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10 Tools and Tips to Help Legal Marketers Advance Diversity and Inclusion

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As a former law firm chief marketing officer, I struggled with how best to leverage my influence and position to help advance diversity and inclusion efforts.

Like many others, I've listened as client demands for diversity grew from an encouraging whisper to an awakening clamor. That awakening has led to ABA Resolution 113, the Mansfield Rule, GCs for Law Firm Diversity and similar efforts aimed at expanding opportunities for diverse lawyers and influencing purchasers of legal services to direct more of their spend to diverse talent.

Considering the fever-pitched demand for diversity and how corporate counsel are increasingly using it as a framework in directing their purchasing power, it makes sense for law firm marketing and business development professionals—particularly those in leadership positions—to use their influence to increase diversity and inclusion at their firms. Not just because it's the right thing to do (clearly, it is), but because doing nothing could lead to reputation and brand issues and loss of business—all problems that fall directly in legal marketers' laps.

This article provides ideas to draw from as you consider diversity and inclusion efforts, especially if you don't already doing so.

1. Sweep around your own porch first

The legal industry's diversity issues don't stop with law firms also suffer diversity issues, particularly regarding encouraging your firm to seek more diverse legal talent. How you can improve diversity within your own department.

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2. Knowledge is power

Several resources are available to increase your awareness and understanding of the diversity issues in our industry. The American Bar Association's [Diversity and Inclusion Center](#) and [The Leadership Counsel on Legal Diversity](#) provide numerous toolkits and best practices to help you address these issues and stay informed about the latest initiatives. And don't forget about LMA's [Diversity and Inclusion Shared Interest Group \(SIG\)](#) to lean on fellow legal marketers' experiences.

3. Old habits die hard

Some law firms still struggle with assembling diverse pitch teams and giving diverse lawyers substantive roles in client development efforts. Feel encouraged to identify these issues and make recommendations for a more inclusive approach. You can point to your prospect's overall commitment to diversity, and their demographics, and share synergies between their needs and any relevant practice or industry expertise among your diverse lawyers.

Also, consider ways that you can help foster relationships between your rainmakers and diverse lawyers to encourage mentoring and sponsorship. Client demands for diversity have put diverse lawyers in a position to generate considerable business. The firms that invest in their diverse talent and provide exposure and learning opportunities to hone their business development and leadership skills will reap significant rewards.

4. Client motivation

Be proactive in identifying existing and prospective clients who are serious about diversity and use that information to motivate your firm's leadership to strengthen their diversity efforts. Use resources like supporters of [The GCs for Law Firm Diversity](#), the Minority Corporate Counsel Association's [list of corporate members](#), and the [list of corporate signatories](#) to ABA Resolution 113 as a starting point.

5. Client collaboration

Consider using the call for diversity as an opportunity to collaborate with clients and develop mutually beneficial initiatives that deepen the client relationship. Examples include client workshops, leadership trainings, affinity group activities, mentorships, diversity fellowships and secondments. These are all ways to help accomplish common goals.

6. Keep an eye on the competition

Few things motivate lawyers more than competition. Keep an eye on your competitors' diversity-related initiatives much like you do on their marketing. Leverage the information to motivate your firm's leadership to improve your own diversity efforts.

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7. Think big picture

Diverse lawyers are under-represented in lead counsel roles and therefore are often overlooked in their firm’s promotional efforts. Consider opportunities to highlight the supporting players in your firm’s most important cases, both internally to those in leadership and externally to clients. Corporate counsel may have difficulty finding diverse talent to hire. The more you can close the gap, the more closely your firm will be positioned for potential opportunities.

8. Encourage opportunities for visibility and leadership

A significant number of companies are using the [ABA Diversity Model Survey](#) in their RFP process. Among other questions, the survey specifically asks firms to identify diverse lawyers in leadership positions. Consider using such RFP materials to encourage your firm’s leadership to more closely consider qualified diverse candidates when selecting committee members, practice group leaders, and other leadership designations.

9. Leverage supplier diversity

Encourage your firm to use its purchasing power to support diverse vendors and service providers. You can tap into local and international resources to advance your efforts in this area (e.g., [The National Minority Supplier Development Council \(NMSDC\)](#) and [NGLCC National Legal Industry Council \(NLIC\)](#)).

10. Collaborate with minority-and women-owned law firms

There may be opportunities for your firm to partner with minority- and women-owned law firms as co-counsel or local counsel. Organizations such as the [National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms \(NAMWOLF\)](#) can help you identify law firms to consider for such engagements and search for collaborators by practice area, region, firm size and area of diversity (e.g., LGBT, women-owned, or minority- owned firms).

These efforts take time, practice and collaboration. By acting on even one of these ideas, your firm can be positioned to move forward in the right direction when it comes to diversity and inclusion.

LMA is firmly committed to fostering diversity and inclusion across the legal marketing profession at large. 1 Inclusion Shared Interest Group (SIG) and how you

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