

Attorneys Advise on Effective Business Development Strategies

by Marian Cover Dockery

The State Bar Diversity Program's annual Business Development Symposium on Feb. 3, sponsored by Alston & Bird LLP, featured some of Georgia's best and brightest attorneys. The general counsels who presented advised attorneys that if they "want to develop business with a company or municipality, they need to know what we do." David Ware, Fulton County attorney; Tamra Toussaint, chief global counsel for KCP Global, of Kimberly Clark; and Cathy Hampton, city of Atlanta attorney, joined a panel moderated by Rick Goerss, chief privacy and regulatory counsel at Equifax.

Ware stated that he is not impressed with fancy websites and great resumes. Although credentials are not overlooked, he seeks attorneys who are capable of showcasing their talents as it pertains to the work of the county. Two participants in last year's conference accomplished this task and successfully secured work. Ware added that he has an expectation of diversity and researches the track record of firms.

Ware began his career at Kilpatrick Stockton, which was the first firm in the city to hire a woman, a person of the Jewish faith and an African-American. His posi-



Photos by Stephanie J. Wilson

(Left to right) Rick Goerss, chief privacy and regulatory counsel for Equifax; Tamra Toussaint, chief global counsel for KCP Global, Kimberly Clark; and David Ware, Fulton County attorney, before the general counsel panel discussion begins.

tion is that a firm representing Fulton County should reflect the diversity of the county.

Toussaint stated that diversity of outside counsel is essential as Kimberly Clark's customers are diverse, and the company serves a global market. She echoed Ware's premise that outside counsel must mirror their diverse customer base and must also have diverse thoughts, experiences and perspectives. She also emphasized that Kimberly Clark seeks firms with diverse partners as well as associates. She pointed out that diversity cannot be purchased; a firm must do more than buy a table at the diversity conference to convince Kimberly Clark of its commitment.

Firms with diverse partners and associates are sought by the city as well, but Hampton also stated

that as city attorney, she encourages outside counsel from firms of all sizes to seek business opportunities with the city. All the panelists agreed that diversity in hiring outside counsel is important. They also stated that an attorney's ability to produce an excellent work product and demonstrate an understanding of the company's culture are two criteria that outside counsel mandate when attorneys make their pitch for business.

Partners' Advice

On Feb. 23, members of the Partners Panel convened to share their tips on successfully building a business and discussed how diversity plays a role in that process. The panelists included: R. Lawrence Ashe, Ashe Rafuse & Hill LLP; Philippa Ellis, Owen, Gleaton, Jones, Egan & Sweeney; and Brynda Rodriguez Insley, Insley & Race. Sam Woodhouse, of The Woodhouse Law Firm, moderated the panel.

All of the panelists are founding partners of their firms, which is a testament to their entrepreneurial skills. The consensus of the group was that first and foremost, attorneys must deliver an excellent work product—a point also emphasized in the general counsels program. Insley's philosophy is to showcase her associates and provide them with the opportunity for visibility with her clients. She recounted how one client was so pleased with one of her associate's work that the client requested the associate to work on all of his future cases. Insley also advised the attorneys to be cautious when taking on new clients to ensure they are a proper fit with your firm. Insley stated that although it is important to generate revenue for her firm, it is also important to have a good relationship with your clients and enjoy your work.

Ashe and Ellis advised the attendees to stay active in their bar associations. Both were able to secure work because of their participation in ABA subcommittees; however, landing the client takes patience.



(Left to right) Law firm partners Brynda Insley, Insley & Race; Sam Woodhouse, The Woodhouse Law Firm; Philippa Ellis, Owen, Gleaton, Jones, Egan & Sweeney; and R. Lawrence Ashe, Ashe Rafuse & Hill, share their tips with the attendees at Part II of the Business Development Symposium.


In one case, it was 10 years before Ellis secured a client, a Fortune 500 company. A relationship that she had with another attorney in the ABA, who eventually rose up the ranks, invited Ellis to meet with her company's team of lawyers.

Woodhouse emphasized the importance of knowing your client before making the pitch. Understand the culture of your client's company, and once you secure work, continue to communicate with that client. Ashe, a runner, jogs with a client and stated that attorneys at his firm also invite clients to golf and spa dates. Ashe discussed why diversity is important, as his named partners represent the diversity that firms should strive for: a woman, an African-American and a white male. All partners are in high demand because of their outstanding skills and experience; however, the diversity of the partnership is the added value that these partners bring to their clients and sets Ashe's firm apart from other Georgia firms.

The general counsels and the partners shared valuable advice to the attendees. All of the participants left both sessions with effective strategies to develop business for their firms.

Meetings With General Counsels

Part III of the Symposium will be held at the Bar Center on April 21, where in-house counsel from the City of Atlanta, Georgia-Pacific, UPS and Fulton County will meet

with attorneys selected from applications completed and submitted online at the State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program's webpage. These meetings are designed to provide attorneys with a unique opportunity to meet in-house counsel and take the critical steps to build a business relationship in the future. To register, visit www.gabar.org/news/diversity_program_presents_the_business_development_symposium/. 



Marian Cover Dockery is an attorney with a background in employment discrimination and the executive director of

the State Bar of Georgia Diversity Program. For more information on the Diversity Program, go to www.gabar.org/programs.

Save these dates!

May 31–June 9

4th Annual

High School Pipeline

Sign up to teach a speech class or serve as a judge at our annual oral and written competition. Contact Marian Dockery at lexikonmcd@aol.com.

Sept. 29

**State Bar of Georgia
Annual Diversity CLE
and Luncheon**