

Managing Partner's ToolKit: Fostering a Diverse and Inclusive Work Environment

At the last Managing Partners' Roundtable held during the City Bar's diversity and inclusion CLE program in June 2015, managing partners requested a one to two page list of takeaways or tools they could implement to enhance the diversity and inclusiveness of their firms. Below is a list of those tools ranging from basic steps that can be taken on a day to day basis to more involved steps that require planning and attention like annual unconscious bias trainings and mentorship/sponsorship programs. The list also includes resources managing partners should be aware of and reasons why diversity and inclusion matters. We hope these tools will be useful to managing partners' efforts to strengthen the diversity and inclusiveness of their firms.

I. Inclusion Strategies

A. Basic Tools - these strategies are often overlooked as obvious, but can have a tremendous impact on the inclusiveness of a firm

1. Consider what it might be like to be in the numeric minority and help diverse attorneys navigate firm culture
 - a) Invite diverse attorneys to lunch/coffee
 - b) Sit next to diverse attorneys at a meeting
 - c) Say hello – simply saying hello can spark conversation that interrupts biases and misperceptions
 - d) Analyze a list of available associates before making a determination of an associate to use on a project so that you are not relying on the same associates for every assignment
2. Do not rely on the grapevine-form your own opinions about associates
 - a) Find ways to put the associates at ease and let them know you believe in their capacity to succeed
 - b) When mistakes occur, share your own experiences of stumbling or overcoming a challenge in your career at the firm
 - c) Make an effort to give timely, constructive feedback to everyone, especially new associates
3. Give associate a second chance to work with you
4. Create "fail safes" in the system
 - a) Rotate office house work (taking notes, planning parties) so that no one group is disproportionately doing the "low value" work
 - b) Institute practice of examining the full list of eligible associates by level rather just who is top of mind
 - c) Create explicit role for someone to speak up for implicit bias in written evaluations and in discussions – rotate this responsibility

B. Mentorship/Sponsorship Tools

1. Mentor/Sponsor people who are not like you
2. Staff associates whose names may be more difficult to pronounce
3. Invite diverse attorneys to sit in on conference calls, client meetings, professional meetings
4. Pay attention to the demographics of associates working on your matter
5. Add at least one new associate to your pool of "go to" associates
6. When giving assignments, be careful to explain what you want, don't assume the associate knows what you know

7. Encourage the associate to return with follow-up questions or identify a more senior associate that can serve as a resource
 8. Tie compensation to formal mentoring/sponsorship program
- C. Training Tools – we can train ourselves to notice and interrupt implicit bias
1. Hold annual or bi-annual diversity and inclusion or unconscious bias trainings
 2. Use Diversity and Inclusion professionals to develop infrastructure to address bias
 3. Review resources to understand why bias exists and the current reality in the legal profession and share with management of the firm
- II. Studies/Literature of Interest
- A. Harvard's IAT
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
 - B. Written in Black and White: Exploring Confirmation Bias in Racialized Perceptions of Writing Skills (Nextions Research Study)
http://www.nextions.com/wp-content/files_mf/14468226472014040114WritteninBlackandWhiteYPS.pdf
 - C. Recruitment (University of Chicago Resume Study)
<http://www.chicagobooth.edu/capideas/spring03/racialbias.html>
 - D. Implicit Bias in the Courtroom (Jerry Kang UCLA study)
<http://faculty.washington.edu/agg/pdf/Kang&al.ImplicitBias.UCLALawRev.2012.pdf>
 - E. Mansplaining, Maninterrupting & Bropropriating: Gender Bias and the Pervasive Interruption of Women (New Nextions Research Study)
<http://www.nextions.com/library/articles-research-studies/yellow-paper-series-mansplaining-maninterrupting-bropropriating-gender-bias-and-the-pervasive-interruption-of-women-nextions-original-research-042015/>
- III. Motivation for Change
- A. Inclusion creates diversity, which improves innovation and law firms need innovation now more than ever
 - B. Creative thinking and innovative solutions arise from diversity of perception and thinking
 - C. The best way to create the most complete analysis of these perceptions and make the best decisions is with a lot of different thinkers