

## LCD in partnership with Finn Dixon & Herling Roundtable Event on “Best Practices and Challenges in Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion”

Finn Dixon & Herling, LLP hosted LCD’s roundtable event for General Counsel (GC) where the “Best Practices and Challenges in Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion” were discussed on April 4, 2019 at Bank Street Events in Stamford. According to the panel moderator and former President of LCD, Joaquina Borges King, the event provided a unique opportunity for GCs to speak amongst themselves and to form new connections. It was also part of a larger effort to introduce LCD and its mission to lawyers in Fairfield County.

The first part of the event consisted of a private discussion amongst 11 GCs. A lively, public panel conversation that involved four panel members and nearly 60 guests followed. Panel members included Greg Butler of Eversource Energy, Bill Aseltyne of Yale-New Haven Health Systems, Sheila Denton of Boehringer Ingelheim, and LaTanya Langley of BIC. King emphasized that the panelists offered unique perspectives because of their differing genders, cultures, and experiences as GCs. Throughout the night, the engagement of both panelists and audience members highlighted not only their passion for the cause, but also a strong commitment to attracting, retaining, and allowing for the success of a diverse workforce.

During the discussion, panel and audience members addressed three key themes including culture and belonging, personal relationships, and the provision of diverse opportunities. Significant attention was given to pipeline programs for students. According to panelist Bill Aseltyne, these programs can begin as early as elementary school. In fact, lawyers from Yale-New Haven Hospital have engaged fifth-grade students by holding a mock trial and teaching about the legal system since 2007. Additionally, panelist Greg Butler mentioned that creating a Diversity Scholar Program for summer associates, like the one offered by the Eversource Energy Legal Department, is a useful way to foster diversity and inclusion. Another recommendation made during the panel discussion was to follow a policy similar to the “Rooney Rule” in the NFL. That is, whenever a position opens within a legal department, those hiring must ensure that they interview a diverse list of candidates.

Panel and audience members also emphasized that it is important to put in the time to train diverse attorneys on the ways of a firm or company to ensure their success. Panel moderator Joaquina Borges King recommended that GCs consider hosting webinars for attorneys of color on the ABC’s of their business and that leaders schedule informal mentoring or network sessions over lunch or dinner. These efforts would eventually help to diminish the feeling of invisibility that many attorneys of color experience.

Finally, throughout the evening, speakers drew attention to the numerous benefits of having a diverse legal workforce. These benefits included a diversity of thought, increased productivity, and an advantage in global markets. Ultimately, in the words of King, the event was a “great success,” and new LCD leaders have confirmed that Finn Dixon & Herling will host it on a yearly basis. Going forward, the expectation is that attendees will think carefully about the

concrete recommendations shared and that they will begin taking steps to implement them. Such efforts would eventually bring about much-needed positive change in the realm of diversity and inclusion.

