

Making Diversity's Case



In 1996, Ricky McKinney joined Burr & Forman as an associate; in 2001 he was named a partner in the firm. In a recent interview, he discussed diversity in the legal business and the value it provides Burr's clients.

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On diversity: We believe that diversity makes our firm better. If our opinions are formed by our experiences, then you logically get a broader perspective, a greater range of opinion when you add people from differing backgrounds. You get insight into issues that might not come otherwise.

On being a lawyer and a minister: I was a kid in the 1960s. I saw first-hand how limited opportunities were for my father and my uncles. Even then, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer so that I could change things. One uncle told me that as much as I liked to talk, I would either be a lawyer or a preacher. And then I turned out to be both!

On Burr & Forman: Before joining Burr, I worked as a public defender and a partner in a very small firm. I never expected to work in a firm this size, until I met the people here. Their attitude is fantastic. They care about each other and their clients. It shows in their actions. When I had the chance to serve as pastor at a small church, I talked to our managing partner about resigning because I knew the time commitments would be difficult to balance. His response was that we would make it work, and don't think about quitting. That's the kind of people we have here.

On diversity at Burr & Forman: We have a diversity committee that is continually working to increase the diversity within the firm. For example, we sponsor job fairs and clerkship programs, and we fund a full tuition diversity scholarship for law students.

It's important to note that we don't add lawyers just to bump up our percentages. We hire good lawyers first. We are charged with producing results for our clients. Increasing the diversity in our firm helps us do just that.

At Burr & Forman, we know that client relationships are the foundation of our firm. We are committed to diversity within our firm to better serve our clients' and our employees' interests.