

Education: PGDL & LPC, Nottingham Law School, England; BA (Hons), psychology, University of Exeter

Company Name: Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Industry: Law

Company CEO: Kim Koopersmith

Company Headquarters Location: Washington, DC

Number of Employees: 1,700+

Your Location (if different from above): London, England

Words you live by: Every cloud has a silver lining.

Personal Philosophy: Treat people as you would like to be treated yourself.

What book are you reading: *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens

What was your first job: Cleaner in a hotel when I was 14

Favorite charity: My Black Dog (a mental health charity)

Interests: Tennis, travel, and karaoke

Family: Husband, Christian, and three children—Lola (11), Fletcher (8), and Cameron (2)



Diversity—from *Nice to Have* to *Need to Have*

The shift in mindset over the last few years, from diversity being a “nice to have” to diversity being recognized as a “need to have,” is increasingly evident. It is hard to argue against the fact that organizations are better places if they are filled with people from different walks of life, with varying experiences and perspectives. Moreover, clients are increasingly focused on it.

So, what part can we all play in continuing to increase diversity in the workplace? To my mind there are four key areas to focus on:

1. Promotion: Until diverse candidates have a seat at the table in decision-making processes, it is hard to see how genuine change will happen and, for now, it remains the case that diverse representation in leadership roles is sadly lacking in most organizations. In order to accelerate that change, current leaders must seek to address gender—and other—inequality by identifying diverse future leaders and ensuring professional growth is possible for all in order to facilitate future promotion and representation through all levels of leadership.

2. Retention: Similarly, organizations must focus on retaining talent. The legal profession has admirable gender equality at the junior level, yet consistently fails to retain women as they move through to partnership. The team I am part of in London has seven partners; three of us are women.

We are all mothers. I talk about my children (often to the associates in my team, many of whom are also women. I talk about the school run, bedtime theatrics, forgetting to order school uniforms in time, and feeding my toddler biscuits in front of the TV to keep her quiet when I’m stuck on conference calls. I am honest and open about how the “juggle” can be exhausting, but also make it clear that I wouldn’t have it any other way. I hope that, in some small way, I am a positive role model for those women who choose to have both children and a career.

3. Sponsors: For those of you in leadership positions, be good sponsors. Identify the individuals on your teams who may not naturally find their way through because they don’t fit a traditional stereotype. Go out of your way to put those people forward for opportunities they might not otherwise be given or take for themselves.

For those of you building your career, identify people who will get behind you and be ready to ask for their help in achieving your career goals.

4. Mentors: We all need sounding boards, whatever our level of seniority. Finding people, whether in or out of work, with whom you can share experiences and chew through problems is invaluable. Understanding what has worked well (and less well) for others can help make your own path a little easier.