IV:** Constructive Engagement

Constructively Engaging Differences

- Practice discussing difficult situations
- What should we do when we experience “bias”?
- How should we address situations we witness that appear to reflect unexamined bias?
- How can we raise performance concerns without appearing biased?

Actions (with consultants)

- Written Policy on Flexible Work Arrangements
 - Roll-out Fall 2007
 - “Learning” Meeting April 2008
 - Recognition by Project for Attorney Retention (DC-PAR)

Actions (with consultants)

- Other Diversity Activities:
 - Website Updates
 - Marketing and Bar Events
 - RFPs
 - Coordination with Recruiting Outreach
 - Other External Efforts (ELI, PAR, other appropriate publicity)

Actions – Post Consultation

- Ongoing Dialogue to Build on Training
- “Diversalogue”
 - Formal quarterly events
 - Firm-wide, rotating planning with all offices
 - E.g., Generational Diversity; Work-Life Balance, Getting Fit at Work; Blending Cultures Around the Holidays
 - Informal meetings/gatherings
 - E.g., Diversity Book Club, Cook Book blog
 - Goals include:
 - Delve into topics from training
 - Encourage/facilitate conversations

Initiatives- External

- Leadership Council on Legal Diversity
 - Diversity Fellow – Now supporting our 3rd Fellow; women and minority principals
 - Rooney Rule
- MCCA
 - Annual Conference in NYC; Awards Gala; GCI Invitational
 - FAN program
- Environmental Law Institute (ELI)
 - Diversity in Environmental Law Series
- Diversity & Flexibility Alliance (PAR)
- DC- Diverse Partners Network

Initiatives – Pipeline & Recruiting

- Howard Law School Environmental Law Program
- Thurgood Marshall Opportunity Program, Maryland Attorney General, Law Schools and Law Firms
- LCLD Law School Mentoring Program
- Urban Debate League
- Environmental Law Institute Intern
- Minority Resume Collection
- LCLD 1L Scholar, 2012 and 2013

Initiatives - Internal

- Training programs in 2013
 - Initial comprehensive training for new people since 2010
 - Focused sessions for everyone
 - New hire training
- Getting to Know You and Cookbook
- Coordination with Recruiting + pipeline Client Surveys and RFPs
- Individual Action/Commitment Initiative

Accomplishments since 2006

- Percentage of women shareholders has risen from 24% to 33%, three of whom are minority
- 4 of 7 Management Committee members are women
- Half of associates are women, up from 46%
- Minority Managing Shareholder
- Percentage minority associates has risen from 6% to 24%
- Percentage of associates working flexible work arrangements has nearly doubled

Accomplishments since 2006

- Awards and Recognition
 - PAR recognized B&D for having the greatest proportion of women in their new shareholder class of 2011. B&D promoted 6 attorneys to shareholder, 5 of whom are women. PAR acknowledged B&D for its promotion of part-time attorneys in the 2011 shareholder class.
 - AT&T Legal Department Award
 - Managing Shareholder awards and recognition

Ongoing Commitment

- Budget increase, even through recession
- This past year, 2012, approximately 37% of attorneys at the firm and 13% of staff participated in B&D Diversity & Inclusion Activities: Our goal for 2014 is 65% participation; 100% in 5 years
- Recent survey indicates strong interest in continuing evaluation and communication regarding flex work arrangements

Lessons Learned/ Keys to Success

- Leadership
- Investment (time and money)
- Constant reassessment and renewed commitment