



**JESSICA MAZZEO**  
Co-Founder and Chief Operating  
Officer, Griesing Law, LLC

## Q&A: Tips for Ensuring Your Workforce Is Diverse and Inclusive

**“Diversity” and “inclusion” aren’t just buzzwords. They are words law firms need to take to heart — not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because it makes business sense, too. More clients look to do business with firms that employ a diverse population.**

We recently asked Jessica Mazzeo, Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer at Griesing Law, LLC ([www.griesinglaw.com](http://www.griesinglaw.com)), in Philadelphia, how firms can put words into action when it comes to ensuring they have strong diversity and inclusion measures in place. Notably, she is also a member of ALA’s Committee on Diversity and Inclusion ([alanet.org/about/diversity](http://alanet.org/about/diversity)).

**Legal Management: What are the benefits of ensuring firm leadership is diverse and includes women in leadership positions? What tips do you have for law firm managers to cultivate such a culture?**

**Jessica Mazzeo:** There are many reasons out there for what they call the “business case” for diversity. But I think it’s much simpler than that. When all the decision-makers fit the same criteria, it’s not remotely feasible for their decisions to be universally fair or effective. Leadership and top management should reflect the makeup of not only your firm, but your client and prospective client base as well. That includes a representative group of individuals who differ in gender, race, disability and/or sexual orientation (among a variety of other diverse categories).

As for implementation, it all comes down to the people. First, you always need buy-in from the top. If your managing partners do not *publicly* support D&I, it won’t work no matter how well thought out the goals are. This includes setting aside budget spend for D&I initiatives and tracking how that money is being implemented at the firm and what the outcomes are. Having public support from the leaders of your firm also sets a very clear

message that D&I is not just a new firm initiative, but an important part of firm culture going forward.

Once you get buy-in from the top, you need to have people who understand the importance of such a program and that they are not simply tasked with “checking a box.” It’s important to educate staff on why diversity and inclusion is essential and why it will benefit the firm now and in the future. Allow staff of all levels to get involved in the firm’s D&I committee, ensure that the committee meets regularly, and set concrete tasks for committee members to keep everyone accountable. One last tip I have for law firm managers is to be patient. Like any new or existing policy, anything that affects firm culture will take time to successfully implement. Get input as you go and adapt as necessary.

***LM: What steps should firms be taking now to make sure their leadership reflects the diversity of employees?***

**JM:** A quick visual of the leadership team will indicate what next steps your firm should be taking. If everyone in a position of leadership looks the same, I would say it’s time for a change. While it’s true that great minds think alike, it’s certainly not true that all great people are alike — in appearance or beliefs. It’s not just about “filling” a position or checking a box with what you think will meet your firm’s diversity goals on paper. The most qualified people need to be in proper roles. If you notice a lack of diverse employees on the path to climbing the internal corporate ladder, consider a review of your hiring and promotion practices. A revamp in that regard will ensure that equal and balanced opportunities exist.

Diversity and inclusion is not just about having a diverse employee base but is also about ensuring that everyone at the table has a voice. You cannot expect to have diverse, high-ranking members of your team if you never provide them with meaningful opportunities. Depending on the position, that could include a senior member of the team mentoring a rising star or inviting attorneys at all levels to attend client pitches and business development meetings. As innovator/activist Vernā Myers said so eloquently, “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

***LM: What sort of leadership trainings do you recommend legal managers implement at their firms?***

**JM:** ALA’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee offers a wide range of speakers who can provide effective D&I trainings for

law firms and legal departments. But if you prefer to do the training on your own, there are a variety of different ways you can successfully do this. First, role-playing situations are always highly effective. Similar to sexual harassment training, have committee members or other top management participate in mock scenarios that showcase both what not to do and the right thing to do. Have clear, distinct examples of right and wrong for hiring practices, training, internal promotions and other similar initiatives at your firm that may need more diversity or that have had issues in the past.

Mentorship has also proven highly effective at fostering diversity. Implement a voluntary mentoring program, and match senior leadership with employees who come from different backgrounds to build rapport naturally and encourage an exchange of experience and expertise. ■

*To follow up with Jessica, you can reach her at 215-732-3922 or [jmazzeo@griesinglaw.com](mailto:jmazzeo@griesinglaw.com).*

