

MSBA DIVERSITY TASK FORCE
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

WELCOME

Use the following script to welcome the focus group participants and explain the process and guidelines:

Good Morning/Evening. My name is ____, and on behalf of the Minnesota State Bar Association's Diversity Task Force, I want to welcome you to [location: e.g., the MSBA offices] and to express our appreciation for agreeing to take part in today's focus group. This conversation, which we anticipate will run for about two hours, is one of several that are being coordinated by the MSBA to get a current snapshot of the various so-called "diversity" issues within the legal profession, and to gather ideas for Best Practices in addressing such issues. The focus groups are themselves part of a larger effort to study issues related to race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion that lawyers in Minnesota face in their professional lives. When I use the word "diversity" I am referring to all five of the areas I just mentioned. The goal is to produce a comprehensive report by the MSBA Convention in June, 2006, which will help guide discussion of these topics in future years. Your participation is critical to the success of the project.

Today's conversation will be confidential. We want to encourage you to answer as candidly as possible. Each of you has been given a card with a letter on it. When you want to respond to a question, please raise the card and identify your designated letter when you speak. Our conversation is being transcribed by a court reporter [or being recorded for later transcription], and the letter will be used in the transcription to identify each speaker, to keep identities anonymous. We are using a transcriber so that we can preserve the accuracy and ensure confidentiality of your comments. Any reference to individuals or to specific employers in your answers will not be included in any transcription, and thus not included in the final report. Nobody here today is required to identify themselves or their employers in order to participate, and in fact we discourage this. Any tape-recording being produced as part of the transcription process will be destroyed once the transcription is complete. We are confident that the identities of participants will remain confidential as a result.

Some helpful guidelines we invite you to consider to make this effort as successful as possible include:

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** It is essential that all of you agree to keep confidential the identities of individual participants and any names inadvertently mentioned in our conversation.
2. **PARTICIPATE:** Please participate freely in the discussion. We need feedback and information from each of you so we can learn together. Many of you were specifically invited because your voice may represent a particular type of workplace, experience, or demographic.
3. **ONE-AT-A-TIME:** To ease the transcription of conversation, please speak one at a time.
4. **DON'T DOMINATE:** Be careful not to dominate the discussion. In our eagerness to share, we need to leave opportunity for all to respond.

5. QUESTION: We encourage questions if you are uncertain about the process or topics- just ask!

6. REMEMBER: there are no "right" or "wrong" answers- just tell us your experience!

ICEBREAKER

Ask the focus group participants to introduce themselves by telling the group how long they have been in practice and what type of practice they have. For example "I have been practicing law for 22 years as a trial attorney and I work in a private large/small firm."

QUESTIONS

Diversity Issues/Problems

1. First, have you ever noticed anyone at your workplace being treated differently because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, or disabilities?

IF YES: Can you give me some examples? (LIST ON CHART)

IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT:

*Case assignments

*Client meetings

*Task/job assignments

*Advancement/Promotions

*Compensation

*Work environment

*Mentoring

*[others specific to diverse group's perspective- eg wheelchair access, etc.?]

2. And how does this type of treatment affect people on a personal and/or professional level?

IF NOT MENTIONED:

a. How has this treatment affected people's development professionally (that is, beyond just being attending CLEs-see list above)?

b. How has this treatment affected other things such as evaluations, compensation, or advancement?

3. And what about the issue of retention? Do you think that all lawyers are treated the same when it comes to retention, or are there differences based on gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation?

PROBE: What are these differences? (LIST ON CHART)

4. Next, I'd like you to think about the hiring of women and the minority groups we have mentioned. Do you think it is easier or harder to get hired if you are a woman or a member of a minority group?

IF YES: Can you give me some examples?

Generally, do you think there is a PERCEPTION that it is easier or harder to get hired if you are a woman or a member of a minority group?

IF YES: Can you give me some examples?

Senior Management Commitment

5. And now I'd like you to think about what has been done at your workplace with regard to diversity. Thinking about your workplace, what has senior management done to promote diversity, or to minimize or eliminate discrimination?

(MAKE A LIST ON CHART.)

PROBE: IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK ABOUT:

Open discussion of diversity issues.

Promotion/advancement

Compensation

Retention

Nondiscrimination or anti-harassment policies.

Offer meaningful opportunities for recognition for all employees.

a. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low, 5 being high) how successful would you say senior management has been at accomplishing these diversity efforts? (WRITE SUCCESS "RATINGS" ON THE SAME PAGE.)

Best Practices

Next, I'd like to have you discuss what experiences you have had that have helped you in your development professionally -I would like to hear what's working in the profession in terms of diversity.

6. What experiences have been most effective in your development professionally?

LIST ON CHART

PROBE: IF NOT MENTIONED, INQUIRE ABOUT:

- *Case assignments
- *Client meetings
- *Task/job assignments
- *Firm/company/bar appointments
- *Advancement/Promotions
- *Compensation
- *Work environment
- *Mentoring

7. Next I'd like you to talk about what type of person or activity has been most valuable to you in helping you to be successful in your profession (no names, please just describe the person's title/position or relation to you)?

LIST ON CHART

8. And what about mentoring-have you had a professional mentor or been one?

IF YES, how did the mentoring relationship(s) happen, and what was the impact?

9. Are there things that we in the profession could all do with regard to promoting diversity that are not currently being done (or not being done well)?

IF YES: And what are those things? (LIST ON THE CHART)

a. How could these things be accomplished?

Final Wrap Up

Those are all the questions I have for you tonight/today. Do you have any final comments or thoughts about the issues we have discussed here?

Thank you very much for your participation. Your feedback and suggestions will be very useful and we really