

Diversity – Law Firms

Hitting The Ground Running: Embracing Diversity At The New Day Pitney LLP

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DAY PITNEY LLP

At Day Pitney LLP, diversity is not a short-term initiative; it is a sincere and proactive commitment to create talented teams that reflect the clients and the communities in which firm professionals live and work.

Top-down Leadership From The Start

Well before the “official” merger of Day, Berry & Howard LLP and Pitney Hardin LLP on January 1, 2007, leaders of both firms recognized and embraced diversity as a core Day Pitney value. Throughout the pre-merger planning process and during the very busy, post-merger weeks, the firm leadership placed its commitment to diversity at the top of its “to-do” list.

Within days of the October 30 merger announcement, Pitney Hardin LLP Managing Partner Dennis LaFiura and Day, Berry & Howard LLP Managing Partner James Sicilian met jointly with a number

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of firm minority partners and associates. During this early November meeting, the Managing Partners discussed what would be the new firm’s commitment to recruiting, mentoring, retaining and promoting attorneys from a variety of backgrounds.

Within the first two weeks of the January 1 merger, the Executive Committee established the Day Pitney Diversity Committee. That Committee, comprised of associates, partners, members of the Executive Committee and Chairs of the Recruitment Committee, met for the first time on January 30. Committee members are already working diligently to support the firm’s diversity initiatives. The Committee encourages attorney participation in various diverse bar association events and sponsors numerous organizations whose missions are consistent with the goal of increasing diversity.

A Unique Mentoring Program For Day Pitney Minority Attorneys

The Day Pitney Executive Committee has also embraced the Executive Committee Minority Mentoring Program originally pioneered by Day Berry & Howard.

Under this program, each member of the Executive Committee mentors at least one minority attorney. This informal partnership serves a dual purpose: Executive Committee members are positioned to learn more about the issues that are important to minority attorneys and minority attorneys benefit by having direct contact with the firm’s leaders.

Executive Committee mentors meet with their assigned mentees regularly throughout the year. These meetings focus on a number of topics, such as professional development, billable and non-billable hours, opportunities and firm experiences. Executive Committee mentors also coordinate with other firm personnel, such as department chairs and the Director of Professional Development, on a regular basis, to ensure that each attorney is developing the appropriate lawyering skills. The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) Committee for the Advancement of Diversity cited this unique mentoring program in its March 3, 2006 publication on “Best Practices in Law Firm Diversity.”

The Executive Committee and the firm’s diverse attorneys also attend off-site, quarterly dinner meetings. At these meetings, the firm’s leadership and minority attorneys socialize and share an open and frank discussion about strategies for developing a more diverse and inclusive firm. The minority associates meet in advance of the meeting to develop discus-

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sion topics and a written agenda to guide the participants. Past discussion topics have included attorney billable hours and workloads, and the role of minority attorneys in firm marketing efforts.

Cultural Celebrations – Learning From Each Other

Many law firms have initiatives in place to support diversity and inclusion. Day Pitney uses the term “diversity” expansively to encompass a wide range of experiences, cultures and backgrounds. To help its employees become more familiar with peers from different backgrounds, the firm will sponsor various cultural celebrations throughout the year, including Black History Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Gay & Lesbian Awareness Month and National Hispanic Heritage Awareness Month.

This year, Day Pitney volunteers from each of the firm’s nine offices have collaborated to organize and coordinate the firm’s inaugural Black History Month Celebration. This February Celebration features a daily firm-wide trivia contest, published calendars of Black History Month events taking place in each office community, weekly showings of the documentary “Eyes on the Prize,” and publication of a daily “Taste of Black History Month” segment, which provides narratives describing relevant literature, recipes and events. The month-long Celebration will conclude with a “Day of Cultural Sharing” and a Black History Month Happy Hour or Luncheon Celebration in each office.

Inside and Out – All Around Commitment

An effective diversity program has both an inward and outward focus, and Day Pitney’s efforts to support diversity extend well beyond the firm’s four walls. For example, beginning in the 2006-07 academic year, the Day Pitney Foundation will make \$20,000 annual grants to Fordham University Law School to fund two scholarships for students who demonstrate merit and financial need, from backgrounds that are historically under-represented in the legal profession.

Day Pitney has joined more than 110 other law firms and government and corporate legal departments in signing the New York City Bar Association’s Statement of Diversity Principles (“Statement”). In becoming a Statement signatory, Day Pitney committed to undertaking a series of specific steps

designed to enhance diversity and inclusiveness within the legal profession.

Day Pitney’s commitment to diversity is also evident in its client work. Day Pitney lawyers who represent individuals in their trust and estate planning long ago recognized that, in particular, same sex couples planning for the future of their families and loved ones require a full understanding of the range of legal rights, obligations and possibilities open to them. Day Pitney attorneys provide sensitive and effective planning in this rapidly evolving legal environment to offer genuine security to same sex couples and minimize the risk that they will encounter complications in the future.

Since funding alone can never address issues, the Day Pitney Diversity Committee oversees not only the financial support provided by the firm in the form of many sponsorships, but also encourages the active participation of firm professionals in organizations such as the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity, Inc. (formerly The Connecticut Lawyers Group), The Boston Lawyers Group and The New Jersey Law Firm Group. Day Pitney attorneys are active in several minority affinity groups, such as the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the Hispanic National Bar Association, New Jersey Women Lawyers Association and the George W. Crawford Law Association.

Day Pitney is also proud to be the first law firm member of the Connecticut Minority Supplier Development Council (CMSDC), an organization that introduces minority vendors to the commercial community to assist in the development of their businesses.

Diversity And The Hiring Front

Day Pitney’s Diversity Committee also contributes significantly to the firm’s recruiting efforts. Firm partners and associates have sponsored resume writing and interview skills workshops for minority law students attending, among others, Boston University Law School, Boston College Law School, Northeastern University Law School, Howard University Law School, and the University of Connecticut School of Law.

The firm also recruits at least one first-year student from the Rutgers University-Newark Minority Student Program and from the University of Connecticut School of Law Cultural Diversity Initiative each year for its summer associate program. Day Pitney also employs sum-

mer interns through the New York City Bar and the Boston Lawyers Group.

Members of the firm’s Recruitment Committee also attend the Boston Lawyers Group Job Fair, the Vault/MCCA Diversity Job Fair and the Philadelphia Area Minority Job Fair.

The success of these efforts are reflected in the percentages of minority attorneys in Day Pitney’s inaugural summer and first-year classes: minority law students and attorneys comprise 38% of the firm’s summer class and 36% of the firm’s fall, 2007 class.

Holding Ourselves Accountable

Day Pitney holds itself accountable for achieving its diversity goals in several ways and employs strategies to communicate the importance of diversity within the firm. For example, individual partner contributions to diversity factor into both partner compensation determinations and non-partner bonus awards. The Diversity Committee submits an annual report to the Executive Committee describing the committee’s accomplishments throughout the year. As a signatory to the New York City Bar Statement of Principles, Day Pitney files minority census data with the City Bar on a yearly basis.

Finally, Day Pitney encourages its professionals to attend minority conferences and seminars designed to help attendees learn more about attracting and retaining minority attorneys.

Day Pitney encourages attorney attendance at these seminars and conferences to enable its attorneys to learn about and bring back new and innovative ideas for supporting and achieving diversity. Annual conferences such as the *Charting Your Own Course* conference, the *Pathways to Diversity Conference*, and the *National Conference for the Minority Lawyer* offer Day Pitney attorneys wonderful opportunities to network, grow professionally and learn more about cutting edge diversity strategies.

Day Pitney is proud of its tradition of fostering and maintaining a work environment in which the diversity and uniqueness of each individual is valued and celebrated. The new firm has inherited and embraces the commitment of its legacy firms to continue to take full advantage of the rich backgrounds and abilities of its colleagues and neighbors and to promoting greater diversity and inclusiveness, within the firm and in the communities in which it practices.