

## **Law Firms & Women Partners: You're Doing It Wrong**

**If your law firm is typical in its promotion of women into equity partner positions, then your firm is making a huge, dumb mistake.**

*By Jordan Furlong*

According to the National Association of Women Lawyers, [in an article at law.com](#), women today constitute just 15% of equity partners in AmLaw 200 law firms.

Set aside for a moment any considerations of fairness or gender equity — although those considerations are completely real and valid. Look at the issue purely from a strategic perspective. It's still ridiculous.

Firms that give only a handful of ownership and leadership positions to women are sabotaging their own market viability. They're wasting vast talent opportunities, overlooking or ignoring what half the population could bring to business development, client relationships, and people or process management. These firms are less capable and less competitive than they would otherwise be.

Not to downplay sexism, because it does exist. But the biggest factor here is firms' simplistic, short-sighted use of hours to measure productivity — a metric that will always favour lawyers (primarily men) with fewer responsibilities outside the office. Change the metric — come up with more sensible, nuanced and sophisticated measures of how lawyers contribute value — and you start to solve the problem.

And as usual, when you set out to solve one problem, you end up solving several, because time-based productivity is not a women's issue. It's a *lawyer* issue: your lawyers, of both sexes, want to be paid for value, not time. And it's a *client* issue: clients want to pay you for value, not time.

Think of the benefits to a law firm that truly established an outstanding reputation within the legal community as a great place for women lawyers to be owners and leaders. They would be overwhelmed by talent opportunities, would benefit from fawning media coverage, and would be able to tell a strikingly different and better story to corporate clients (where many of the women who left law firms wound up in leadership positions).

This is not rocket science. This is not just the right and decent thing to do. It's the strategically smart thing to do. Bring more women into your firm's equity circle, to everyone's benefit.

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