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INCLUSION
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VERNA MYERS CONSULTING GROUP, LLC
DIVERSITY + INCLUSION FOR LEADERS IN THE LAW

Vernā Myers Consulting Group, LLC works to make diversity a lasting reality and a creative force in the life and work of leading law firms and related organizations. Our clients are redefining how they approach their business, recognizing that mastering diversity and inclusion is essential to their success – the key to attracting, keeping and capitalizing on top talent, fostering healthy morale, and serving today's leading companies.

"If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human possibilities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place."

-Margaret Mead

INSPIRE

VMCG Speaking Engagements

We are available for speaking engagements at conferences and workshops. In the recent past, tailored talks have included topics such as:

- The case for diversity & inclusion
- Understanding personal and systemic barriers and biases
- The leadership's role in creating a diverse and inclusive environment
- Integrating diversity & inclusion into your culture
- Recruiting and developing the best and the brightest
- Understanding the grey areas of sexual harassment

Collaboration: Initial Meeting with Key Players

VMCG meets with key individuals in your firm's leadership to determine your commitment, needs and goals. We share the information we have gathered from our considerable experience regarding:

- What a successful diversity & inclusion initiative entails
- The best composition for your diversity committee
- How to design and execute an assessment
- How to avoid missteps
- How your firm compares to its peers

It is essential...efficient and effective.

Presentation: Introducing Firm Leaders to the Business Case for Diversity & Inclusion

A presentation by VMCG to your firm's management, committees, and/or partners to explain the business value and basic concepts of diversity. We describe how diversity:

- Enhances the firm's ability to attract and retain the most talented attorneys and staff
- Reduces the high cost of unwanted attrition
- Gives the firm access to new client markets
- Satisfies client demand for diversity
- Enables the firm to improve client service through increased innovation, productivity and teamwork

Many firms have found this presentation absolutely critical to building the necessary internal support, enthusiasm, and leadership.

VMCG also offers presentations at partner retreats as a way to launch an initiative and to increase the partnership's awareness of the importance of diversity for the firm.

ASSESS

ASSESSMENT: Evaluating Diversity & Inclusion in your Workplace

In partnership with a working committee from your organization, VMCG designs an assessment tool to gather comprehensive, candid, detailed perspectives from attorneys and staff on diversity & inclusion in the workplace. The goal is to assess:

- How well the organization is currently promoting diversity & inclusion
- What obstacles may stand in the way
- How the organization's strengths and culture can be used as a platform for change

Our assessment can include conducting interviews and focus groups with current and former attorneys and staff, firm vendors, law school personnel and clients; and reviewing relevant demographic data and policies. Our qualitative data can be supplemented by a firm-wide survey that is analyzed by our statistician and is included in our presentation. We work closely with an assessment group to determine the content, scope and process for the assessment. We ensure that everyone feels included and respected in the process. We report our observations, along with specific recommendations for next steps. Our considerable experience in law firms provides you with a sharp analysis of issues and real-life suggestions for change.

CHANGE

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION INITIATIVE AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

With a working group from your firm, VMCG designs and implements a strategic action plan to promote diversity & inclusion in every aspect of your operations, including recruitment, retention, training, development, policies, education, support systems for employees from underrepresented groups, marketing, and client and community outreach.

The process begins with a workplace diversity & inclusion assessment that helps us pinpoint your firm's specific needs and strengths and identify the most promising strategies, given your goals. Without such a plan, diversity committees eventually get lost, frustrated or discouraged. We not only help you understand what needs doing – we help you get it done.

SYSTEMS AND POLICIES INTEGRATION: Supporting Diversity & Inclusion

While getting better at diversity & inclusion requires personal and interpersonal change on the part of the individuals in your firm, to make real change for diversity, your organization will need to be clear about how and why it operates the way it does on a daily basis:

- How does the firm make hiring decisions? Based on what criteria?
- How does work get allocated?
- How do you assure that everyone is having equal access and opportunity?
- How do you evaluate associates?
- Who gets feedback and mentoring?
- How do you check for bias in your systems?
- Where are summer associate events or firm events held? Are they culturally broad, to appeal to a diverse group of people?
- How do leaders get groomed and selected? Is the firm conscious about how it is done?
- How many women and people of color are in leadership roles? Why?

VMCG helps a firm notice and deconstruct the way it does business and offers best practices for developing systems, policies and practices that support diversity & inclusion.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Workshop: Diversity Leadership

VMCG recommends that your firm conduct a diversity leadership workshop early on in your diversity process – ideally once the assessment is complete. It is designed specifically to help firm management, and practice and department leaders build the leadership and management skills to pursue successful recruiting efforts, work effectively with diverse teams, and create inclusive work environments. The workshop:

- Introduces key diversity concepts
- Clarifies the value to your firm of embracing diversity
- Helps participants appreciate the dynamics of difference, inclusion and exclusion in the workplace
- Gives participants the chance to practice key leadership and management skills that will enhance their diversity goals (e.g., feedback, evaluation, conflict resolution, assignment of work) through case studies

Workshop: Specific Skill Building for Hiring and Associate Evaluation Committees and Staff Managers

This workshop is best conducted after an assessment and before any firm-wide diversity awareness workshop. It is designed to give those who have specific responsibilities in your firm a way to consider diversity issues as they carry out their responsibilities, develop new practices and policies, plan events, etc. The workshop:

- Presents fundamental diversity principles
- Helps individuals think about their diversity and experiences, and how their own background might help or create challenges for them when it comes to carrying out the firm's diversity goals
- Explores best practices for their specific areas of responsibility
- Teaches practical skills for promoting diversity

Workshop: Diversity & Inclusion Awareness – Firm-wide

This highly interactive workshop for attorneys and/or staff helps participants:

- Learn more about how to recognize, understand and appreciate our human diversity
- Understand the dynamic of bias, sensitivity and oppression in the workplace and in society at large
- Consider ways to overcome the barriers to embracing diversity

We design each workshop in conjunction with a working committee from your firm, typically after we have completed a workplace assessment. The workshop package also includes a follow-up discussion with the working committee in which we present our observations and any recommendations for follow-up.

Workshop: Diversity & Inclusion Awareness – for New Partners and Mid-Level and Senior Associates

This interactive workshop is designed to help those individuals in your organization who are progressing through the firm think about their responsibilities for creating a work environment that is respectful and inclusive of difference. They have peer relationships, they are supervised and they supervise others. The workshop focuses on these relationships and reminds participants that while they may not be as powerful and influential as those above them, they do have influence over others and others are impacted by their behavior. They learn or relearn diversity principles and work on practical work scenarios to develop diversity leadership skills.

Workshop: Diversity & Inclusion Awareness – for Incoming and Summer Associates

Again, a highly interactive workshop, but in this case designed specifically for summer associates or incoming fall associates. The workshop:

- Introduces participants to basic diversity & inclusion concepts
- Increases their awareness of their own and others' cultural backgrounds
- Reveals the benefits of embracing diversity, for law students, law firms, and the legal profession as a whole
- Helps them examine the factors that encourage diversity or stymie it

The workshop is extremely helpful for firms that have launched diversity efforts and want to convey their values, commitment, and expectations to the next generation of talent.

Workshop: Gender Diversity and Work Flexibility - for Partners and Associates

This workshop is designed to look specifically at the unique issues and barriers that women encounter as they enter and advance in the workplace. The workshop:

- Helps participants to appreciate the different ways a male-dominated work environment can negatively impact women
- Encourages frank and open dialogue about how to address the tension between the work demands of clients and attention to our personal obligations and interests
- Considers the tangible and intangible costs of attrition of women from the firm
- Raises awareness about the biases and assumptions that women face regarding work styles, communication styles, commitment to work and value to the firm
- Familiarizes participants with the firm's alternative work policy
- Offers best practices and management skills for working in a flexible way that respects everyone as professionals with personal obligations and commitments

Workshop: Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Creating a work environment that is free of sexual harassment is a four-pronged effort; your firm needs:

- A well thought-out and published policy
- Training, for everyone at the firm, which includes the legal and psychological aspects of sexual harassment
- Training for those who are designated to receive complaints

VMCG works with firms to review and revise, if necessary, the firm's sexual harassment policy and resolution procedures; designs a training that reviews the law and engages participants in dialogue to consider practical issues and grayer areas of the law; and helps the firm designate and train individuals designated to act as EEOC officers. VMCG also coaches individuals or groups regarding unacceptable behavior.

COACHING AND SUPPORT – for Individuals and Groups

Although making diversity work is always a joint effort, its success can also depend on the commitment of key individuals in key areas in the organization. VMCG can work one-on-one to help individuals appreciate the impact they have on the firm's diversity goals and to increase their diversity awareness, skills and accountability.

OUTREACH AND HIRING ASSISTANCE

Many of our clients seek our advice on increasing their outreach and hiring of racial and ethnic minorities. We work with firms to:

- Create a multi-faceted, long-term, targeted approach that includes analysis of schools, offers, acceptances
- Develop relationships and programs at schools to increase visibility
- Evaluate hiring criteria and programs
- Develop diversity materials for all candidates
- Develop lateral hiring strategies

We also conduct workshops for hiring committees and interview training for on-campus interviewers and all personnel interacting with candidates on behalf of the organization.

SUSTAIN

ADVICE AND SUPPORT – For Diversity Committees

Our new clients often say, "We have a diversity committee but we are not sure about what we should be doing," or, "We were doing well and then we got stuck, "or worse yet," We talk a lot, but we get nothing done." VMCG works closely with your diversity committee to develop a clear mission; with goals and norms for operating effectively. Most diversity committees will be responsible for developing and driving the firm's diversity action plan. VMCG helps a firm think through the composition of the committee, helps the committee work together, and offers information and resources to help it carry out its mission. Often to jump-start the process for the committee, VMCG facilitates a retreat for the committee.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM: To support retention and advancement

After working with you to define your diversity goals, VMCG designs a mentor program to support them. Retention is the issue with which so many of our clients are struggling. In every organization, we find that having someone who personally invests in the career of a developing attorney is crucial. Our process of encouraging mentoring includes consulting on the development of the program elements (participants, team goals, accountability, follow-up) and one or more training sessions with participants to:

- Explain the roles, expectations, and responsibilities of mentors and protégé(e)s
- Teach effective mentoring skills
- Enhance understanding of the benefits and challenges of cross-cultural/gender mentoring matches
- Improve participants' ability to make such matches work

AFFINITY GROUPS, RETREATS AND INDIVIDUAL COACHING: To support traditionally underrepresented groups

In order to help members of traditionally underrepresented groups develop the skills, confidence and knowledge they need to succeed in a majority work environment, your firm may want to sponsor various support systems for these attorneys. These support systems help attorneys build a community to stem their sense of isolation, learn skills to effectively deal with the negative assumptions and discomfort of others, confront their own assumptions and unconstructive behaviors, take responsibility for their career, learn substantive skills, develop business, etc. We offer our clients advice on the formation of affinity groups. Often we design and facilitate retreats just for women, attorneys of color and/or, gay/lesbian bisexual/transgender attorneys and staff. We also conduct one-on-one sessions to help individual attorneys or staff.

METRIC AND MEASURES OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION EFFORTS

How does a firm know if what it is doing is working? As part of the strategic action plan, we help the firm establish ways to measure its effectiveness. We also suggest that a firm do a benchmarking study three years after the initiative is launched to compare the results with the findings and issues identified by the initial assessment. We can help the firm develop a scorecard, evaluate programs and systems, and revise practices and policies as it refines its efforts.

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