

4 Female Perspectives On BigLaw Leadership

By Madeleine McDonough, Angela Styles, Jami Wintz McKeon and Regina Pisa

Law360, New York (July 23, 2017, 8:02 PM EDT) -- Recent increases in the number of women at the BigLaw partnership level have been incremental at best, according to the annual Law360 Glass Ceiling report. Meanwhile, the senior management side suffers an even greater disproportion of women to men — only a handful of the largest U.S. firms are led by women. We thought it would be interesting to hear from a few of the female leaders who have beaten the odds. Here, in their own words, are perspectives from Shook Hardy & Bacon Chair Madeleine McDonough, Crowell & Moring Chair Angela Styles, Morgan Lewis & Bockius Chair Jami Wintz McKeon and Goodwin Procter Chair Emeritus Regina Pisa.

Jami Wintz McKeon, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP



Increasing gender diversity in law firms — and particularly in leadership positions — is top of mind for our firm as well as our clients. A diverse team brings a variety of perspectives to every issue, and a conscious focus on diversity allows us to attract, retain and promote the best talent. As a result, Morgan Lewis has invested in looking closely at how we can ensure that our firm is leading the way in breaking through the historic barriers to leadership facing women.

During my time as chair, we have contributed to many external efforts devoted to studying and advancing the role of women in the legal profession, including those created by the ABA, Harvard Law, Direct Women and Catalyst. We also prioritize internal efforts aimed at promoting gender diversity, including training all of our partners on implicit bias, having an initiative focused on business development for women and participating in programs with our clients designed to increase and advance

the women in their ranks and in ours.

Having an inclusive environment is essential to any diversity initiative, and understanding our own often unconscious assumptions is an important foundational piece of building such an environment. At Morgan Lewis, we have long offered implicit-bias training to our clients and their executives, and our partners go through that training as well. These sessions highlight the effects of inclusion on employee engagement and the impact that implicit bias has on creating a diverse, inclusive and highly engaged workforce, and they help equip all decision makers with the practical tools necessary to address this bias. Morgan Lewis was in the vanguard in developing these programs, which are now recognized as

essential elements of the onboarding and leadership development process throughout much of corporate America.

Beyond training, we are making investments that knock down any unintentional barriers to success. For example, we launched an industry-leading remote working program, which allows eligible associates to work two days a week from home. While heralded as a breakthrough for working mothers, our program actually is open to all — reflecting our commitment to inclusion in all aspects of our firm. And we are proudly partnering with Diversity Lab to pilot the new Mansfield rule initiative, which involves a commitment that women and minorities make up 30 percent of any candidates for firm leadership and governance roles. We are already mindful of this need for balance, but we recognize the value in being public about our commitments to advance the opportunities for women. It is now acknowledged that women leave the profession more often because they perceive an absence of opportunity than because of a search for an elusive work-life balance. So we focus on making sure that women have and see those opportunities. That we have a female chair and many other female leaders in our firm sends a strong signal that there is no glass ceiling at Morgan Lewis, but we hope that the profession will progress to the point where this is not such an unusual circumstance.

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