

Jennifer Reddien in Bloomberg Law: Virus Crisis Could be Big Test of Law Firms' Diversity Efforts

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Haynes Boone Director of Diversity and Inclusion Jennifer Reddien talked with *Bloomberg Law* about generalized fears in the legal industry that the COVID-19 crisis could erase a decade of employment progress that has been made for women and attorneys of color.

Here is an excerpt:

There's a real risk law firms will make cuts that affect minorities more or let pipeline building and mentorship programs backslide due to the pressures of the COVID-19 crisis. But diversity advocates hope firms have learned the hard lessons from the last economic downturn.

A shift of focus to minority attorney retention programs is one reason to hope for better this time around. ... Also, since the Great Recession, pressure from clients for more diversity in their outside counsel has increased and changed the approach many firms take in navigating their diversity and inclusion initiatives.

One firm, Haynes Boone, has several check-ins or "snack breaks" with its diverse associates per week, said Jennifer Reddien, the firm's director of diversity and inclusion.

"I find that with mentorship programs, the burden is on an associate to reach out to a mentor," Reddien said. That burden is even harder with the potential awkwardness of a video call. So for the first few weeks of remote work, Reddien instead asked partners to reach out to their mentees and schedule some time to connect.

Advocates believe that strong contributions from leadership are fundamental to turning firms' talk about diversity into action, especially because the COVID-19 crisis is only compounding already longstanding legal industry inequality.

To read the full article, click [here](#).