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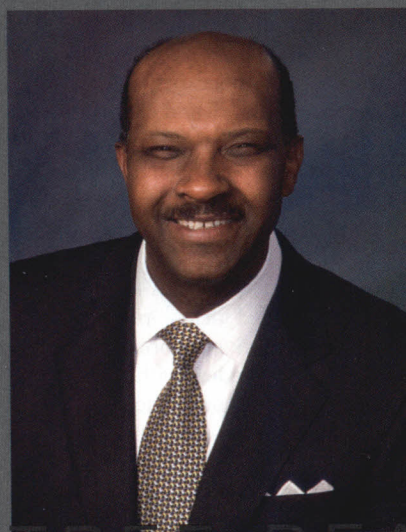


SAWYER

DIVERSITY

IN MAJOR LAW FIRMS

SHOOK, HARDY & BACON LLP



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MICHELLE WIMES
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP

Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP The Bridge to a Successful Diversity and Inclusion Initiative

How is it that some law firms have what it takes to hire the best and brightest diverse candidates only to see them leave three to

five years later? Why does this happen in spite of the law firm's "commitment" to diversity, good intentions, and long-standing investments in diversity and attorney development? How can a law firm go from "well meaning" to well doing"? These are just a few of the questions that must be answered if a law firm wants to not only attract attorneys of color; women; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) lawyers but also create and foster an inclusive environment that makes them want to stay.

In the past five to seven years, most law firms have begun to actively pursue some type of diversity program. They have organized firmwide diversity committees, hired a dedicated professional to direct the firm's diversity efforts, expanded the network of schools and job fairs they attend, and created inclusive policies and procedures (like alternative work schedule programs and domestic partner benefits), all in an effort to demonstrate their overall commitment to diversity. Yet, the landscape of law firms simply has not changed much. Demographically, the leadership in most large law firms today is still white, heterosexual, and male. Law firms have to recognize that a commitment to diversity and inclusion does not automatically translate into inclusive work environments. And, unless more diverse partners become leaders within their respective law firms, and generally in the profession, any progress at the associate level will be difficult to maintain.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that new 'sightlines' are emerging in diversity. These sightlines are less focused on a law firm's overall commitment to diversity but increasingly on the actual performance expertise and capabilities of their diverse lawyers. Clients want to know that a law firm can staff its cases and transactions with top performing diverse lawyers – lawyers whom they deem to be indispensable to their matters. And, young lawyers, particularly diverse lawyers, want to be valued and seen as key, indispensable team players within their law firms. If a law firm is able to meet the needs of both its clients and its young, diverse lawyers, it will stand out among its competitors as providing

true value in a fast changing legal marketplace while creating an inclusive environment that stems unwanted attrition. But, a firm must be willing to make the necessary investments to increase its pool of top performing diverse attorneys who are perceived by both the firm and key clients to be indispensable.

Too many law firms for too long have relied on the age-old mantras, "cream will always rise to the top" or "I know talent when I see it" in determining who gets developed and promoted. However, it is precisely these age-old approaches that have had a negative impact on diverse lawyers. Without developing specific, meaningful criteria to define lawyer success, diverse lawyers particularly suffer in large majority-run law firms.

At Shook, Hardy we have spent the past eighteen months engaged in a process that will undoubtedly increase our pool of top performing diverse lawyers while decreasing the potential for bias, favoritism, and cronyism – barriers which disproportionately impact minority lawyers.

The Success Pathway Project

In an effort to candidly assess the criteria that lead to success in our workplace, we hired an outside consultant to interview attorneys at all levels (both majority and minority) in each of our domestic offices. In each interview, we sought to better understand the success pathway at Shook by identifying and examining the (1) on-boarding strategies, (2) ways of working, (3) interpersonal/relationship building skills, (4) ways of learning, and (5) self-investment habits of our top performers and underperformers.

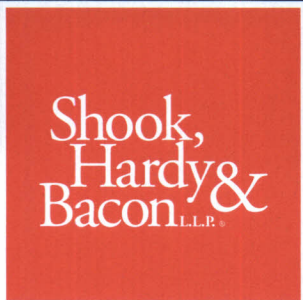
This project led us to uncover invaluable information regarding (1) the attributes necessary for early success at the firm ("Gateway Attributes"), (2) the rules of play and rules for long-term success, (3) specific behaviors that create an attorney's "brand" as well as those behaviors which could lead to an attorney's "derailment," and (4) the mindset of a top performer.

This rich body of information is currently being integrated into our recruitment, new-attorney training, associate development, associate evaluation, diversity, and new-partner training efforts. **s**

For a full report on Shook, Hardy & Bacon LLP's Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives, please contact Michelle Wimes, Director of Strategic Initiatives at mwimes@shb.com



Diverse
perspectives
expand your
view.



Shook,
Hardy &
Bacon LLP

Shook, Hardy & Bacon

is committed to approaching our clients' issues from a rich array of angles. By creating an environment that celebrates diversity and inclusion, we more readily achieve the innovative solutions that today's challenges require.

In 2011, the Women in Law Development Forum awarded SHB its Gold Standard Certification for integrating women into the highest leadership positions. Accolades for the firm in 2010 included MCCA's Thomas L. Sager Award for the Midwest Region, Altria's Law Department and Inclusion Award, and a perfect score of 100% on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.



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