

Harrity Pledge and Challenge

By **Mauricio Velásquez, MBA**
President, CEO – The Diversity Training Group



At a recent Association of Legal Administrators, Washington, DC Chapter meeting – John Harrity, Managing Partner and Diversity Partner of Harrity & Harrity was on a panel and presenting his firm's Diversity and Inclusion Journey. Harrity and Harrity, LLP is an Intellectual Property Firm boutique based in Fairfax, VA, experiencing high growth.

He explained their commitment to Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) and said, "We believe that the 'practice of law' is advanced by a more diverse legal team – with diversity of background, upbringing, education, and perspective comes quality legal innovation. At Harrity & Harrity, we are committed to **The Harrity Rule**, a supercharged version of the Rooney Rule that shows our firm's commitment to D & I is not window dressing or smoke and mirrors."

The Rooney Rule is a National Football League policy that requires league teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching and senior football operation jobs.

But there was a flaw – the football team only had to interview at least one minority candidate for an NFL coach opening but could interview an unlimited number of candidates from the majority. For Mr. Harrity – "The NFL is just not going far enough." Mr. Harrity said, "We wanted to go much farther and so we decided for every opening – attorney, non-attorney – for every candidate that is from the majority, there must be a candidate 1:1 from a minority background to match and level the opportunity playing field."

I interviewed Mr. Harrity before and after his presentation and he went on to tell me - "We are creating and nurturing a workplace culture that is inclusive, values differences, is authentic, and we want our team to know we really care about them, their well-being, and their future. This will make us the IP law firm employer of choice. We are looking for good people – from all backgrounds. Right now we have more work than we can handle."

After the meeting it struck Mr. Harrity and he asked me in his interview – "Is what we are doing that special?" I told him – "Yes, absolutely," and that is why I wrote this article. There is talk of the recently introduced Mansfield Rule - the rule requires women and minorities to comprise at least 30 percent of the candidates for leadership and governance roles, equity partner promotions, and lateral positions in law firms. Again Mr. Harrity countered - "By when? We don't think that rule goes far enough and we are in a hurry."

Sandra Maxey, Chief Diversity Officer at Harrity & Harrity told me “Making the commitment is one thing, executing, the every-day work of finding and hiring and retaining diverse talent is the real challenge and we are staying the course.” Jazmine Hitt, Diversity Coordinator at Harrity and Harrity stated, “If you are intentional, constantly keeping your eye on this prize, holding people accountable – you will get results and we are pleased with our results to date.” They both said to me - “We have a D&I Strategy and Plan and a team, an infrastructure supporting our efforts here at H&H and we are constantly tweaking and improving our strategy and plan.”

They have put it all on their website (www.harrityllp.com) - they are transparent and inclusive. Please join Harrity & Harrity and the ranks of other law firms - “Who really want to see change and are among the most committed to the hiring and retention of more diverse talent for the betterment of the practice of law.”

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