



Five Reasons Why Men (Yes, Men) Should Join the IPO Women in IP Committee

By Andrew Currier, CEO, PCK IP

I am CEO of a boutique IP firm based in Toronto with offices in Washington DC and Waterloo, Ontario. The firm was founded by two white male patent attorneys, Stephen Perry and myself, and one Asian female patent attorney, Dolly Kao. While the firm leadership has embraced diversity principles since founding, we still encounter significant challenges in overcoming unconscious biases, adapting to cultural differences and attaining a workforce that reflects the diversity of our clients and the society that we serve.

To help me better manage the firm's diversity challenges, I joined the IPO's Women in IP Committee just over a year ago. This initiative has vastly improved my diversity skill set and, to my surprise, my general managerial skills have also improved. I also have been warmly and graciously welcomed by an amazing group of women who have mentored me on several specific situations and general firm diversity programming.

Here are some facts. The Committee currently has around 80 members, but presently only about six are men. The male experiment is working – and it's clear -- we need more. We want at least ten new male members by end of March.

So here it goes: Here are just five reasons (out of many) that men should join this Committee.

1. Clients are Demanding More Diverse Firms

Many clients now require firms to demonstrate meaningful diversity initiatives as part of their engagement. Through participation in the Committee, our firm has improved workplace diversity and responded to these very sensible client demands. (And yes, if you need me to say it, real diversity programming does translate into an improved bottom line. I still am CEO after all.)

2. Advancing Workplace Diversity Requires Effort from Everyone

Men can improve our workplace Relationship Skills while we share our Task-Oriented Skills. While this kind of stereotype must be treated carefully, studies show that female leaders often excel at emphasizing smooth workplace relationships while male leaders often excel at emphasizing task completion. Both are critical to the bottom line. We have lots to learn from each other. There are an infinite number of other strengths that individuals and representatives of diverse demographics can bring to a winning team. The Women in IP Committee is a place where those strengths can be understood, nurtured and shared.

3. Learn How to Mentor Across Demographics

Male leaders should take an active role in mentoring women and other diverse professionals in order improve diversity at the leadership level through natural workplace succession. As CEO, I am responsible for mentoring several ethnically diverse and female colleagues. I get tremendous personal support from individual members of the Women in IP Committee who have helped me mentor diverse members of the firm.

4. Men Are Diverse Too, But Like Everyone, Many of Us Are Invisibly Diverse

Just because men make up the majority of the workplace does not mean that we are all the same. Ethnic background, mental health, sexual identity and physical abilities are just some examples of ways that men can be visibly, or often invisibly, diverse. The Women in IP Committee is a forum that embraces all aspects of diversity and can help convert invisible diversity from secret “weaknesses” into workplace strengths.

5. It's an Amazing Group of Forward Thinking People

Having participated in and lead diversity initiatives since I was an undergraduate student, I know which ones take positive, constructive and inclusive steps forward. When it comes to diversity programming, this group of folks is among the very best I have worked with. If you care about diversity, this is a team you want to be part of.

While it raises some eyebrows, I don't think twice about being a male member of the Women in IP Committee. Besides making some great new friends, it makes good business sense and it's an excellent resource for promoting women and general workplace diversity. If you're ready to join, or your eyebrows are just raised, shoot me an email at currier@pckip.com and we will talk it through.