

WOMENLEGAL

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A woman with red hair, wearing a black blazer, is holding a glowing blue globe of the Earth. The globe is the central focus, showing swirling white clouds and blue oceans. The woman's face is partially visible in the background, looking towards the camera.

A WOMAN'S WORLD?

What issues do women working in the legal profession in the US, UK, Australia and Asia face today?

FOCUS FEATURE

An insight into the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession's latest report.

MASTERCLASS

How to overcome the obstacles facing women aiming for partnership.

Women Legal's mission -
to encourage and inspire female lawyers.
We're on the same page.

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A new era...

The American author and critic, Mayra Mannes, once wrote: "Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good-looking, good-tempered, well-dressed, well-groomed, and unaggressive."

It was a tell-tale insight into the many limitations women of her time faced on a daily basis. This was the 1960s – a period often referred to as 'second wave feminism' – when women may have gained the right to vote but still fought for equality in many other aspects of their lives, from the workplace to the home.

Fast-forward 40 years and it is remarkable how little has changed. Even in the 21st century reducing the gap between the perception of, and opportunities given to, women and men is a concern for many, as gender-based discriminations such as fewer rights, lower income and less access to resources and decision-making continue to plague women the world over. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the workplace, where complaints about an ever-present 'glass ceiling' preventing women from progressing up the career ladder, have now become commonplace. And the traditionally male-dominated legal sector is by no means exempt from such discrimination, as a simple search through the archive of any national newspaper would seem to prove. Law firms worldwide are oft accused of allowing gender-based discriminatory practices to continue unchallenged in the workplace.

It is for that reason that we have launched *Women Legal* magazine, a publication dedicated to aiding the advancement of women in the legal profession. By providing a vehicle for the sharing of best practices and opinions, as well as expert, practical guidance, we want to give women working in the legal sector across the world the recognition that they deserve.

The *Women Legal* editorial team is working to provide you with a valuable resource that can be used in your day-to-day activities, and as an online reference – our website is currently under development.

At the heart of our success in achieving this goal is you, the reader, so if you have any issues that you are keen to address, or that you would like *Women Legal* to explore, please do get in touch. Similarly, if you would like to share any of your own experiences, contribute news items to our news section or have any feedback or comment for our letters page, you can contact me at lmcnulty@ark-group.com.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the first issue of the magazine and look forward to receiving your comments and feedback in the future. Many thanks also to those who have contributed articles and helped with the launch of the magazine.

Lucy McNulty
Editor



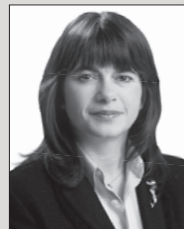
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Diversity: A future focus

By **Susan E. Satkowski**, shareholder, Lavin, O'Neil, Ricci, Cedrone & DiSipio

EACH DAY, MY INBOX contains at least one or more invitations to join programmes that address gender diversity in the legal profession. Are these programmes still relevant, particularly in this presidential election year in which a woman almost won the Democratic Party nomination and a woman is the US Republican Party's nominee for vice president? True, these are events in the political arena, but we cannot look at ourselves in the mirror as American women lawyers without recognising these historic achievements in our nation's history. Yet, the dialogue on gender diversity in the American legal profession must continue.

Statistics support this view. In *A Current Glance at Women in the Law 2006*, the ABA's Commission on Women in the Profession reported that women comprised 48.8 per cent of law students awarded a Juris Doctor degree, but comprised only 30.2 per cent of the profession, 17.3 per cent of partners in private practice and 16.6 per cent of Fortune 500 General Counsel. We must work to transform the numbers of women in law schools to the same or similar levels for women in leadership positions in the profession.

History also teaches us that discussion of gender diversity is still necessary. Women in this country have come to possess the right

to own property, attend the same prestigious universities as our founding fathers, work outside the home, and vote. These ideas seem so basic to us that to not have these rights seems unthinkable. And yet, until it becomes commonplace to have women as leaders of law firms, the discussion of gender diversity in the legal profession must continue.

At one gender diversity event, someone in the audience had the courage to raise his hand to make the point that unless women focus on how they can bring business to the table, the discussion will not be fruitful. He is right, too. The gender discussion can have its accounts of 'war stories', but must also look forward to what we as women lawyers have to offer. This topic can consume many pages, but as an example: a lack of aggression in salesmanship – a characteristic of most women – turned around, is integrity in marketing true abilities. Rainmaking is founded on developing relationships and women excel at maintaining them. The ability to be a good listener, another attribute of rainmakers, has always been a skill set of female lawyers. Let us therefore continue the gender diversity discussion, but concentrate on the future and the ways to enable us to make a positive change. [WOMENLEGAL](#)