COMMITTEE ON RETENTION AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN

Leading Women

In our Texas offices, the Committees on Retention and Promotion of Women (CRPW) meet regularly to facilitate the exchange of information, strategies and networking tips. Recently, the women’s committee branches in Dallas and Houston teamed up for a luncheon video presentation led by a business consultant on communication styles common to lawyers. The group discussed trends specific to the Texas offices, learning about personal communication styles and their impact on client perceptions.

The Dallas office is under the leadership of Yvette Ostolaza, Executive Committee member, office managing partner and co-global coordinator of the Complex Commercial Litigation practice. She is one of 13 women partners in Sidley’s Houston and Dallas offices, several of whom lead practice groups and sit on powerful firm committees. Women also comprise more than half of the Dallas office partnership.

Many other women partners in our Texas offices also serve in leadership capacities within the firm and the legal industry. Dallas partner Angela Zambrano is currently the president of the Dallas Women Lawyer’s Association, the oldest women lawyer’s professional organization in Dallas, and Yvette serves as co-vice chair of the Southwest branch of the Women in Law Empowerment Forum. In 2015 and 2016, the Texas committees jointly sponsored events at University of Texas’ Center for Women in Law.

Keeping in Touch and Giving Back

In 2015, the Dallas committee hosted a sangria and taco competition judged by celebrity chef Dean Fearing where teams of Sidley lawyers and clients competed for the honor of best sangria. The winning team selected a charity to receive a $500 donation from Sidley. In the past year, the women in the Houston office and their clients attended the Houston Ballet Nutcracker Market, a charitable event which raises money for the ballet and its scholarship programs.

Several of our Texas women lawyers are board members for nonprofit organizations including Girls, Inc., Vogel Alcove, the Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, the Houston Ballet and many others. Our women lawyers’ extensive community involvement provides the platform for Sidley’s charitable support of various organizations and events in the Texas market. Recent events that Sidley has supported include the 2014 and 2015 Attorneys Serving the Community (ASC) Luncheon benefiting the Foundation for the Education of Young Women and the 14th Annual Women’s Advocacy Awards supporting Legal Aid of Northwest Texas.

Business Development

The Dallas and Houston CRPW host a series of client focused events throughout the year with women in-house counsel as part of their efforts to connect women in law. In 2015, Dallas held an educational seminar with guest speaker Melinda
Marcus who provided insights on projecting a position of power, navigating tricky political interactions and communicating in ways that mitigate gender bias. Early in 2016, the Dallas office also held hosted a self defense seminar taught by retired Navy Seals seminar with over 50 clients in attendance. In past years, Sidley client Neiman Marcus has graciously offered their flagship store in downtown Dallas for networking, a fashion show and shopping with clients. This summer, in additional to other social events to facilitate networking with current and potential clients, the Houston CRPW will host an event featuring the co-author of “Fast Forward: How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose.” Sidley is also a 2016 National Sponsor of the Women’s Energy Network (WEN), a 4,000-member organization that focuses on advancing women in the energy industry. Partner Tracy LeRoy currently serves as the Advisory Council Co-Liaison for WEN’s Houston chapter, leading strategic discussions with WEN’s Advisory Council and Board of Directors. She previously led WEN’s Sponsorship and Executive Member Events committees. Partner Anna Ha led a committee for the 2015-2016 WEN Charity Luncheon, supporting STEM education opportunities for Houston-based girls. Houston associates are also active in WEN and serve on various committees.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Enhanced Mentoring Program
The Texas offices participate in the firm’s Enhanced Mentoring Program. This initiative pairs minority and LGBT associates with partners in their practice who are responsible for helping those associates obtain challenging, skill-building assignments, access to clients and introductions to partners within and beyond their practice group. Mentors also provide career coaching.

Building Connections
The Diversity Committees in each office support the professional development of associates. To help associates build connections across firm, the committee initiated a “Take a Partner to Lunch” program that encourages associates to invite partners to lunch for mentoring and networking.

The Diversity Committee also hosts events to promote Sidley’s commitment to diversity and inclusion in the Dallas legal community. These gatherings provide an opportunity for associates to foster relationships with existing clients and to make connections with in-house counsel at Dallas-area companies that share Sidley’s dedication to diversity and inclusion.

Pipeline Programs
The Dallas and Houston offices implemented Sidley’s 1L Diversity Mentorship Program in 2013. This program supports the career aspirations of diverse, rising second-year law students who have secured summer employment or internships in Texas at firms other than Sidley, by providing career development strategies and an understanding of Dallas and Houston law firms. Mentors and mentees meet informally to discuss fall on-campus recruiting and summer associate programs, interviewing best practices, and questions related to practice area selection. Program participants are invited to attend formal workshops conducted by Sidley lawyers and recruiting staff and to participate in events for our summer associates. Sidley also sponsors various affinity group programs at Texas law schools as part of the firm’s effort to build diversity in the legal profession as a whole.