

Facebook Selects Kilpatrick for New Law Firm Diversity Award

By Samantha Stokes
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Another tech giant is putting more emphasis on outside counsel diversity by creating a law firm diversity award.

Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton announced Monday it was the inaugural honoree of Facebook's Law Firm Diversity Champion Award. Facebook selected a winning firm by gathering diversity data from 40 of its largest spend law firms and then developing a scoring system to rank those firms, Kilpatrick said.

The new Facebook award comes at a time when general counsel are placing **more public pressure** on law firms to improve their diversity of associates, partners and leaders.

Facebook is not the only company to publicly recognize its law firms' diversity efforts. Microsoft also has a program in which it **recognizes top outside counsel performers** in diversity measures.

Facebook selected Kilpatrick for its high percentage of women and minority lawyers, leadership opportunities for those employees, and diversity programs to attract and retain top diverse talent, the law firm said.

Kilpatrick said it was recognized at a reception at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California, on June 20. Colin Stretch, Facebook's general counsel for the past six years, and Jennifer Newstead, the incoming general counsel, presented the award to the firm.



Left to right, Larry McFarland, Kilpatrick Townsend's co-relationship partner for Facebook; Jennifer Newstead, Facebook general counsel; and Colin Stretch, outgoing Facebook GC.

Facebook also recognized three runners-up at last week's reception: Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, Morrison & Foerster and Sidley Austin.

Facebook representatives could not immediately comment Monday on the selection process for the award.

Larry McFarland, Kilpatrick Townsend's co-relationship partner for Facebook and the firm's Los Angeles office managing partner, said that when his firm started working with Facebook more than half a decade ago, it built a team that was diverse from the start.

"It's never too late to start, but it's not enough to create a diverse firm today," he said. "It's important to us as a firm, and it's been important to us for a long time."

Of the 50 Kilpatrick Townsend lawyers working with Facebook, McFarland said that about 80% of the

hours billed to the tech company were from women, racial-minority or LGBTQ attorneys. And of the five team leaders at Kilpatrick working with Facebook, four are women and one is an African American woman, he said.

“It’s not just quantity,” he said about the number of diverse lawyers on a team. “To me, the most important thing is the leadership opportunities.”

Facebook requires all outside counsel to staff Facebook-related teams with at least 33% women and diverse attorneys, Kilpatrick said, and these lawyers must receive “meaningful and measurable” leadership opportunities.

Facebook’s scoring system for the award was based on each firm’s level of compliance with these billing guidelines. Firms were also scored on their diversity strategies and plans.

(Kilpatrick was ranked No. 86 in American Lawyer’s **latest Diversity Scorecard**, which records the average number of full-time-equivalent minority attorneys at Am Law 200 and National Law Journal 250 law firms in 2018.)

“Knowing the number of high-quality law firms who counsel Facebook makes this recognition especially satisfying,” Kilpatrick Townsend executive committee member Ty Lord said in a statement. “But honestly, I am not surprised since Facebook and Kilpatrick Townsend share a strong bond in their joint

commitment to diversity and will continue to intensify that commitment.”

Going forward, the firm said, Facebook and Kilpatrick will partner on three initiatives to address diversity issues in the legal industry: legal scholars program for incoming minority law students; a summer associate program for diverse students who have completed one year of law school; and a leadership connections program to support diverse mid-level and senior Kilpatrick associates seeking leadership positions.

The three runners-up will also partner with Facebook on these diversity initiatives, according to a Facebook spokesperson.

McFarland, at Kilpatrick, said improving law firm diversity is important for client service, as businesses become more global and diverse themselves.

“By getting these diverse groups of people together, I’ve found it strengthens relationships with clients and creates a better business product,” he said. “The future is diverse, our clients are diverse, and the successful companies are global.”

“The work doesn’t stop here,” he said.

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