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Macy's counsel Dennis Broderick commits to expand legal diversity

Summit to explore ways to increase job opportunities

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [Lucy May](#) Senior Staff Reporter

On April 25 and 26, 100 general counsels from Fortune 500 corporations will join managing partners from the nation's 150 largest law firms to discuss ways to make the legal profession more diverse.

Macy's Inc. General Counsel Dennis Broderick helped organize the event, to be held in Phoenix, because he believes it can help "move the needle" on diversity.

"This is a big, long-term, tough game, and none of us can say we've succeeded or it's over or we don't have to attend to it anymore," said Broderick. "We have to continue battling it and staying in the game and advancing the ball in the long term."



Dennis Broderick

He should know. Broderick has been working to diversify the legal landscape locally for years as an active participant in the Greater Cincinnati Minority Counsel Program, a coalition working to provide equal opportunity for minority lawyers.

"Dennis has done as much as almost anyone in town to further diversity in the larger firms and corporations," said **Cincinnati Bar Association** Executive Director John Norwine. "He's let all the law firms in town know that having a diverse group of attorneys in the office will help them secure more corporate business."

Broderick spoke with the Business Courier's Lucy May about the upcoming summit. Excerpts follow:

Q: How did you get involved in the 2008 Call to Action Summit?

Some number of years ago, my company and I, as the general counsel, along with 100 or so other general counsels of other public companies signed a Call to Action statement by Rick Palmore, then the GC of **Sara Lee**, now the GC of **General Mills**. It called for the GCs to do what we could to move the needle on diversity and work with our partners at law firms. Failing to make satisfactory progress on diversity, there would be implications on that corporation's ability to do business with that law firm.

A year and a half or so ago, a number of signatories met in New York and out of that came this idea of having a first-of-its-kind summit involving the senior legal individuals at the companies and law firms.

Q: Why is this important to Macy's?

Diversity and succeeding at diversity is a business imperative in our business. Our potential customer base in America covers a wide swath of our population and crosses all ethnic and gender lines. We as a company want to appeal to as broad a customer base as possible. We think we can do that, in part,

by having a diverse work force. The more we succeed at diversity, the bigger and broader our customer base will be and the more successful we'll be for shareholders.

It's important to us at Macy's that our service providers are similarly diverse. By doing so, we send a signal that we care a lot about diversity. And by having diverse suppliers provide goods and services to us, we can be more effective in maximizing diversity.

Q: I understand you've been working to diversify Macy's own legal department.

Yes, 25 percent of our lawyers are now ethnically diverse, and that's indicative of our commitment. We don't stand as the paragon of accomplishment on the subject of diversity. We're pleased at where we are, and we have many initiatives to seek to move the needle on diversity. We have about 60 lawyers on staff. Sixty-five percent are women, and nine out of the last 11 hires were diverse candidates.

Q: How tough has it been to make your law department more diverse?

We didn't go out and say to ourselves we're only going to hire minority attorneys. We had openings, and we went out into the marketplace and looked for the most talented people we could get. Through that process we were fortunate to have identified a lot of quality people, and a number of those people who best fit the bill were minorities. What we seek, most importantly, are high-quality legal professionals, and that's the indispensable criteria for all of our hires.

Q: Would it be harder to attract those minority candidates if your legal department were centralized here?

It might be. I bet that's true. Our office in Atlanta has attracted a lot of high-quality minority professionals. Some cities are more attractive to minority candidates than others, I suppose. And Atlanta seems to be a city that's a very attractive place for minority attorneys. We're in San Francisco, which has a very significant minority population of professionals. We're in New York City. I bet if we just had one office in Cincinnati we might not have had the same results. We've offered a diversity of geographic opportunity for new hires that not every law department can do.

Q: I understand that the Call to Action Summit is looking to establish measurable benchmarks. What kind?

We want a way that corporations can get metrics information and data from law firms in a way that doesn't bombard firms with different requests from different people. The real promise of this summit will come about through an ongoing process of engagement. It will be very valuable to have people get together. But diversity isn't about a day and a half of meetings. It's about an ongoing commitment over a long period of time. We're hoping this summit will be a catalyst.