

OVERCOMING ALLY PITFALLS: ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND BIAS FROM ALLIES

September 29, 2021 – 2:15 – 3:45 pm

SCHEDULE:

- 2:15 – 2:20 - Sponsor Speaker – Reed Smith
- 2:20 – 2:25 - Introduction – Marwa Elzankaly (Of Counsel, McManis Faulkner)
- 2:25 – 3:05 - Panel Discussion with:
 - George Schell (General Counsel, Presidio Trust)
 - Arezoo Riahi (Director, Diversity & Belonging Programs, Autodesk, Inc.)
 - Jennifer Martinez (Chief DEI Officer, Hanson Bridgett LLP)
- 3:05 -3:10 - Move into breakout rooms
- 3:10-3:35 - Breakout groups
- 3:35-3:45 - Debrief

PANEL DISCUSSION:

● PANEL QUESTIONS:

- How do you define a microaggression and what is one piece of advice you have on how best to respond?
 - Has the definition of a microaggression changed with time?
- How do microaggressions affect us and how does one prevent such acts from demoralizing them or taking away their focus.
- What is the best way to deal with an overpowering ally?
- What is one piece of advice you would give us on how we become more aware of our own biases and the possibility that we may engage in our own microaggressions?

1

¹ CMCP2021_Annual_Business_Conference_OvercomingAllyPitfalls_092921

GROUP DISCUSSION:

- **GROUP QUESTIONS:**

- Is it ever best to just ignore microaggression?
- How might imposter syndrome (or a lack of appreciation of your own self-worth) affect one's response to a microaggression or an overpowering ally?
- Can you ever overreact to a microaggression?
 - How would you respond to people who think you are just being "paranoid" or "oversensitive"?
- Can microaggressions happen from other attorneys of color?
 - In that scenario, should they somehow be handled differently?
- Is it career suicide to talk about microaggressions?
 - Does/can participating in events like this, or talking about these issues, somehow hurt you professionally?

- **FACT PATTERNS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- A colleague offers to help you, seemingly based on an assumption about your abilities, with no evidence you have challenges in that area.
- You are asked to head up a diversity effort or it is assumed that you will because you are a person of color.
- When you propose having a program to increase awareness of diversity in the organization, you are pushed to just incorporate it into the usual Black History Month program, or asked to tone it down so that you do not make people uncomfortable.
- Your white colleague asks you to be their mouthpiece to speak to another person of color.
- A colleague keeps interpreting or explaining what you say in a meeting.
- The recruiting committee is concerned about the qualifications of the diverse candidate you are pulling for and more excited about another candidate who has no better qualifications but looks more like them.
- You feel that others are recognized for their abilities/successes/work, whereas you are recognized for things like how you dress.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Limbong, Andrew. "Microaggressions Are A Big Deal: How To Talk Them Out And When To Walk Away." NPR. June 9, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/08/872371063/microaggressions-are-a-big-deal-how-to-talk-them-out-and-when-to-walk-away>

Melaku, Tsedale M., Angie Beeman, David G. Smith, and W. Brad Johnson. "Be a Better Ally." Harvard Business Review. November 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally>

Pfizer Inc. "Understanding Racial Microaggression and its Effect on Mental Health." Pfizer. Accessed September 20, 2021. https://www.pfizer.com/news/hot-topics/understanding_racial_microaggression_and_its_effect_on_mental_health

Sue, Derald Wing. "Microaggressions: Death by a Thousand Cuts." Scientific American. March 30, 2021. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/microaggressions-death-by-a-thousand-cuts/>

Taylor-Kennedy, Julia and Pooja Jain-Link. "What Does it Take to Build a Culture of Belonging?" Harvard Business Review. July 21, 2021. <https://hbr.org/2021/06/what-does-it-take-to-build-a-culture-of-belonging?autocomplete=true>

Washington, Ella F., Alison Hall Birch, and Laura Morgan Roberts. "When and How to Respond to Microaggressions." Harvard Business Review. June 3, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions?autocomplete=true>

3

³ CMCP2021_AnnualBusConf_Overcoming_Ally_Pitfalls_092921