

## Women's Network

Neal Gerber Eisenberg is proud of its legacy of being at the forefront of the advancement of women in law firms and is committed to staying in the forefront.

The Women's Network was created to help women achieve their individual professional goals through programming, training, and advocating for women to achieve leadership positions within the firm. Social activities are part of the program and lead to more organic mentoring among the women of the firm, as well as better networking opportunities with women clients. We recognize that in order to continue to deliver to our clients the highest caliber legal service we must attract, support and retain the best talent – male and female – including committed moms and dads. We also recognize that we must continually evaluate how we do things and innovate where we see opportunities to serve our clients better and position our attorneys for success.

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As law firm partnerships require more hours from partners dedicated to business development, client relationship management and firm citizenship, our firm has moved to offer distinct options to highly talented, skilled attorneys seeking alternative careers. Dovetailing with client demands, the firm has an alternative staffing model to meet the clients' billing needs and attorneys' individual career goals. This model was implemented not as a "Mommy Track," but as a path that lets attorneys have a job they love and a life that provides them the work/life balance they seek.

*"I knew from my first interview that this place is exceptional. The firm's leadership has honed in on something that most firms have not even begun to fathom: there are talented women (and men)*



*out there who want to continue practicing law and developing professionally, but, for whatever personal reasons, do not want to commit to the pressures of "full-time" and/or being on a partnership track. By crafting a Counsel track the firm has given attorneys, like myself, the opportunity to choose both a career and a family. Equally important, by openly offering such options, the firm is also validating such choices for women and men and making important strides toward changing societal stigmas about choosing between career and family."*

- Nawshaba Siddiquee, Counsel, Intellectual Property

By recognizing that law practice within a law firm need not be confined by the associate-partner paradigm, the firm empowers attorneys who want something different to stay in the legal workforce.

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As high achievement is a core value of law firm partnership, the firm supports women choosing this road to career and life satisfaction. One of the key components in supporting women striving to balance partnership and motherhood is building a solid support network and a culture of mentoring. The firm's WANT program – Women Attorney Networking Teams – is set up to provide our women attorneys with increased opportunities to network internally, and build meaningful personal and mentoring relationships with their colleagues at all levels and in all stages of their professional development. Each team is made up of women mixed by practice area, seniority, and business profile. The WANT teams provide smaller forums for discussing the issues women are facing, and also successfully encourage mid-level attorneys to take risks and spur business development opportunities.

Sonya Rosenberg, a partner in our Labor & Employment group, credits the Women's Network and WANT teams for part of her success: *"One of the key things the Women's Network has helped me with is getting introduced to and building relationships with very supportive women throughout the firm, which has helped immensely in terms of business development. In particular, the WANT teams have created mentorship opportunities and professional alliances, and prepared me for cross-selling opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. The programs are meaningful and effective, and the support the women provide to one another here is unique and invaluable. I feel fortunate to work at a firm where the women are truly committed to helping and bringing one another up."*

We also recognize that group mentoring is not ideal for all situations. In particular, life and career transitions tend to be very personal subjects more ideally suited to individual discussions, and so the Women's Network created "Mom Mentoring" to provide support and guidance for women as they transition into working mothers. We pair expecting attorneys with two attorneys at the firm (mom mentors) who have recently navigated the transition to working mother – both at the partner and associate level. The mom mentors meet regularly with their expecting attorney mentee before, during and after she returns from maternity leave. They offer guidance on everything from finding a nanny to preparing files for transition while gone to managing workload upon returning to work.

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The Women's Network's quarterly lunch 'n learn programs, open to all attorneys, continue to focus on issues of importance to women lawyers. Topics range from networking strategies to understanding law firm financials to succeeding as a woman in a male-dominated profession.

Our summer tradition of getting together for a potluck in a woman attorney's home is well-attended and enjoyed by the women attorneys and summer associates. In the Holiday season, the women celebrate their personal traditions with our annual gift exchange. These events help further strengthen mentoring opportunities and provide a fun and casual way for the firm's attorneys to reinforce their connections with one another.

Our annual Professional Connection Events for women clients and prospective clients, allows our women attorneys to develop and expand their own client relationships. The style of these events varies and has included educational and professional seminars, community service opportunities and social/entertainment activities.

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Central to all of these initiatives, programs and awards is the desire of the firm and our women to help each individual attorney achieve her own success, both personally and professionally. Whether that success is defined as landing a seat on the Executive Committee or crafting a Counsel position with built-in work life balance, we respect and reward each woman who is sharing her success with the firm.

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The Women's Network recognized that attorneys (both male and female) struggle with parenting questions and issues. The PLAY Group provides a forum for sharing the experiences and resources of attorneys at all stages of the parenting process. The PLAY Group sponsors quarterly discussions and presentations on relevant topics. Past PLAY Group program topics have included: childcare options, summer camp options, how to handle bullying, technology and your kids, estate planning and insurance for families.