

Promoting diversity in your law practice

The advantages of a diverse law firm are well documented. Diverse firms are better able to attract a wider range of clients and, according to an American Bar Association article, they also better relate to important decision makers within the legal process. Whether you are just starting out in your practice career or have a seasoned law firm, diversity is an initiative that you can easily implement. The ABA provides some tips for increasing diversity within your law firm. Let's discuss a few of them.

Diversifying management and roles within the firm

A diverse law firm is not only reflected in the partners and associates. Management, support staff and leadership roles should all represent your goals. Whenever a new role or position becomes available in your firm, make the effort to open up the opportunity to a larger pool of candidates. Solely relying on seniority or legacy can discourage diversity in these roles, as well as the firm as a whole. Instead create a pool that reflects merit, as well as diversity. Seeing different genders and races in leadership positions sends a message that the firm values all of its employees equally.

Celebrate the differences

Cultural differences can easily become huge elephants in the boardroom. It's important to create a firm culture that embraces these differences and celebrates their value. No member of your firm should feel excluded or unwelcome. Here are some tactics to implement:

- First, openly communicate your diversity goals. Keeping them a secret creates a perception of wrong doing. From the mailroom to the senior partners, everyone should know the firm's philosophy on expanding diversity.

- Second, sponsor team building activities that celebrate diversity. The ABA article mentions one firm that sponsors an annual potluck, where members are encouraged to bring foods that represent their individual cultures. You might also consider an after-work diversity event for employees and their families.
- Third, ensure that there are clear, unobstructed systems in place for employees to report inappropriate behaviors. Let all employees know that harassment and acts of discrimination will not be tolerated within the firm.

Associate Development

If you hire diverse attorneys and adequately develop them, they will one day become diverse partners. When a firm's partners reflect diversity, it speaks volumes for the practice within the legal community and among potential clients. Simply hiring diverse associates is not enough. Put in the time and effort to develop all of your associates equally.

Law school graduates increasingly reflect a wider variety of individuals. Opening your doors to everyone is not only the appropriate thing to do, but it also strengthens the overall success of your practice.

About Erika Winston:

Erika Winston is a Virginia based writer with a passion for all things legal. As a former domestic relations attorney, she understands the challenge of determining the best fee structure for your practice. Erika is a regular contributor to [TimeSolv](#) and a variety of other publications.