

Episode 7: Creating A Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Work Environment with Stacey Sublett Halliday of Beveridge & Diamond

Article By:

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[National Law Review](#) Web Content Specialist [Shelby Garrett](#) closes out Legal News Reach Season 2 with an impactful minisode featuring [Stacey Sublett Halliday](#), Principal and [DEI Committee Chair](#) with [Beveridge & Diamond](#). Diversity, equity, and inclusion look different for every law firm, and smaller firms like B&D have to be even more resourceful in their approach to fostering dynamic work environments. How can firms use organizational partnerships to augment their internal DEI strategies?

We've included a transcript of the conversation below, transcribed by artificial intelligence. The transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and readability.

Shelby Garrett

Thank you for turning into the Legal News Reach podcast. My name is Shelby Garrett, Web Publication Specialist with the National Law Review, and this episode I'm super excited because I will be speaking to Stacey Halliday, an environmental justice attorney with leadership roles with the American Bar Association and the Environmental Law Institute. Hi, Stacey.

Stacey Halliday

Hi, Shelby, thank you so much. And thank you National Law Review for having me today.

Shelby Garrett

Of course! To kick things off, would you mind telling us a little bit about your background in legal and what led you to pursue a career in law?

Stacey Halliday

Sure. I'm a shareholder at Beverage & Diamond, and we're an environmental law firm. I'm based out of Washington DC. As you mentioned, a large part of my practice involves counseling clients on

environmental justice, identifying risks, opportunities, and helping them incorporate EJ in their work. And I also have a broader practice on ESG issues and product stewardship, so things like sustainability disclosures, ratings and rankings, green marketing compliance and circular economy, that sort of thing. I started the firm a million years ago, longer than I'd like to admit, and had the privilege of also spending two years in the middle of that as an Obama appointee at the US Environmental Protection Agency in the Office of General Counsel so...bounced around a little bit. It's been a long journey, I sort of wandered into environmental law by happenstance, but it's been an incredible journey so far.

Shelby Garrett

That's awesome. We're super excited to have you today, because we also worked previously on an article about the EPA. So this is perfect to actually get to see each other face to face and talk to each other. Today, we're going to be talking about DEI initiatives. To start off with that, could you give us a basic definition for people who maybe aren't familiar with it and tie us into how that relates to law firm operations?

Stacey Halliday

Yeah, absolutely. And I should mention, one of the other hats that I wear at the firm, besides a shareholder is also Chair of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee. So that's sort of my D E and I hat, I have been on the committee for the 10 years on and off that I've been at the firm. So for D E and I, in terms of definitions, it's--I hate to give you the lawyer answer, but it's an "it depends" kind of thing, right? So DEI efforts are defined in such a broad variety of ways and are very unique to each organization. So some folks call it DEI, some say DEIA to include accessibility, there's variations on the theme. But at B&D, DEI is really focused on building and fostering an inclusive culture that allows everyone to be their authentic selves at work, removing obstacles that inhibit equal opportunities for all and promoting and supporting those from historically underrepresented groups outside of the traditional DEI bucket. So defined by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, identity, disability, or otherwise. So that's sort of how we think about it at our firm. And I'd say the way that plays out is I as chair, and my deputies, and our committee work with the Management Committee of the firm, the Chief Talent Officer, the firmwide managing principal who oversees the management of the whole firm, and members of committee, we're the largest committee at the firm, its attorneys and staff. And we work with developing internal and external policies and practices across the firm. We have a Working Parents Group, an Employee Engagement Committee focused on staff and a Women's Initiative to develop more targeted programming, but that's kind of how it's structured across the operations of the firm.

Shelby Garrett

That's awesome, and that's great to hear some examples because like you said, it kind of is tailored to each firm and what the community of employees needs. So it sounds like it would be a really large undertaking, because it has to be pretty authentic and genuine with straightforward conversations that might be a little bit harder, with some self-reflection. What is a good place for companies to start out? What is step one?

Stacey Halliday

Step one, really, in my perspective is, tone from the top is a really big I think, ground floor for a lot of this. I came from an HBCU, I went to Howard University School of Law, very proud graduate. And

after my clerkship, I met Ben Wilson, who was the Managing Partner of Beverage & Diamond. And Ben is legendary. He's just a staunch and uncompromising advocate for diversity and for supporting attorneys of color. And he's the reason I went to Beverage & Diamond because I saw so significant leadership of the firm, he is an individual, but across the firm from his leadership had embraced and embedded diversity as a priority in addition to doing excellent work for our clients. So that I think has continued. He retired, I think it was within the last year, which is very hard as somebody who worked very closely with him. But we've really seen the firm continue to demonstrate that absolute commitment, and you see it in the numbers. In our firm about 36% of our shareholders are women, 50% of our Management Committee are women or minorities, we continue to get very positive accolades for our DEI work even after so I think we see that commitment from the top and that helps all of us understand, incorporate remember that DEI is something important every day.

Shelby Garrett

Absolutely, that's a really great point, and very nice to hear how you got involved with the firm. When a firm is looking to measure their success, are there any indicators-- I imagine it probably depends on what exactly they're tasked with or what their initiative is. But is there anything that overall could help measure that success?

Stacey Halliday

Yeah, it's it's funny, coming into this with a DEI hat but also doing ESG work, I think a lot about metrics and how do you set targets and measure your progress and hold yourself accountable. And because we're so small, we're fewer than 150 lawyers or so, we partner a lot. And that's we use third party groups that are really specialize in this work and specialize in best practices for law firms to measure our progress and hold ourselves accountable. And a leading example of that is our participation in the Mansfield program. So the Mansfield certification program--I see you nodding Shelby, so that's something you've heard of before. It's based on the Rooney rule for the uninitiated, so the--I know nothing about football, but I have heard it's based on the football Rooney rule, and that requires consideration of candidates from historically underrepresented groups for certain leadership roles. So we're Mansfield 5.0 Certified, Mansfield Plus, and that means that not only do we consider certain underrepresented groups for at least 30% of all significant leadership roles, lateral recruiting and business development opportunities, for the Plus certification, we exceeded that requirement by actually achieving 30% or more representation. So that's been a program we've been involved in at least the last four or five years, and the requirements continue to elevate every year. So it's really an incredible way to not only track our progress, but also keep ourselves challenged because the goalposts continue to move to keep us challenged and leaning forward into this kind of work.

Shelby Garrett

That is really awesome. Yeah, when I was preparing for this, I was looking at the Mansfield website, I think it's run by Diversity Lab maybe? So I was looking through all of their documentation on their website so that's awesome. While we're talking about Beverage & Diamond specifically, I know you mentioned the tone from the beginning was very inclusive. Is there any additional training or education that is provided to employees, whatever you're comfortable talking about, specific to the firm?

Stacey Halliday

Yeah, of course. I think we have a number of different programs, we have the committee and we

have an annual survey across the firm that helps us understand where there might be need or interest in getting additional training and support in this space. So from an internal perspective, that's something that's more dynamic and focused on our particular firm and its community. So that could be anything from implicit bias training, to learning about more accessibility issues, or neurodiversity or something like that. So that's something that we develop, and work as committee to build over the course of the year. But I think again, partnerships are a really big part of how we support our community in getting the best practices and cutting edge work in the space and support for each of our individual community members. So we partner with groups like LCLD, the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity, which is just unbelievable. The program is amazing. So we have Fellows, Pathfinders, and we have Summer 1Ls that are part of this LCLD partnership, and the Fellows and Pathfinder program supports individuals in either mid-career or senior level or entry level attorneys with things like professional development programs, leadership training, relationship building opportunities, and that's for attorneys from historically underrepresented groups. So it's really amazing, I haven't actually I haven't done it, but a lot of my close colleagues and friends have done it and they talk about the relationships they've built, the support they've gotten, in addition to what they get internally at the firm being just invaluable and a great resource. So that's something that's a good example of the kind of things that we do plus our internal training to really support those in our community.

Shelby Garrett

Sorry, I think I missed it. Was that a third-party group?

Stacey Halliday

Yeah, it's unbelievable. It's like there's a couple of different programs like this and MCCA, Minority Corporate Counsel Association, and there's--the acronyms, it's an alphabet soup--CCWC Corporate Counsel Women of Color. There's a couple of different programs like this that focus on different historically underrepresented attorney groups and communities. But LCLD is something where we've had a really in-depth relationship and pipeline coordination. So the 1L program through LCLD, we have a 1L Summer Associate. So usually they're 2Ls, you're a second-year law student when you come to summer at a law firm and then hopefully you get an offer afterwards for a job. But we have a 1L come in through the LCLD program from a historically underrepresented group. And it's a great way to build a pipeline for talent in our community organization, especially in the environmental law space where diversity is a challenge.

Shelby Garrett

Absolutely. That is amazing. One of the things I think you mentioned towards the beginning was a program for working moms. Do you mind explaining a little bit more about that, is that like a third-party?

Stacey Halliday

It's actually internal. We created a Working Parents Group, we had a Women's Committee initially, and the Women's Committee was dealing with a lot of coming together to talk about all of the challenges that women inherently face. But we were also finding that we had a lot of men who are parents, as well, who were kind of, you know, still tackling a lot of these challenging issues, especially coming into the pandemic, when we're all working remotely. And I have two young kids under three... it's a challenge, it's a journey. And actually having that community to talk about what kind of

resources we might need, how we might support one another, how we can share best practices and lessons learned, and just support each other in the work environment, which is inherently stressful in a law firm. But if we're all being understanding and know more about what we're facing, we can all kind of tackle it together. So the working parents group was an outgrowth, I think of the pandemic and of having a community of young parents, and of more veteran parents who could all sort of share these lessons learned and worked together on solutions.

Shelby Garrett

That is awesome to hear both the internal kind of programs and then also the third-party kind of programs. How does the firm's DEI work align with its overall business strategy and its goals? I know we just talked about the 1Ls and having them have that exposure and the opportunity to network and really get involved early, but looking more broadly at overall business strategy and goals.

Stacey Halliday

I think it's such an interesting time in this space, because where there might have been more skepticism, especially at a law firm where your time is billed in six minute increments, to dedicating time and resources to DEI, now we're seeing some pressure from clients, some external pressure, that really sends home the business case for the importance of diversity and for supporting DEI from a retention perspective. And I think Beverage & Diamond is unique in that we've always embraced DEI as one of our core principles that are important to the firm. But were there any naysayers, it's now you know, we're really seeing that clients are bringing down the hammer. They're asking for more transparency. We have dense, pages long surveys asking us to disclose information about our diversity performance, and how many people from historically underrepresented groups are on our pitch teams, how many folks are actually billing time, are they getting considered for promotion, like they, they want to know that level of detail. And if they don't see it, there's either a penalty in terms of fees or you don't get the work. And I think that is something that has shifted, in concrete ways, the industry. You're seeing a huge proliferation of Chief Diversity Officers, So C-suite level leadership and management in law firms that actually looks at this topic the way it is, a sophisticated practice, that's on top of legal practice. So I think the business case is now kind of firmly being established across the industry more so than it has in the past. Just a really interesting trend.

Shelby Garrett

That is really interesting. When I was like reading different articles to prepare for this, I hadn't heard of that. So that's really great to hear that there's some external pressure and investment in this bigger priority. You were talking kind of a little bit about, you know, billing hours. So building these DEI initiatives require some resources and support. What kind of resources and support can a firm offer to employees who might be affected by these issues? I know kind of just like, taking the time for the Working Parent Group. But what resources really go into that?

Stacey Halliday

I think for us, again, we're fairly small. So you know, where you have these huge multinational global firms that have hundreds of 1000s of people who would be part of an affinity group or any type of program that's associated with different subpopulations of a diverse community, we've got like five. So it's not necessarily the same sort of thing in terms of the scale of the programs, which is why we end up doing more partnerships so that, you know, the Diversity and Flexibility Alliance might have a program or something like that, or we'll say, "Hey, if you're interested in doing this training, or

engaging this community more aggressively, we absolutely support you, as an individual, doing that kind of work, because we don't have the infrastructure necessarily to do it." But some larger firms and companies do things like backup childcare, something like that, like, I think Bright Horizons or something like that, you know, you can go and, if your school's closed, or if your kids sick, you can find some way to get some coverage so that you can still go to work. There's all kinds of flexible leave policies and that sort of thing that really does help in terms of giving people the space that they need, still thinking from the parent context. Affinity groups are something that we have decided to date not to really form more broadly, just because again, the numbers aren't there. But for us our partnerships are the way that we do it. But a lot of other large organizations do things like affinity groups that have more of a build-out in terms of permanent programs throughout the year. So in terms of brass tacks for us, we have the committee, with its mix of associates and staff members, and we have a budget every year to support those external engagements and partnerships and certification programs and that sort of thing. But it really does run the gamut, I think, especially at larger shops, where they have more numbers to really build out more infrastructure and training programs and curricula and support benefits, like childcare.

I worked at a law firm before I went to law school, and it was a much larger law firm. And I think historically, there's been a really strong divide between attorneys and staff at a lot of law firms, which I think can be problematic and unnecessary. It inhibits, I think, community and diversity in a lot of different ways. But B&D has been fantastic. Our DEI committee is fully integrated with staff and attorneys. And we have some pretty significant empowerment and promotion of non-lawyers at the firm in this space to try and get a better perspective on our community. We're basically half non-lawyers. So it's really important to make sure that we're not only capturing the voices of those members of our community through the committee, but also investing in the non-lawyers. And so we have a couple of professional development programs and we encourage external training in the same way that we support our attorneys. So it's, I think, something that gets lost a lot in the conversation for law firms, because they're so focused on the folks who are billing, but it's a much bigger biosphere, for the law firm to be successful. It's a lot more to it than just the legal work. So I think it's really been important to make sure those voices are captured, the broader diversity of the firm is captured through thinking about your staff, and not just your attorneys.

Shelby Garrett

That is an amazing point I had not even considered, there's an additional kind of hierarchy of opinions being taken into account. That's really interesting. As we start to come to a close, are there any final thoughts you wanted to share?

Stacey Halliday

I'm so grateful to the National Law Review, specifically to you, Shelby, for bringing this conversation to bear. And I think it's really important for our community to really think about effective practices here so that we generate and support more diverse communities so that we have more diversity of thought, as well as other types of diversity in the way that we solve problems and do our work. And I'm happy that we had a chance to have this chat and celebrate the work that's being done in the space.

Shelby Garrett

Yeah, that's really great. I am very grateful that you joined us today, I appreciate you taking the time to really walk through all of this because it is pretty unfamiliar to me. So it's really great to get the

basic understanding of where firms can start if they haven't started yet, and some inspiration of where they can go. So I really do appreciate that. And thank you so much for joining us today. For listeners who are interested in finding you and maybe some of your thought leadership in the environmental justice area, where can they look for you?

Stacey Halliday

Thank you for the plug, I will absolutely take it! bdlaw.com. So please check out B&D's site, the Environmental Justice Practice Group has its own site. And we also have a podcast, another shameless plug for our joint podcast with the Environmental Law Institute called Ground Truth. That will be kicking back up in 2023, but we bring on folks and have some deep thoughts on EJ and what's ahead and what's coming down the pike. So hopefully check us out there as well.

Shelby Garrett

Fantastic. Thank you so much. Again, we really appreciate your time, and we will be back in a couple of weeks for a new episode of Legal News Reach.

Conclusion

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