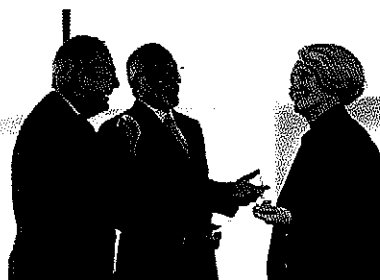


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Lawyer's Lantern

Reach the Next Level with Group Mentoring

By Lori L. Garrett

The Lawyer's Lantern is a new column that offers illuminating professional guidance for your career.

In celebration of January's National Mentoring Month,¹ MCCA seeks to bring attention to the need for mentoring lawyers who are a part of historically underrepresented groups ("diverse attorneys"). MCCA's research shows that diverse attorneys report reduced access to mentors, whereas the availability of mentoring is key to effectively advancing diversity in the legal profession.² MCCA strives to address this challenge and to create opportunities for corporations and law firms to benchmark best mentoring and diversity practices.



Lori L. Garrett

When people think of mentoring, they often think of one person in a supervisory or senior position grooming a junior colleague. This type of mentoring relationship focuses on the mentee's learning needs, and views the mentor as the main learning resource. Mentors may recommend outside sources for additional learning, but the mentor remains the chief source for guiding the mentee's development. This type of traditional one-to-one mentoring relationship is critical, but operates in a narrow definition of mentoring. It does not encompass the full range of what mentoring can be. Group mentoring, which occurs when a group of individuals comes together to collaborate and meet specific learning needs of an individual or a group, embodies the

"next level" of mentoring.

Groups may have one or more mentors/ facilitators, and participants include one or many mentees. For example, an entire diversity committee from one corporation may serve to mentor an entire diversity committee from another corporation. Or an expert consultant may host a group to discuss best strategies for addressing a particular challenge, such as retention or rainmaking skills. In that format, mentees may benefit simultaneously from the expert mentor who provides recommended action items related to the topic. In another example, a group may be made up of law firm managing partners, a peer group with similar



learning interests or needs that is self-directed and self-managed.

Although the form and function of mentoring groups may vary widely, they all share the common purpose of accelerating the learning of the members of the group. Groups can be structured so they are open to anyone, restricted with approval by the mentor/ facilitator, mandatory, or invitation-only.

Group mentoring solves the dilemma of mentoring many people when not enough qualified mentors are available to make one-to-one mentoring matches, or when one-to-one mentoring is not feasible or practical (as in the example of mentoring an entire diversity committee). Group mentoring may be more efficient and allows multiple individuals and organizations to access information about topics at one time.³

MCCA has taken the lead to bring online mentoring around diversity and professional development issues to the profession on a wide basis. Last spring, MCCA launched the KAN-Do! Mentoring program. KAN-Do! (which stands for **K**nowledge, **A**ccess, and **N**etworks) aims to foster connections among the many outstanding lawyers, corporations, and law firms in our network. It is the first initiative funded as a result of donations to MCCA's 10x10x10 Campaign. KAN-Do! makes use of Open Mentoring,[®] a Web-based tool developed by Triple Creek Associates that matches, manages, and monitors mentoring relationships KAN-Do! Mentoring offers two unique types of mentoring experiences: the traditional one-to-one mentor/mentee relationship; and group mentoring.

In KAN-Do!'s one-to-one mentoring tool, participants are able to enter mentoring relationships with other members of MCCA's network as a mentor, a mentee, or both. The matching process is comparable to the process found in a service like "match.com."[®] Participants complete an online profile and decide what skills or perspectives they wish to develop or share, what geographic market they wish to target or serve, who they wish to mentor or receive mentoring from, and their "meeting" availability. Mentors can select how many mentees they engage, and mentees can engage as many different mentors as they like. It takes just a few minutes to complete the profile, but matches are immediate. The time commitment for both mentors and mentees is as little as three months; if a mentor's or mentee's schedule during a particular period becomes too busy, he or she may simply elect to "hide" their profile temporarily.

Through the group-mentoring feature of the program, members of the MCCA network also can share best practices and gain access to expertise. Recently, MCCA hosted its first group mentoring event with attendees of its *Creating Pathways to Diversity Conference*,[®] which was held in New York City on November 11, 2009. Attendees of the "Nuts and Bolts of Building an Effective Diversity Program" panel, a hot discussion session at the conference, were invited to continue the conversation as a group through the KAN-Do! Mentoring program. The panelist and other experts are serving as mentors/facilitators of the group, and attendees are participating as mentees of the group. The mentees will listen to an after-conference webinar, presented by the mentors, that will address issues and questions that were not resolved during the Conference panel presentation.

MCCA is excited to invite you to be part of its unique KANDo! Mentoring program. In fact, MCCA is forming a group especially to discuss an issue presented by the topic of this article: mentoring diverse lawyers. MCCA's latest groundbreaking research report, *Sustaining Pathways To Diversity: The Next Steps in Understanding and Increasing Diversity & Inclusion in Large Law Firms*,⁴ recommends that law firms create leadership development and succession-planning programs that ensure that a diverse group of lawyers are groomed and mentored to assume relationship and/or billing responsibility for key clients of the firm. Our research has shown that it is especially critical to focus on leadership development and succession planning early on in the careers of young lawyers. To join a group formed to help you learn how to improve your efforts to groom

and mentor a diverse slate of lawyers for future firm leadership and succession, please sign up for the KAN-Do! Group Mentoring program by completing a profile at www.mcca.com/mentoring. Once you complete your profile, please search for the group entitled, "Leadership Development and Succession Planning." You may also elect to enter into one or more one-to-one mentoring relationships by visiting the same site and completing the same profile.

To learn more about MCCA's KAN-Do! Mentoring program, please contact Lori L. Garrett, managing director of the southeast region, at (404) 870-4619 or lorigarrett@mcca.com. **DB**

Note

¹ See National Mentoring Month Campaign, available at www.nationalmentoringmonth.org/about_nmm/.

² See Minority Corporate Counsel Association, *Creating Pathways to Diversity Mentoring Across Differences: A Guide to Cross-Gender and Cross-Race Mentoring* p. 29-33.

³ This article includes information about one-to-one mentoring and group mentoring taken from guide materials created by Triple Creek Associates for MCCA.

⁴ See Minority Corporate Counsel Association, *Sustaining Pathways To Diversity: The Next Steps in Understanding and Increasing Diversity & Inclusion in Large Law Firms*, p. 8.

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