

4 Firms Receive Accenture's First Diversity Awards

By **Clarice Silber**

Law360 (April 8, 2021, 4:21 PM EDT) -- Accenture on Thursday selected four law firms as the winners of its first Outside Counsel Diversity Awards, noting it was honoring the legal service providers for their efforts in 2020 to create a culture of equality in their workplaces and communities.

For its 2021 Outside Counsel Diversity Awards, the global professional services company named Arthur Cox LLP, Covington & Burling LLP, Crowell & Moring LLP and Mason Hayes & Curran LLP as the top law firms. Accenture said it chose the winners from a field of 65 firms of varying sizes and regions.

Joel Unruch, Accenture general counsel and corporate secretary, said in an emailed statement that by working together and recognizing the efforts that make an impact, "we can spark meaningful change in our industry."

"Together we can make a difference and I look forward to working with all of our partners to create a culture of equality in our workplaces and communities," Unruch said.

Accenture noted that the firms that won the awards were being recognized for their diverse representation both internally and on staffing the company's matters, along with commitments to inclusion and diversity activities and organizations within their firms and across the profession.

A recent American Bar Association survey published in February found that white men still occupy most law firm leadership roles and are more likely to move up the ladder than women, minorities and people with disabilities.

According to the ABA's Model Diversity Survey Report, which compiled data on law firm equity and inclusion recorded between 2017 and 2019, white attorneys dominate at all levels of the firms surveyed, making up about 70% of associate positions and even more at the nonequity and equity partner level, reaching up to 93%.

The data suggests that representation of minorities — categorized in terms of race, identity, LGBTQ and disability — has grown at the associate level, but it has declined at the partner level.

According to Accenture, Arthur Cox received the award for its strong commitments to gender equity within the law firm and for being an ally to the LGBTQ community. Accenture said Arthur Cox also established goals surrounding inclusion and diversity at the partner level and has initiatives geared

toward assisting diverse associates' progression into leadership roles.

"The firm has formal initiatives for gender and LGBTQ+ in the workplace and their success is attributable to a carefully developed suite of programs," said Arthur Cox managing partner Geoff Moore in a statement. "We still have more work to do in this space, but I am pleased that we are heading in the right direction."

Accenture highlighted Covington's progression of its women and ethnic minority lawyers at all levels and its achievement of 3.0 Mansfield Rule Certification Plus status.

The Mansfield Rule indicates that the firms have shown that candidates they considered for key positions — such as governance roles and equity partner promotions — include at least 30% women, LGBTQ attorneys, racial and ethnic minorities, and lawyers with disabilities.

Accenture said Covington also contributed nearly 120,000 hours of pro bono work to promote social and racial justice.

Covington Chair Doug Gibson said in a statement that the law firm continues to view diversity and inclusion as a key priority and it has enhanced and expanded its diversity and inclusion structure "to hold ourselves accountable for our goals and to support all our lawyers and staff globally."

Accenture said Crowell & Moring launched a best in class sponsorship program to accelerate the advancement of diverse lawyers, created a board-level Racial Equity Task Force, and also achieved 3.0 Mansfield Rule Certification.

Ellen Dwyer, Crowell & Moring's Executive Committee chair, said in a statement the law firm is committed to enhancing the representation of diverse lawyers at all levels in its firm and ensuring that those employees gain the experiences necessary to promote and retain them.

The company said Mason Hayes has invested in efforts to increase the representation of women and ethnic minorities at senior and executive levels, and ensured diverse staffing on the company's matters.

Melanie Crowley, a Mason Hayes partner and head of employment and benefits, said in a statement that the law firm works hard to ensure it has a diverse and inclusive workplace both for its employees and its clients and suppliers.

--Additional reporting by Michele Gorman and Marco Poggio. Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.