



A Strategic Pursuit Towards 'One Community, Identity of Many'

Snell & Wilmer
**Committee on
Diversity & Inclusion**
One Community, Identity of Many



Over its 75-year history, Snell & Wilmer has grown from its headquarters in Phoenix to add eight offices throughout the western United States and in Mexico. That expansion has resulted in Snell & Wilmer emerging as a nationally recognized firm, with the capability and resources to serve thousands of clients domestically and abroad. Indeed, many of those clients are not only diverse in terms of their respective industries, but also in their composition of people. Similarly, as the firm expanded, the diversity of the firm grew with it.

In explaining what diversity means to Snell & Wilmer, John Bouma, the firm's chairman, says, "I have always felt that the best solution often emerges from diversity of perspective, thought and talent. Diversity is about people—the similarities that bind us and the differences that enrich us, which in turn reveal individuals who make a difference." Bouma, however, is quick to point out that diversity cannot exist in a vacuum, but rather requires an environment for individualism to thrive: "Diversity needs inclusion, which is about making sure members of the firm know they belong and are respected, valued and appreciated for who they are as individuals."

These statements from Bouma expose a nuanced understanding of diversity and inclusion, and the idea that effective programs start from the upper echelons of management. Snell & Wilmer has more than a diversity and inclusion program; it has a strategic framework that blankets the firm's infrastructure. Again, Bouma explains, "Snell & Wilmer has long believed diversity and inclusion are important. Not only are they important components of our commitment to be a compelling place to work, they are also important components of our endeavor to consistently provide superior legal services."

While leaders at other law firms may share Bouma's keen understanding of diversity and inclusion, the commitment to addressing those matters often falls short of execution. To ensure that wasn't the case at Snell & Wilmer, the firm created the diversity outreach group more than a decade ago, which ultimately evolved into the committee on diversity & inclusion. The committee, led

today by Snell & Wilmer attorney Manuel H. Cairo, strives to build upon the firm's commitment to these matters by bringing additional focus and clarity to the firm's efforts. Cairo states, "that through much research, the committee developed a strategic plan with articulated key initiatives that provide vision, focus and clarity with a long-term view towards advancing diversity and inclusion in a balanced and holistic fashion. We also developed vision, mission and value statements so that diversity and inclusion efforts remain innovative, relevant and fully aligned with the firm's overall business objectives."

The use of strategic planning sessions could lead one to think Snell & Wilmer is in the business of diversity and inclusion. For example, the statements send powerful messages about the role of diversity and inclusion in the firm's culture and overall business strategy. The mission statement reads: "By honoring the unique qualities of individuals,



Manuel H. Cairo

educating our colleagues and building meaningful alliances, Snell & Wilmer promotes a diverse group of qualified professionals that reflect the communities in which we live and the clients we serve." The vision statement succinctly describes Snell & Wilmer's direction: "One Community, Identity of Many." The committee adopted the firm's value statement to reaffirm Bouma's desire that diversity and inclusion are intertwined with the firm's overall infrastructure.

This approach has resulted in an impressive communication of Snell & Wilmer's long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion. The firm has a vibrant website enforced with clear statements of its commitment to diversity and inclusion and a comprehensive cataloging of the firm's existing diversity and inclusion efforts, including formal activities. Its latest effort is the Fellowship for Advancement and Resources ("FAR"), an expansion of a scholarship program the firm implemented in 2009 that has assisted 13 diverse students study and pay for the law school entrance exam. FAR is a pipeline program aimed at providing fellows with a number of important benefits, including those of the scholarship, designed to increase the likelihood of the fellows' acceptance to, and success in, law school and beyond. The firm intends to develop additional efforts towards addressing their key initiatives.

Snell & Wilmer's approach to diversity and inclusion has strengthened its long-standing commitment to both ideas and reaffirms similar programs and beliefs held by stakeholders. The approach also allows it to develop metrics to assess its efforts and conduct a regular performance analysis designed to ensure dynamic and balanced action. Snell & Wilmer's outside-the-box efforts are commendable and serve as an example for others.



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