

BARKERGILMORE: TRANSFORMING DEI STATEMENTS INTO ACTION

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have been the buzzwords in the legal industry for some time now. While most law firms have released statements committing to DEI, how many of these firms have successfully translated their DEI commitments into action?

To answer this question, **BarkerGilmore**, a leading executive search firm, conducted a survey of legal industry professionals across the United States to gather insights on the progress of DEI in the industry. The survey findings, detailed in the white paper titled "From DEI Statements to Action," provide a deep dive into the current state of DEI in law departments and offer recommendations for companies looking to turn their DEI statements into tangible actions.

The survey, which received responses from legal industry professionals, was answered by General Counsel and Managing Counsel at organizations across the United States.

One of the that main findings of the survey that while most organisations have DEI initiatives in place, there is a significant gap between the existence of these initiatives and their effectiveness.

The survey also revealed that the top strategy used to increase representation is 'Intentional Recruiting' at 23%, followed by a requirement to have a historically underrepresented candidate in the slate of candidates (23%), including diversity on the search committee (7%), and networking within minority organizations (7%).

Despite these challenges, the survey identified several key factors that can lead to the success of DEI initiatives in companies. One of the most critical factors is leadership commitment. According to the survey, legal departments without DEI recruitment strategies reported 10 percentage points less representation from the overall average than those with at least one strategy.

Another factor that can contribute to the success of DEI initiatives is the allocation of sufficient resources. The survey found that firms that allocated sufficient resources to DEI initiatives were more likely to report successful outcomes.

In addition to these factors, the survey found that transparency and accountability are critical components of successful DEI initiatives. Companies that include a diverse search committee member and who show flexibility to the candidate's qualifications/skill set reported an increase in representation within their legal departments of 13 percentage points each, respectively.

When companies make their DEI goals transparent and hold themselves accountable for achieving them, they are more likely to see progress. Legal departments without DEI recruitment strategies reported 10 percentage points less representation from the overall average than those with at least one strategy.

The survey findings demonstrate that while many companies have made DEI commitments, there is still a long way to go in terms of translating those commitments into action. The good news is that the survey offers a roadmap for firms looking to do just that. By focusing on leadership commitment, resource allocation, transparency, and accountability, firms can turn their DEI statements into tangible actions.

In conclusion, the survey findings offer valuable insights for law firms looking to make progress on DEI. With the right approach, firms can create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace that benefits all employees and the companies as a whole.