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COUNSEL'S CORNER

In November, we took our 5-year-old son to the Chicago Theatre to see a wonderful musical production of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." While the show sparked great memories of my youth (and my lifelong fear of the Abominable Snowman), the story serves as a lesson regarding the benefits of embracing diversity and inclusion.

While Rudolph was initially shunned because his bright red nose made him "different" from others, Santa understood that Rudolph's unique attribute would be the "difference maker" in guiding his sleigh through the fog to save Christmas.

The continued lack of diversity and inclusion in our legal profession is well-documented and alarming. To better serve our clients and our profession it is important for all of us to understand that diversity and inclusion is a business necessity.

Studies indicate teams that embrace diversity show higher performance over time, and conversely, those that do not might accelerate early but eventually hit a sameness barrier. In fact, research by McKinsey & Co. demonstrates that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians while companies in the top quarter for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.

Building diverse and inclusive teams enables law firms and in-house legal teams to have a customer-first mindset. Companies need lawyers that mirror the diversity of their customers so they are better positioned to connect, communicate with and persuade people of all races, genders, abilities and cultures.

In addition, the key customers of law firms — general counsels of companies — are increasingly supporting the American Bar Association Resolution 113 that was passed at the ABA Convention last August and its mission to create a legal profession that better reflects the diversity of the nation we serve.

Whether it be the growth of artificial intelligence, increased mergers among law firms, the rise of non-traditional legal service providers or the demand for more alternative fee arrangements, the legal profession is changing every day. Law firms and in-house legal departments will need the fresh new ideas and different perspectives that diverse lawyers provide so they can successfully perform and transform at the same time. Legal teams who are not open to a more inclusive "growth mindset" culture run the risk of being disrupted.

While there's no magic formula for improving



FIVE TIPS FOR MEANINGFUL DIVERSITY

It's not just moral; diversity on staff is good business

By DENNIS C. GARCIA

diversity and inclusion in your organization, here are some best practices:

Tie Executive Compensation to Diversity Goals: It is customary to offer senior leaders financial incentives to help compel better business performance. Why not do the same for achieving improved clear and objective diversity and inclusion metrics within your organization?

Use the "Rooney Rule": The National Football League uses a policy known as the "Rooney Rule" (named after Dan Rooney, the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers) that requires league teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching and senior football operation jobs. Consider using a similar diverse slating practice for the interviewing of qualified candidates for open attorney positions within your organization.

"What's Measured Improves": Not only is this an insightful saying from management guru Peter Drucker, but it actually works! Actively measure and monitor your law firm or in-house legal department's diversity and inclusion statistics — and publish them. In addition, remember that the road to improved diversity and inclusion is a marathon, not a sprint — so do not be discouraged by periodic setbacks.

Don't Forget Inclusion: This insightful quotation from diversity and inclusion champion Verna Myers speaks for itself: "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."

Learn From Others: There are a variety of terrific local and national organizations who evangelize the importance of diversity and inclusion within the legal profession. Learn from them by getting actively involved in their organizations, attend their events. In addition, learn from those law firms and in-house legal departments who are proven diversity and inclusion leaders.

Please remember that embracing diversity and inclusion makes excellent business sense and makes all of us better lawyers. [CL](#)

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