



## **Women's Initiatives - A Call to Action**

### **Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County Bar Association Law Firm Leaders Summit on Retaining and Promoting Women Lawyers**

By 2012, signatories to the Call to Action agree to implement two initiatives in each of the five priority areas listed below to attract, retain, and advance women lawyers. Each firm is free to choose those options which work best for that firm. This handout provides many examples, but this is a non-exhaustive list. To the extent a participating firm already had an initiative in place prior to the date of the Summit, the firm may choose to deepen its commitment to that initiative, or it may broaden its focus and choose another possible course of action. Participating law firms also agree to participate in a newly-created Coalition which will work with the LACBA/WLALA Joint Task Force to provide a forum for continued collaboration, cross-firm sharing of measurements of success of women's initiatives, and a formal network of firm leaders with a continuing commitment to advancing and retaining women lawyers.

#### Summit Priority Areas & Options for Taking Action

##### *Professional Development/Women in Leadership*

- ❖ Advertise/highlight women rainmakers in the firm
- ❖ Incorporate active female participation in every key firm management committee, including management, compensation, hiring, and professional development/business development
- ❖ Include a woman attorney in client pitch meetings and on the teams for significant or high-profile cases, especially in leading roles
- ❖ Develop and support business plans for senior female associates and junior partners to enhance their internal advancement within the firm

- ❖ Conduct breakout sessions at annual firm partnership meetings to discuss women's issues which are later presented to firm management
- ❖ Create leadership programs for female attorneys that meet one to two weekends each year with assignments focused on marketing, client development, and participation in firm management
- ❖ Create a committee to monitor the progress and professional development of female attorneys at different stages of their careers
- ❖ Promote active firm involvement in women's bar associations, including reducing billable hour requirements or providing pro bono credit for time spent in leadership positions in those bar associations
- ❖ Encourage and sponsor senior female associates and female partners to attend various "Women in Leadership" conferences

#### *Mentoring*

- ❖ Institute a top-to-bottom mentoring program for women lawyers and law students, from summer associates to junior partners
- ❖ Work with women's bar associations to obtain mentors from outside the firm
- ❖ Partner with clients for mentoring purposes. Clients who mentor firm associates have indicated that they form a stronger bond with the firm as a result

#### *Marketing/Business Development/Rainmaking*

- ❖ Have a formal training program supervised by a women's initiative or diversity committee
- ❖ Track the success of formal training programs through firm management
- ❖ Invite business development trainers to talk to women attorneys about how to market, develop opportunities for business, and adapt to different client styles
- ❖ Have female attorneys submit business plans with benchmarks, a list of resources and guidance to accomplish the plan, metrics to measure success, and an outline for assisting or retooling if necessary
- ❖ Host alumni events where current female attorneys can network with attorneys (both male and female) who now practice with other firms who have gone in-house, to the government or have become judges
- ❖ Include female attorneys in client events and presentations
- ❖ Implement a one-time intensive leadership program for women attorneys (lasting six months to one year) that includes personal coaching, mentoring, reading

assignments and marketing skill development. Following this, implement a one-time leadership training program for all new and lateral female hires.

#### *Work/Life Flexibility & Continued Opportunities for Advancement*

- ❖ Be receptive to flexible work schedules, reduced hours, telecommuting, and job sharing
- ❖ Have a written flexible schedule/reduced hours policy that is openly communicated and adhered to; periodically examine the policy to evaluate its effectiveness. Each attorney on a flexible schedule should have the opportunity to advance or move in and out of flexible arrangements, commensurate with the attorney's and the firm's needs
- ❖ Make the flexible work arrangement program available to all attorneys (whether for childcare, eldercare, or lifestyle reasons)
- ❖ Keep the participants in flexible schedule/reduced hours programs on partnership track, to the extent desired, commensurate with the hours worked by the attorney and other criteria for partnership.
- ❖ Monitor those attorneys on reduced hour arrangements to discuss scheduling, whether "schedule creep" is occurring, and whether the attorney is still receiving appropriate assignments and having appropriate opportunities in the courtroom, boardroom, and with clients
- ❖ Offer other arrangements that provide flexibility, such as the ability to work at home, sabbaticals, the opportunity to take a leave without pay and return to the firm at a later date

#### *Reexamining the Measurements of Success & Addressing Unconscious Bias in Evaluations*

- ❖ Implement comprehensive management training to examine and sensitize firm management to unconscious bias that may creep into the evaluations of female attorneys
- ❖ Test hypotheses about why women leave the firm through exit interviews, comments in annual associate and partner evaluations, informal comments from attorneys, and client feedback
- ❖ Increase the number of women in firm management, bar association committees, client development activities, working for the firm's top billable clients
- ❖ Increase the number of new and lateral women attorneys, women equity and non-equity partners, and those who have primary/first chair and/or billing responsibility on cases

- ❖ Increase the budget for women’s group meetings, networking opportunities, and sponsorships

Carrying it forward: the Coalition of Law Firm Leaders

Participating law firms agree to form a Coalition which will work with the Joint Task Force to carry on the work of the Summit. The Coalition will, among other things: (1) share information about the initiatives each firm has undertaken to advance and retain women lawyers and the corresponding measures of success each firm has had in retaining and advancing women lawyers; (2) work collectively to examine further the issues surrounding the advancement and retention of women lawyers; (3) serve as a sounding board for each firm’s positive efforts, successes, and pitfalls experienced along the way; (4) propose programming and develop practices to further the progress of women in law firms; and (5) provide training and perspective on women’s continued success in today’s law firm and business environment.

Each participating law firm agrees to identify (1) one partner, preferably a managing partner or a partner directly responsible for the firm’s women’s initiatives, to serve as the post-Summit Delegate to the Coalition; and (2) up to two additional attorneys or employees to serve as the Alternate Delegate(s).

Agreed to this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Summit Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Law Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Coalition Delegate: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Delegate: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Delegate: \_\_\_\_\_