

# Legal recruiters find growth zone selling diversity

BY ERIC YOUNG

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One of the Bay Area's largest legal recruiting firms has set up a diversity committee in an effort to attract minority and women candidates for corporate law departments and firms.

San Francisco-based Major Hagen & Africa said its new effort will help respond to increased requests from clients who say they want to make sure they are seeing job candidates who are not only white and male.

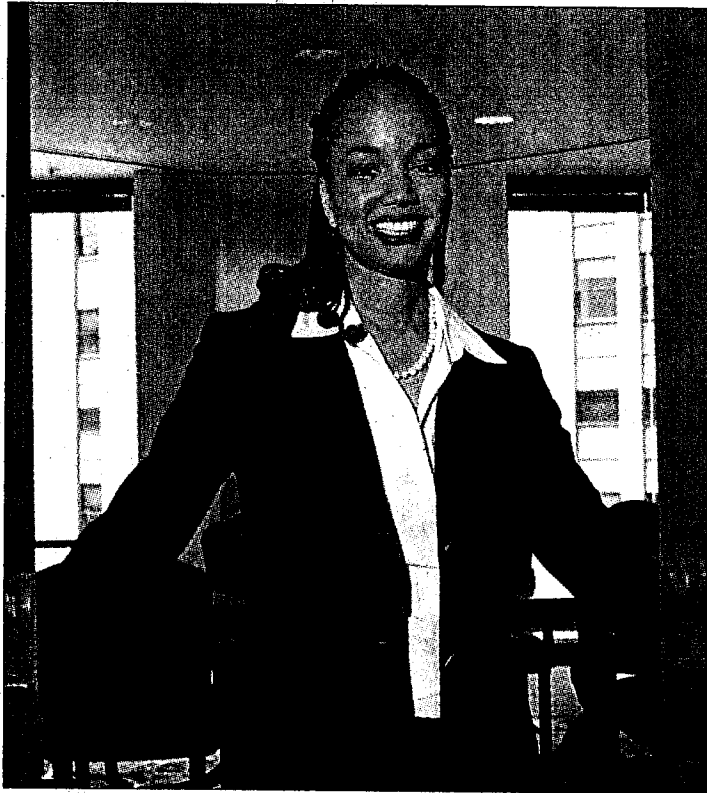
"A lot of clients in the last year are asking (Major Hagen), 'What are you doing on the diversity front?' or 'In this general counsel search we really expect you to get us people of diverse backgrounds,'" said Anna Marie Armstrong, the managing director at Major Hagen responsible for the diversity committee.

Armstrong said she and other Major Hagen recruiters will make frequent trips to law schools to talk with minority students and do other networking at professional events to get the word out about the firm's diversity efforts.

In giving more attention to diversity, Major Hagen is part of a growing trend in the legal recruiting field to place more blacks, Latinos, Asians, women, gays and disabled in top lawyer posts.

Major Hagen likely will run up against a few competitors for candidates. Already a small number of boutique legal recruiters, such as Carter-White & Shaw LLC of Chestertown, Md., focus exclusively on finding minority attorneys.

Armstrong said she thinks demand for diverse candidates will come from both corporate law departments as well as law firms. Generally, she said, corporate law firms have been quicker to pick up on the idea that having a diverse legal group makes good business sense.



**OPENINGS:** Armstrong seeks diversity in applicants.

"Law firms are sort of the last bastion," she said. "They are the last to jump on board and say this is a real issue."

In corporate law departments, women comprise 30 percent of the legal staff while minorities make up about 12.5 percent, according to numbers from the Minority Corporate Counsel Association.

At law firms, the numbers are moving upward more slowly. Attorneys who are black, Asian, American Indian or Latino make up slightly more than 4 percent of the partners at the nation's law firms and about 15 percent of the associate or senior attorneys, according to a 2003 study by the National Association for Law Placement.

Eric Young covers law for the San Francisco Business Times. ■