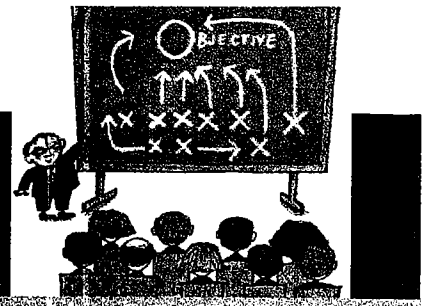


Chasing the Diversity Goal

What one firm does to attract, encourage, and retain diverse attorneys.



BY EMANUEL FAUST AND KAREN BUSH

Imagine listening to civil rights leader Dr. Benjamin Hooks as he tells you, firsthand, about his experience growing up in the 1920s and 1930s in Memphis, Tenn., as one of seven children in a black family. How he had to use segregated bathrooms and lunch counters and how, during World War II, he found himself guarding Italian prisoners of war who were allowed to eat in restaurants that were off-limits to him. He would talk about his calling to the ministry and then about his decision to go to law school in Chicago because Tennessee schools would not admit him. He would tell you about returning to Memphis, determined to do something to try to end segregation, and then about his role as executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. After the conclusion of his powerful story, you could ask him questions and then participate in an informal reception.

This experience was an afternoon program for attorneys and staff at the law firm Dickstein Shapiro Morin &

Oshinsky. At Dickstein Shapiro, events such as this presentation from Dr. Hooks are part of an ongoing firmwide effort to address issues of diversity. The diversity speaker series is just one of the firm's educational programs aimed at enhancing diversity at Dickstein Shapiro and in the legal profession.

In the mid-1990s, Dickstein Shapiro implemented progressive programs to promote a work-life balance for women attorneys, including formalizing policies enabling attorneys on alternative schedules to be eligible for partnership. For example, Deborah Kelly, who now is head of the firm's employment practice, arrived as a first-year associate pregnant with triplets, was the first on-track litigator to work an 80 percent schedule, was elected to the partnership, and now also serves as the firm's deputy general counsel—while still maintaining her 80 percent arrangement with the firm.

As time passed, Dickstein Shapiro recognized that diversity, beyond just gender, was critical. The firm felt that a diverse culture was not only "the right thing to do" but a business imperative.

Open-minded and collaborative work environments are necessary to provide the highest level of client service. In 2002, Dickstein Shapiro's management decided to make significant commitments of time and resources to enhance diversity at all levels of the firm.

To help the firm's leaders understand where they were in terms of diversity, and where they wanted to be, Dickstein Shapiro engaged the services of a diversity consultant to provide objective analysis and subject-area expertise. Through interviews, analysis, and meetings, the firm developed a diversity strategic action plan and a program of specific diversity initiatives to promote diversity at all levels. An important part of this plan was communication about and integration of the diversity initiatives throughout the entire firm, including incorporation into Dickstein Shapiro's firmwide strategic plan.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

To support the expanding diversity efforts, the firm made several organizational changes. One step was to create the full-time position of diversity and

pro bono counsel, filled by Elaine Arabatzis, a former firm associate. She serves as a member of Dickstein Shapiro's diversity committee and as a liaison to the firm's professional development committee. The diversity committee includes 12 partners, attorneys, and staff members who meet twice a month to review objectives, progress, accomplishments, and challenges. The committee co-chairs report directly to the firm's managing partner.

MENTORING

To focus on acclimation and retention, the firm created the diversity mentor panel for diverse attorneys. This panel serves as an additional layer in the firm's formal mentoring program, which also can include a mentor, a professional development partner, and a writing coach, depending on the attorney's level. In the mentoring programs, one of the goals is to encourage substantive, non-work-related interactions among different levels of attorneys. In addition, mentors strive to provide professional guidance on the transition into the firm's culture and to help with acclimation to the new environment and new people.

Another way the firm tries to encourage collegiality and friendship is by supporting informal, non-work-related events, such as poker competitions, softball games, bowling, and other activities that are designed to allow attorneys to interact on a more personal level.

DIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

The firm also felt that it was important to foster communication about, and appreciation of, individual differences. Initially, the firm instituted internal diversity dialogues that everyone was required to participate in. The dialogues were led by teams consisting of a partner, an associate, and a staff individual, who had been trained by the firm's diversity consultant on how to foster productive dialogues. The dialogues were held during working hours with groups of approximately 10-20 individuals.

Fundamental to the dialogues was the understanding that the discussions would remain anonymous and confidential, in order to encourage honesty and participation. The dialogue leaders and diversity committee then identified the most common themes from the conversations to develop additional initiatives.

A second major programming initiative has been the diversity speaker series, which has been available to the entire firm. Well-respected community leaders have come to the firm's offices to talk about their experiences, often in celebration of a specific heritage month or event, such as Black History Month, Gay Pride Month, Women's History Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Besides Dr. Hooks, speakers have included Debra Lee, president and chief operating officer of Black Entertainment Television; the Hon. Kurt L. Schmoke, dean of Howard University School of

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DIVERSITY, FROM PAGE 34

Law and former mayor of Baltimore; Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.); Hilary Rosen, formerly of the Human Rights Campaign; José Bahamonde-Gonzalez, the University of Maryland School of Law associate dean and chair of the National Association for Law Placement's leadership/membership diversity task force; Sarita Brown, president of Excelencia in Education and formerly executive director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans; A'Leia Bundles, the great-great-granddaughter of entrepreneur and social activist Madam C.J. Walker; and the Hon. George Bundy Smith, senior associate judge of the New York Court of Appeals.

These presentations take place during working hours, everyone is encouraged to attend, and receptions are held afterward to honor the guest speakers.

RECRUITING

Finally, the firm has been engaged in an ongoing aggressive recruiting campaign to increase diversity at all levels. Recruiters who regularly work with the firm have been asked to assist in the firm's diversity recruiting initiatives and have presented outstanding candidates. Several of our major clients also have supported the firm's initiatives and recruiting efforts. Additionally, the firm actively recruits at minority job fairs and through contacts established by diverse attorneys already with Dickstein Shapiro. The firm also sponsors diversity-related causes, events, and other opportunities through organizations such as the Minority Corporate Counsel

Association, the National South Asian Bar Association, the Second National Law Faculty of Color Conference, and the National Association of Women Lawyers.

COMMUNICATION AND INTEGRATION

In order to help incorporate diversity into every aspect of Dickstein Shapiro's daily operations, the firm took several steps to increase communication about diversity-related events and programs. These steps include communicating firmwide the diversity committee's mission statement; publishing a diversity column in the firm's monthly, internal marketing newsletter; and creating a diversity calendar of events that includes diversity-related programs in which the firm is involved. This month, the firm internally published a cookbook that featured more than 20 recipes contributed by attorneys and staff who represent the diversity of cultures at Dickstein Shapiro.

Although much remains to be accomplished, a number of positive results already have been achieved.

RESULTS

In 2004, Dickstein Shapiro successfully recruited three minority partners who are highly regarded in their practice areas: Phil Hampton in intellectual property, Leslie Thornton in complex dispute resolution, and Alicia Batts in antitrust. In an industry in which particular practices often have a lack of diverse professionals, the firm has excellent diverse attorneys in every core group—corporate and finance, energy, intellectual property, legislative and

regulatory affairs, and litigation and dispute resolution.

Dickstein Shapiro exceeds the national averages in "attorneys of color" at law firms in 2004, as defined by the National Association of Law Placement in the following categories:

PARTNERS

- National: 3.77 percent
- Dickstein: 4.65 percent

ASSOCIATES

- National: 13.60 percent
- Dickstein: 19.08 percent

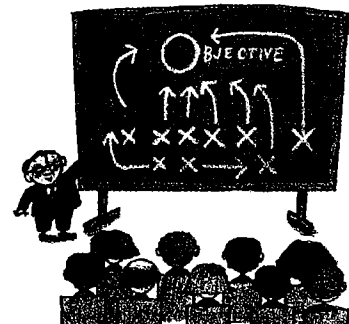
2004 SUMMER CLASS

- National: 19.70 percent
- Dickstein: 37 percent

Multicultural Law Magazine included Dickstein Shapiro in its list of "2005 Top 100 Law Firms for Diversity," with a rank of 32, based on the firm's nine minority partners and 43 minority counsel and associates out of 331 attorneys. The firm has increased the number of diverse attorneys nearly 50 percent over the past three years, and it is a Dickstein Shapiro priority to continue to hire and retain excellent diverse attorneys in its core practice areas.

These accomplishments did not happen overnight, nor do they mark the finish line; but they illustrate the firm's commitment to being a leader in the initiatives that promote a well-balanced workplace.

Emanuel Faust and Karen Bush are partners and co-chairs of the diversity committee at Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky, in the Washington, D.C., office.



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