



Study: California Law Firms Lead Country In Diversity – But It’s Not Easy

Fierce Competitors Share Best Practices, Including Mentoring, Monitoring and Activism

Press Release

January 19, 2010 (Mountain View and San Francisco, CA) — Some of the nation's largest law firms have chosen to share – among even their fiercest competitors – the best practices that helped them recruit, grow and promote a more diverse firm, in hopes that the law profession will eventually reflect the rest of the country – or barring that, at least reflect the nation’s law schools, according to a groundbreaking study commissioned by Fenwick & West LLP and conducted by Talent Advisory Board Inc., an independent third-party research firm.

Specifically, the study showcases best practices for leading firms that have been successful in recruiting, retaining and advancing African American, Hispanic, Asian, GLBT and female attorneys at the associate and partner levels in California. An independent third party, Talent Advisory Board, conducted the research.

The *California Law Firm Critical Mass Best Practices* diversity research study report shows that in terms of diversity at least, California firms are well ahead of most other states drawing on the diversity of the region. But even more notable in the report is the level of detail and openness with which some of these leading firms were willing to share the tips and practices that helped them win awards as well as coveted recruits. By doing so, said the study's director, they may have helped the legal profession as a whole gain unprecedented visibility beyond the numbers and rankings with which firms are usually judged, to how those firms got there.

"This study combines objective statistical benchmarks with law firms that exceeded the benchmarks, and shows in detail the best practices that enable superior diversity performance," said Tina Paikeday, principal of Talent Advisory Board. "Although you might be able to attain this level of insight anecdotally at a conference, we believe this is one of the first times that seven such leading law firms have collaborated to provide concrete firm-specific examples and guidance in a format that is accessible to anyone."

Some of the practices highlighted in the study include:

- Placing a lower emphasis on grades for recruiting, political activism as a potential recruiting tool, and lateral hiring which can expand diverse role models

- Providing senior-level sponsors who are proactive in mentoring and facilitating development opportunities for advancement
- Monitoring closely the diversity levels not only across the firm, but also in specific high-risk practice groups and in summer recruiting classes, to correct potential diversity issues early in the pipeline

Fenwick Partner Felix S. Lee, who co-chairs his firm's diversity committee, said he was glad to see the commitment on the part of his own firm and his competitors. "Fenwick has been a long-time leader in promotion of diversity in the legal profession, and continues to be one of the most diverse law firms in the country. The firm remains committed to continued progress in this regard. We don't want to rest on our laurels but to press forward and use these findings and the wisdom of our peers so that the legal profession ultimately will reflect the country at large."

He added, "We feel the firms were motivated to participate both because they wanted to learn how to increase diversity in their own firms, and also to increase diversity across the profession as a whole."

Research Participants

Firms including Littler Mendelson, Wilson Sonsini, Bingham McCutchen, Morrison & Foerster, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman were selected for inclusion as major California law firms that ranked in the top quartile in one or more of the following rankings: *Minority Law Journal* 2009 Diversity Scorecard, *California Lawyer* 2009 California 50 Partner Progress and *Greenlining Institute* 2008 Major Law Firm Diversity Scorecard.

Diversity demographic data for the legal profession was collected from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the American Bar Association and the NALP *Directory of Legal Employers*. Talent Advisory Board analyzed the data in order to create benchmarks for the level of diversity in the U.S. legal profession and in specific geographic regions within California. The benchmark data was compared to data provided by each firm to identify firm-specific diversity strengths. To view the complete report, [click here](#).

About Fenwick & West LLP

Established in 1972, Fenwick & West works closely with clean technology, life sciences and other technology companies that are changing the world through innovation. The firm has more than 30 years of experience crafting innovative solutions to the business challenges that arise at the intersection of technology and the law. Fenwick & West clients, who range from start-up ventures to global enterprises, value our attorneys' deep industry experience and understanding of their technologies. The firm is ranked by *Minority Law Journal* as one of the top five most diverse law firms in the United States. The Diversity Committee at Fenwick & West works closely with the attorney recruiting department to increase outreach at law schools targeted to diverse student communities and Fenwick has been actively

involved in various groups and activities that work to promote diversity both in the legal profession and the community, including the Asian American Bar Association, Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (BALIF), the ABA Section of the Litigation Committee for the Minority Trial Lawyer and the Minority Corporate Counsel Association. The firm has implemented diversity training, mentoring, assignment tracking and recruiting initiatives in order to strengthen diversity. In its efforts to embrace diverse heritages, the firm hosts cross-cultural celebrations, including Cinco de Mayo and Chinese New Year. For more information please visit www.fenwick.com.

About Talent Advisory Board Inc.

Talent Advisory Board Inc. is a boutique research based consulting firm focused on serving law firm leaders who have made a commitment to advancing workforce diversity. Qualitative and quantitative research and analysis is employed to provide independent diversity assessments, measure success metrics, and inform planning based on diversity best practices. Principal Tina Shah Paikeday received an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business and previously served as a management consultant at McKinsey & Company. For more information please visit www.talentadvisoryboard.com.

Source: Fenwick & West LLP