

Microsoft Honors Greenberg Traurig, Latham For Diversity

By **Hailey Konnath**

Law360 (October 28, 2019, 11:48 PM EDT) -- Microsoft Corp. on Monday recognized Greenberg Traurig LLP as the top-performing law firm participating in its diversity program and also named Latham & Watkins LLP as the first-ever winner of its new Most Innovative Award, as part of the technology company's 11-year effort to address diversity issues in the legal industry.

Microsoft Corporate Vice President and General Counsel Dev Stahlkopf announced the honors in a blog post noting Greenberg Traurig's "incredible strides" in increasing the diversity of the attorneys working on Microsoft matters, becoming a "strong partner in setting a high bar for the industry."

"The diverse teams from Greenberg Traurig performed with excellence," Stahlkopf said.

And Latham boasts innovative approaches to create a more diverse and inclusive culture, she said. In particular, the firm has laid out strategies for addressing socioeconomic diversity, sponsored the California Minority Counsel Program job board in an effort to reach lateral candidates from diverse backgrounds and developed a Diversity Leadership Academy, she said.

Latham's initiatives "were overwhelmingly favored by their peers," Stahlkopf said.

A spokesperson with Greenberg Traurig told Law360 on Monday that the firm thanks Microsoft for sharing its "vision of a diverse and inclusive legal profession."

"We are honored to work with them on this important initiative and are committed to continuing to help move the needle forward," he said.

Representatives with Latham didn't immediately return a request for comment late Monday.

Microsoft created the Law Firm Diversity Program in 2008 with the goal of increasing the number of women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities and veterans in the legal industry. It started the program by giving firms year-end bonuses if they reached a quantifiable diversity goal. In the last decade, most of the firms in the program earned their bonuses every year, according to Microsoft.

Since then, participating firms have increased the average percentage of hours worked by underrepresented lawyers on Microsoft matters from 33.6% to 58.7%, Stahlkopf said.

Diversity in management committees has also increased from 31.2% to 41.8%, she said.

Greenberg Traurig increased its underrepresented partner hours with Microsoft from 45% to 61%, Stahlkopf said Monday. And all attorney hours worked by underrepresented attorneys increased 13 percentage points from 58% to 71%, she said.

"Our attorneys who work closely with Greenberg Traurig noted that all members of the team were consummate trusted advisers, and their impressive work led to positive outcomes for Microsoft," she said.

"While we applaud the progress that has been made, we also recognize that there is still much to do," Stahlkopf said. "The legal profession continues to lag behind other industries and the diversity of our communities overall, whether for women, minorities or other diverse groups."

That's why Microsoft decided to recognize innovation on "culture, equal opportunity and career development in law firms and in-house legal departments," she said.

And Latham rose to the top of a pool of "bold ideation and experimentation," Stahlkopf said.

According to Law360's 2019 Diversity Snapshot, the legal industry has seen only marginal progress on racial and ethnic diversity in the attorney workforce from year to year, even as demands grow from clients expecting more diverse legal teams.

About 20% of attorneys and just over 9% of partners at surveyed law firms identify as attorneys of color, according to the report.

--Additional reporting by Michele Gorman and Jacqueline Bell. Editing by Breda Lund.