



Making the Women's Affinity Group Work

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Why Start An Affinity Group?

- Community and informal mentoring
- Targeted professional development
- Opportunities to build business
- Outside leadership for women
- Recruiting



Create Momentum

- Read the literature – a little bit
- Learn the business case – for you
- Adopt a positive tone
- Start with simple programs
- Build support with firm leaders
- Make the affinity group visible



Develop Structure

- Isolate your goals – short term and long term
- Choose your profile – *ad hoc* vs. committee
- Fit structure to the firm and its personnel
- Intersect mission with other diversity initiatives
- Budget from planned program
- Publicize structure and enforce responsibilities to lead



Market Internally

- Name, presence, activities
- Contact all women attorneys frequently
- Involve multiple offices, different agendas
- Become ever-present, visible to practice leaders and managers
- Imitate elements of a “firm-within-a-firm”



Mission and Message

- It fits the firm's culture and needs
- It advances the firm's core values
- It is the hub of communication on matters affecting women
- All activities help the women
- All activities help the firm



Program – Choose Themes

- Career development within the firm
- Career pathways
- Advancement untainted by gender-related issues (like work/life balance)
- Safe venue for dialogue
- Source of literature and experience on issues important to women attorneys
- Rich with leadership opportunities



Program – Sample Activity Types

- Needs assessments
- Developing partner success
- Client development events
- Associate success and retention
- Local office monthly development
- Internal and external messaging



Staying Relevant and Essential

- Stay two steps ahead of firm culture
- Anticipate and have a voice in firm change
- Adapt as the firm grows and changes
- Continue to light the path for further change
- Communicate, stay positive



New Resources

- Advancing Women in the Profession: Action Plans for Women's Bar Associations (Report on June 11-12, 2007 Conference, MIT-PAR), available at <http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/>
- Implementing Women's Initiatives in the Modern Law Firm (ARK Group 2007), order from Managing Partner Magazine at www.ark-group.com