

Upgrading your diversity quotient

Each year, [Vault.com](https://www.vault.com) releases its picks for law firms with the best diversity rankings. In establishing this list, the organization uses associate surveys to analyze how well these firms create, maintain, and foster a workforce that includes diversity. When people speak about diversity, the tendency is to focus on areas of race, ethnicity and gender.

While these classifications are important to consider, true diversity is even more inclusive. The Vault diversity rankings include five specific categories: minorities, women, LGBTQ individuals, disabled individuals and veterans. They then used a formula to measure each of the five categories for an overall score.

Unfortunately, diversity is still a work in progress within the legal community. This may stem from a collective failure to recognize the value of a diverse workforce, or a lack of knowledge about strategies to promote diversity within a firm. Whatever the case may be in your practice, the following information and tips can help you improve the diversity of your law office.

Foster Relationships with Minority Professional Organizations

Organizations, such as your area Women's Bar Association, the Hispanic Bar Association or a local Veterans organization, can prove helpful in your efforts to increase diversity. Not only do such organizations provide valuable networking opportunities to expand your knowledge of issues facing these specific communities, but they can also serve as gateways for extremely talented and capable employment candidates.

Mentoring programs

Whether you implement a formal mentoring program or simply encourage informal mentoring between diverse parties, these efforts help create and maintain a diverse workforce. An article in [Law Practice Today](#) states, “Informal mentoring can aid with professionalism, retention of female lawyers and lawyers of color in the legal profession, and in the career development of diverse lawyers.” These professional relationships promote engagement, inclusiveness and teamwork among all members of the firm.

Analyze your hiring process

Many law firms utilize a hiring process that discourages diversity right from the start. The use of gender or age specific wording in a job announcement can greatly affect the candidate pool. Once resumes are submitted, the tendency of law firms to only consider applicants from the highest tiered law schools can also work against efforts to diversify. There are plenty of excellent attorneys in the legal community without an ivy league education. Finances or other obligations may have kept an excellent student from attending a top notch school. Drop those preconceived notions and consider a wider demographic of applicants.

The interview stage can also present diversity impediments. Interviewers tend to look for candidates who “fit in” with other members of the firm. Whether purposely or inadvertently, this type of perspective can diminish the consideration of diverse candidates for positions within your firm.

With the vast diversity of legal clients in the world, diversifying your law firm makes sense to your bottom line. By establishing long term goals and implementing some of these practices, your firm can also be recognized for its commitment to diversity.

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.