

Women GCs among those to attend DLA Piper's third Global Women's Leadership Summit

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By Ed Silverstein

DLA Piper's third Global Women's Leadership Summit will bring together female in-house counsel, business leaders and lawyers from DLA Piper.

The two-day, invitation-only event will be held at the end of September in Chicago, and will focus on many issues of concern to women general counsel and law firm members.

Topics to be addressed at the event are feminism, diversity, working with boards of directors, handling increasing corporate risk and developing leadership skills. Among the companies to be involved are GE, Nike, Hyatt, McDonald's, the New York Public Library and AOL. Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to President Barack Obama, is the keynote speaker.

Many of the panelists have faced glass ceilings and other issues as they advanced their careers, and they will be offering advice to others facing similar concerns.

In anticipation of the summit, Christina Martini, partner and vice chair of DLA Piper's Chicago Intellectual Property Practice Group and chair of DLA Piper's Global Women's Leadership Summit, confirmed in a recent statement to InsideCounsel, that "Glass ceilings do still exist, but not in the same way they did a few years ago."

"While we are all aware that there may be inherent limitations in certain situations, it is more important to see that there



are [a] myriad [of] meaningful opportunities for all of us, if we just have the foresight and wisdom to identify them for what they are and seize them," she added. "We must also recognize that we are often much more critical of ourselves than others are of us. This mindset limits us far more than any glass ceilings which may still exist, and we have to check that attitude at the door."

One way for women attorneys to successfully move forward in their careers is through mentors and sponsors.

Martini says these "are an essential element of our professional and personal development."

"They provide support in a variety of ways, including as teachers and coaches on how to accomplish whatever goals and objectives we set for ourselves," she explained. "They also share invaluable wisdom on their successes and failures so that we can learn from the approaches which have and have not worked in certain situations." Often, sponsors speak on behalf of other attorneys when it comes to promotion and advancement.

The summit also will let female general counsel, deputy general counsel and other in-house female leaders share experiences, thoughts and best practices. Among the topics to be discussed are building and leading a legal department and career advancement.

“We seek to create an open, inclusive environment which fosters a provocative dialogue and a sense of camaraderie, collaboration and friendship among attendees that will hopefully grow and expand far beyond the event itself,” Martini added.

That is important. Wendy Weinberger, one of the panelists at the summit and who is senior vice president of Operations

and General Counsel of i4C Innovations, said it is critical to be authentic to improve networking skills.

“Attend networking events where you will have the opportunity to meet people you would be genuinely interested in meeting, and attend events that draw members of the business community,” she advises.

“Let your actions and accomplishments speak for themselves,” she adds. “Don’t oversell yourself.”

In addition, another summit panelist, Paula Boggs, the former general counsel of Starbucks, and founder of Boggs Media, explained there are several strategies attorneys can use to ensure qualified

women are represented on a board of directors.

“Lawyer advisors may know of worthy candidates who would not otherwise come to the board’s attention and when the lawyer has earned enough credibility, she or he will be heard when in the room,” Boggs said.

About the Author



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Ed Silverstein is a veteran writer and editor for magazines, websites and newspapers. A graduate of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, he has won several awards for his published articles.