ACC DOCKET
INFORMED. INDISPENSABLE. IN-HOUSE.

Small Matters: A Different Approach to DEI

Diversity and Inclusion



Have you ever heard the phrase, “Go big or go home?”

While it’s often used in a joking manner, the reference reflects a significant part of American culture — and our preoccupation with size. Because in our society, size matters.

But when it comes to making progress in diversity, equity, and inclusion, it’s not the size that everyone thinks. We believe when it comes to making actual progress in this space, small matters. Because if the choice is only between “go big or go home,” the truth is most of us will just go home. We might not even try because the solution seems insurmountable and therefore not worth our time.

> Because if the choice is only between “go big or go home,” the truth is most of us will just go home.

When did we make things so big and beyond our reach, that we don’t even get started? When did we make ourselves so small that our personal effort isn’t worth taking?

Let’s imagine what’s possible if we embrace the small, tangible actions in driving diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially as in-house counsel.

Many of us forget the incredible power we have in simply asking:

- Why isn’t the pitch team diverse?
- Why is the pitch team diverse but no underrepresented attorneys are billing the matter?
- Why are underrepresented attorneys billing the matter, but they aren’t getting substantive growth opportunities like taking a deposition or arguing a hearing?
- Why is an underrepresented attorney running the entire case from start to finish, but isn’t

getting origination credit?

If our partner firm says they don't have anyone that fits our ask, instead of shrugging our shoulders and moving on, ask "Why?" And even offer to help. We all have the ability to ask our law firm partners about their individual commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, we can ask them if they are personally mentoring or sponsoring an underrepresented attorney. And if we are dissatisfied by their commitment, we can suggest ideas and offer collaboration.

We all have the ability to ask our law firm partners about their individual commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Of course, we can't ignore our own personal efforts as in-house counsel. We can:

- Mentor or sponsor an underrepresented attorney.
- Help underrepresented attorneys practice their pitch to a prospective client.
- Review resumes and cover letters of underrepresented law students.
- Share our journeys or advice over a cup of coffee or tea.
- Send the managing partner an email about the impressive underrepresented associate we met at a conference and thank them for investing in their development.

Some of these may seem small, but if everyone who takes "small" actions follows through — and invites their colleague to do the same — these actions will add up.

We've tried, "go big or go home," and it's not working fast enough. So, let's embrace small.

Learn how the ACC Maturity Model can help you.

DEI, Esq. is comprised of in-house counsel who share a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the members, Jane Howard-Martin, Connie Almond, Olesja Cormney, Jennifer N. Jones, and Meyling Ly Ortiz, work as employment counsel at Toyota Motor North America, Inc., their views and the thought-leadership expressed are their own and not necessarily the views of their employer.

Jane Howard-Martin



Vice President and Assistant General Counsel

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Jane Howard-Martin is vice president and assistant general counsel for Toyota Motor North America, Inc. (TMNA) and manages the Labor, Employment, Immigration, Benefits and Trade Secrets practice. Howard-Martin leads the labor and employment practice group that is responsible for providing legal advice and counsel and managing litigation and labor matters for a workforce of 33,993 based in our North America affiliates, including the nine North American Manufacturing Centers (NAMCs), R&D, Finance, and Headquarters functions.

Prior to joining Toyota in 2003, Howard-Martin was a partner with Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, LLP in their Los Angeles and Pittsburgh offices, and previously was a partner at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Howard-Martin has been featured in a number of publications and symposiums. She authored a column on employment issues for USAToday.com, a treatise on Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act and served on the Editorial Review Board of the Pennsylvania Labor Letter. Howard-Martin also appeared as a panelist on MSNBC's "Today in America" on the issue of harassment. She is a frequent speaker on employment law topics at various conferences including those held by the ABA, the National Employment Law Council, and the American Employment Law Council. In November 2020, Howard-Martin received the ABA Honorable Bernice B. Donald Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Legal Profession Award. She is the past President (2009) and currently serves on the board of directors of the California Employment Law Council and is also a board member of the American Employment Law Council. She is also a fellow with the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers.

Howard-Martin earned a BA from Harvard University in 1979 and received her juris doctorate degree from Harvard Law School in 1982.

She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Gus Martin, who is on the facility at California State University, Dominguez Hills. In her free time, she enjoys ballroom and hip-hop dancing, trying international recipes, writing historical fiction, and travel.

Connie Almond



Managing Counsel, Labor and Employment

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Connie Almond is managing counsel in the labor and employment law group for Toyota Motor North America, Inc., a mobility company headquartered in Plano, TX.

Olesja Cormney



Managing Counsel, Labor and Employment

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Olesja Cormney is managing counsel in the labor and employment group for Toyota Motor North America, Inc., a mobility company headquartered in Plano, TX. She is a strategic counsel and a proactive problem solver, offering an innovative perspective and an agile approach based on her prior business experience. Cormney is honored to be on the board of the ACC Dallas Fort-Worth Chapter.

Jennifer N. Jones



Managing Counsel, Labor and Employment

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Jennifer Jones is managing counsel in the labor and employment group at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. She has over a decade of experience counseling employers on a broad range of labor and employment law issues. As one of the founding members of DEI, Esq., she has a deep passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and has authored many articles and participated in many panels on the subject. She also sits on the board of two nonprofit organizations, both with a mission of ensuring that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to quality secondary and post-secondary education. In her free time, Jones strives to be a “fun mom” for her two small children

while keeping up with the latest and greatest in interior design.

Meyling "Mey" Ly Ortiz



Managing Counsel, Labor and Employment

Toyota Motor North America, Inc.

Meyling "Mey" Ly Ortiz is managing counsel of employment at Toyota Motor North America, Inc. Her passions include mentoring, championing diversity and inclusion and a personal blog: TheMeybe.com. At home, you can find her doing her best to be a "fun" mom to a toddler and a preschooler and chasing her best self on her Peloton. You can follow her on LinkedIn. And you knew this was coming: her opinions are hers alone.