



Positive Strides; Equal Measures

Skills and Professional Development



Many think of employment and HR-related issues as simply a function of the Human Resources department. While this is partly true, the legal department plays a significant role by creating compliance policies, advising on employee discrimination claims, and more. In fact, there are many policies put in place by the HR department that in-house counsel must officially address, contribute to, and enforce, and several of them are explored in this issue of the *ACC Docket*.

This edition includes articles about Title VII of the Civil Rights Act as it relates to possible LGBT discrimination, how to avoid employment traps in China, getting the best out of your multigenerational workforce, and a topic that has been getting a lot of attention in the media lately — pay equality for women.

Despite the lip service given to pay equality across industries — with everyone from Hollywood actresses, Fortune 500 CEOs, and politicians all over the globe joining the conversation — pay disparity between the sexes continues to be a problem globally. Based on a 2014/2015 report by the United Nation's International Labour Organization, women can earn as much as 36 percent less than men who do comparable jobs, and the gap is even wider for higher-earning women.

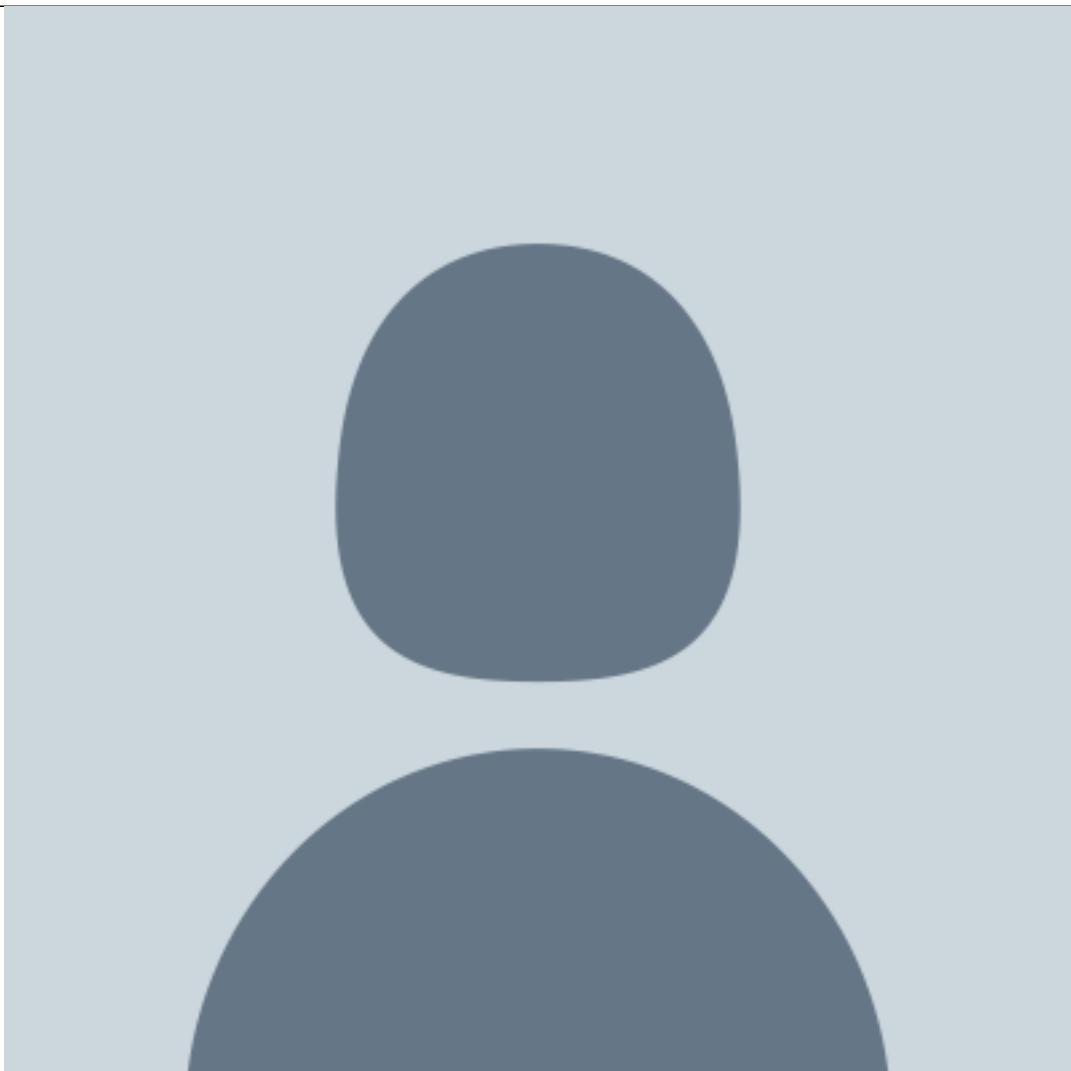
While women have made tremendous strides in our profession and beyond, the fact remains that we are sometimes paid less than our male counterparts, and not always afforded the same opportunities. In this month's cover story, "Finding Equality and Balance in the Face of Legal Typecasting," authors K Royal (VP and assistant GC of CellTrust) and Tracy Stanton (senior counsel — asset management at NRG Energy, Inc.) delve into the topic, calling attention to several underlining issues that could be contributing to the gap not closing fast enough, including a disproportionate amount of women in senior positions. Referring to information found in the 2015 ACC *Global Census*, the article

finds that women account for only about a quarter of all general counsel and CLO positions. Further, despite technological advances and flexible work arrangements, which should help close the gap — as well as the general consensus that equal pay for equal work is simply the right thing to do — these discrepancies continue.

What's the answer? The first step is to address the issue, and create discussions and opportunities to foster change. I'm sure you're aware of ACC's many advocacy efforts, but have you taken a look at what else your in-house bar is doing? In last month's letter I mentioned the ACC Foundation and one of its newest initiatives, Women In The House (WITH). Created to foster the professional development of women in the law, WITH plans to build on the success of its launch earlier this year with a "Global Women In the Law Summit" in June at the United Nations.

As in-house counsel, we are often thought of as the gatekeepers of our organizations. That doesn't mean that we are only concerned with compliance and providing legal counsel to our colleagues, especially those working in HR. We have a larger responsibility to those working in our individual companies, as well as to the in-house community at large. That responsibility includes working to ensure fairness and equality for all.

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