

The call to action: Advancing women attorneys in leadership in Chicago

By Jane DiRenzo Pigott and E. Lynn Grayson¹

The Chicago Bar Association ("CBA") issued a Call to Action ("CTA") in 2004 with ten law firms acting as leadership signatories:

Baker & McKenzie LLP
DLA Piper US LLP
Jenner & Block LLP
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Kirkland & Ellis LLP
McDermott Will & Emery
McGuireWoods LLP
Schiff Hardin LLP
Sidley Austin LLP
Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP

The CTA has fifty signatories² at present: forty-four law firms and six legal departments. Each signatory to the CTA agreed to pursue five goals over the time from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2007:

- Increase percent women partners by three percentage points
- Women on every firm committee in same proportion as in partnership
- Increase number of women practice group leaders
- Ensure flexible hours policies are equitable and viable options
- Improve any disparities in rates in which women and men are retained, promoted and laterally recruited

The intent of the CTA was to promote greater focus on and increased awareness of advancing women into leadership roles in Chicago law firms. Each of the five goals was measured annually and reports were issued to the signatories. These interim measurements were intended to provide tools to law firm signatories to ascertain their progress on the goals of the CTA.

In 2005, the CBA's Alliance for Women ("AFW") won the National Conference of Women's Bar Association's Public Service Award for the CTA. Since 2004, the templates for the CTA and the annual measures have been shared with bar associations across the country, many of which have created calls to action in their communities.

The AFW was thrilled by the results achieved by the CTA in Chicago. Every

one of the five CTA goals were met or exceeded by a number of signatory firms. Material progress on the issue of women in leadership roles in the Chicago legal community has been made since the inception of the CTA in 2004.

Goal 1: Three Percent Increase in Women Partners

This goal was measured on both an absolute and a relative basis. On an absolute basis, twelve law firm signatories increased their percent of women partners by at least three percent (firms are listed in the order of percentage increase):

Bryan Cave LLP
Seyfarth Shaw LLP
Schiller DuCanto and Fleck LLP
Ungaretti & Harris LLP
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
Chapman and Cutler LLP
Perkins Coie LLP
Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP
Foley & Lardner LLP
McDermott Will & Emery LLP
Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson LLP
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Bryan Cave experienced the biggest increase in women partners from 2004 to 2007: 19.0 percent.

In connection with the CTA, the AFW also looked at relative performance of law firms with regard to their percent of women partners. In 2004, the average for the percent of women partners at Chicago law firm offices³ was 18.12 percent. In 2007, that average³ had increased to 19.31 percent and 22 Chicago law firm offices exceeded that average. The signatory law firms with the highest percent of women partners at the end of the CTA in 2007 are (the firms are listed in order of percentage of women partners):

Schiller DuCanto and Fleck LLP
Cassiday Schade LLP
Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP
Tressler Soderstrom Maloney & Priess LLP
McDermott Will & Emery LLP
Ungaretti & Harris LLP

Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum & Nagelberg LLP
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP
Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella, P.C.

Four firms appear on both of these lists—they increased the percent of women partners by at least three percent from 2004 to 2007 and they are among the top ten highest percentages of women partners among Chicago law firms.

Goal 2: Proportionate Representation on Power Committees

Between the baseline year (2004) and the end of the CTA (2007), there was a 100 percent increase in the number of signatory firms that had women proportionately represented on the majority of the firm's power committees. One-third of the signatory firms increased the number of power committees at their firms with proportionate representation by women (firms are listed in alphabetical order):

Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione
Bryan Cave LLP
Chapman and Cutler LLP
DLA Piper US LLP
Foley & Lardner LLP
Goldberg Kohn Bell Black Rosenbloom & Moritz, Ltd.
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson LLP
Schiff Hardin LLP
Schiller DuCanto and Fleck LLP

By the end of 2007, Brinks had women proportionately represented on all of its power committees.

Goal 3: Increase Women Practice Group Leaders

More than half of the CTA law firm signatories met the goal of increasing their number of women practice group leaders (firms are listed in alphabetical order):

Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione
Bryan Cave LLP

Chapman and Cutler LLP
 DLA Piper US LLP
 Foley & Lardner LLP
 Goldberg Kohn Bell Black Rosenbloom & Moritz, Ltd.
 Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP
 Laner, Muchin, Dombrow, Becker, Levin and Tomlinberg, Ltd.
 Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
 Mayer Brown LLP
 McDermott Will & Emery LLP
 McGuireWoods LLP
 Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson LLP
 Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP
 Seyfarth Shaw LLP
 Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
 Winston & Strawn LLP

Material increases from 2004 to 2007 in the number of women practice group leaders were reported by three of the signatory firms. Foley & Lardner LLP added thirteen women practice group leaders, and Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP and DLA Piper US LLP added nine and seven, respectively.

Goal 4: Equitable and Viable Flexible Hours Policies

Over half of the signatory law firms reported that an attorney utilizing a reduced schedule had been promoted to partnership (firms are in alphabetical order):

Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella, P.C.
 Chapman and Cutler LLP
 DLA Piper US LLP
 Dykema Gossett PLLC
 Foley & Lardner LLP
 Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP
 Jenner & Block LLP
 Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
 Kirkland & Ellis LLP
 Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
 Mayer Brown LLP
 McDermott Will & Emery LLP
 McGuireWoods LLP
 Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson LLP
 Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP
 Pattishall, McAuliffe, Newbury, Hilliard & Geraldson LLP
 Schiff Hardin LLP
 Seyfarth Shaw LLP
 Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon LLP
 Winston & Strawn LLP

During the course of the CTA, almost half of the signatory firms reported an increase in the number of attorneys working a reduced schedule (firms are in

alphabetical order):
 Baker & McKenzie LLP
 Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione
 Bryan Cave LLP
 Chapman and Cutler LLP
 Foley & Lardner LLP
 Jenner & Block LLP
 Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
 Kirkland & Ellis LLP
 Laner, Muchin, Dombrow, Becker, Levin and Tomlinberg, Ltd.
 Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
 Perkins Coie LLP
 Quarles & Brady LLP
 Schiller Schiller DuCanto and Fleck LLP
 Seyfarth Shaw LLP

By the end of the CTA, all signatory firms reported having a written flexible hours policy.

Goal 5: Improve Retention, Promotion and Lateral Recruitment Disparities

This goal focused on preventing dilution of the existing women partner statistics by hiring and promotion practices. The CTA results on this goal demonstrate that a number of firms have actively improved the percent of partners who are women through their hiring and promotion decisions.

These signatory firms had at least one class of new equity partners that was forty percent or more women attorneys (firms are listed in alphabetical order):

Baker & McKenzie LLP
 Chapman and Cutler LLP
 Foley & Lardner LLP
 Jenner & Block LLP
 Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP
 Laner, Muchin, Dombrow, Becker, Levin

and Tomlinberg, Ltd.
 Meckler Bulger Tilson Marick & Pearson LLP
 McGuireWoods LLP
 Perkins Coie LLP
 Quarles & Brady LLP
 Schiff Hardin LLP
 Seyfarth Shaw LLP
 Vedder Price P.C.
 Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon LLP

During the course of the CTA, four of these firms had two classes of new equity partners that were at least fifty percent women (firms are listed in alphabetical order): Chapman and Cutler LLP, Foley & Lardner LLP, McGuireWoods LLP and Wildman, Harrold, Allen & Dixon LLP.

Conclusion

Chicago law firm signatories to the CTA demonstrated success on each of its five goals. Many firms demonstrated real success on the front of advancing women into leadership. Overall, the Chicago legal community made material progress and established some best practices that fed the success of its efforts. Continued progress will be necessary, but the CTA facilitated focus and progress on this important issue.

1. Ms. Pigott is Managing Director of R3 Group LLC and Ms. Grayson is a partner at Jenner & Block LLP. The two were Co-Chairs of the Alliance for Women ("AFW") in 2004 at the inception of the Call to Action and have co-chaired the Call to Action Committee of the AFW since then.
2. A list of signatories can be found at www.chicagobar.org.
3. Statistic provided by National Association for Law Placement.

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