



Success in Big Law and Corporate Law Departments: Tips For Lesbians



**THE LGBT
BAR**

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Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law and Big Companies



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Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Panelists:

Ashley Brooks – Partner with Sullivan & Worcester, LLP, practicing real estate, Boston

Lyzette Bullock – Associate with Mintz Levin practicing litigation and health care, Boston

Elizabeth “Beth” Davis – Partner with Burr + Forman, LLP, practicing environmental, product safety, and FDA, Atlanta

Ashianna Esmail – Director, Product & Regulatory Legal with PayPal, San Francisco, California

Ashley Tessier – Employee Relations & Investigations with Google, San Francisco, California



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Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Disclaimer:

There is no monolithic, immutable lesbian.

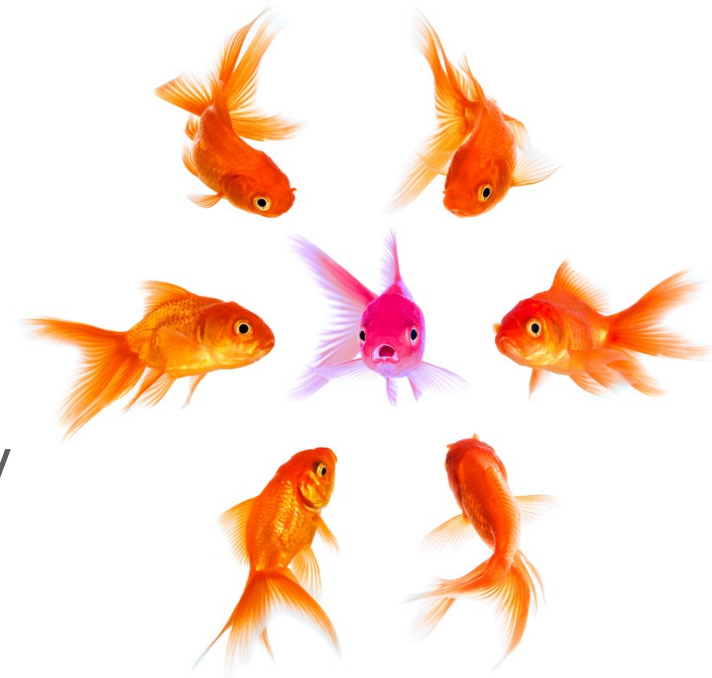
- › We cannot and do not purport to speak for everyone.
- › We are mindful of an intersectionality of minorities represented among lesbians (woman/lesbian, POC/lesbian, religious/lesbian, gender identity, etc.)
- › Every member of the group has unique challenges.

Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

What is it like to be an out lesbian at a large law firm or company?

Lesbians share many of the same challenges as other minorities:

- › We're women, but also gay
- › We're gay, but also women
- › We may be mothers, but also gay
- › We are diverse in other ways

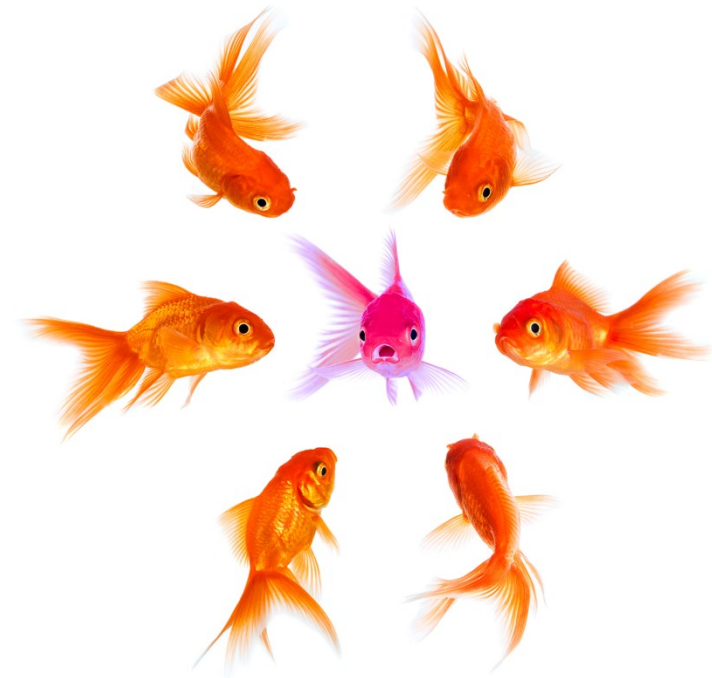


Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

What it is like to be an out lesbian at a large law firm or company?

Corporate environments and big law firms are challenging:

- Traditional environments
- Fast paced, high pressure
- Straight male dominated – still



Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

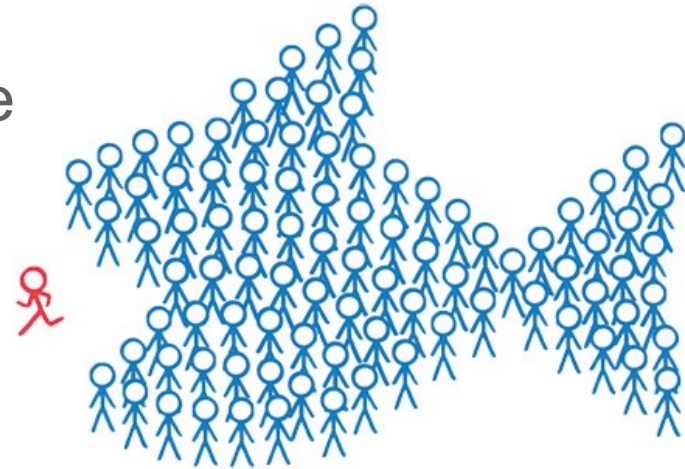
Why Big Law Should Care

- › We are part of a pool of talent that is expensive to replace;
- › Corporate clients demand diversity of their legal teams;
- › Law firm succession plans and best practices require retaining talent.

Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Barriers to entry

- › 50% of law school grads today are women;
- › 33% of all lawyers are women;
- › About 40% of women lawyers leave the profession mid-career – up to 3X more than male lawyers;
- › Fewer than 20% of law firm partners are women; even fewer women are in firm management.



Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Obstacles to career development

- › Discrimination and implicit bias compromise opportunities;
- › Challenging work environments can drive you away;
- › Lack of role models.

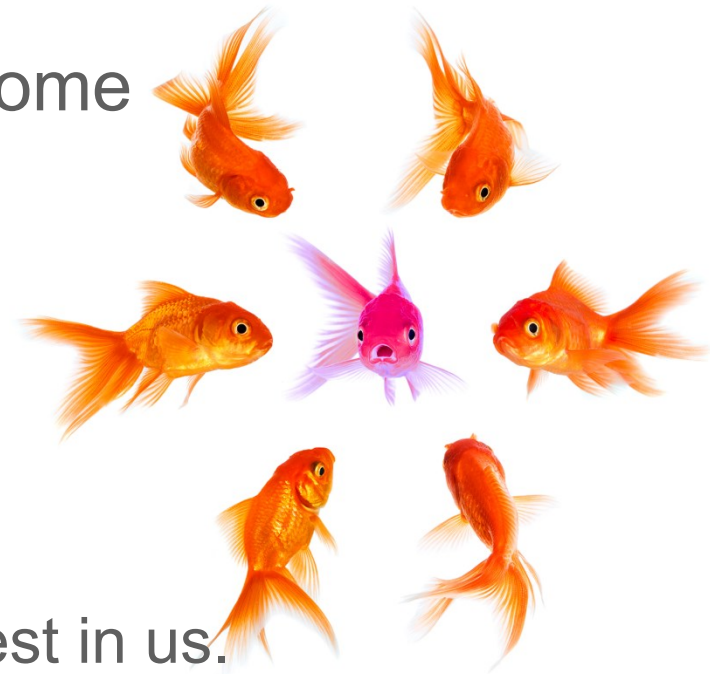


Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

What it is like to be an out lesbian at a large law firm or company?

And yet, success doesn't often come without help:

- › In work as in life, we need allies.
 - To show us the ropes
 - To advocate for us
- › Colleagues need to know us, find common ground, to trust and invest in us.



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Strategies for Success:

- › **Always** do good work.
- › Follow through on commitments.
- › Don't leave a colleague hanging.
- › Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Strategies for Success:

Find mentors or like-minded colleagues

- › Formal mentoring programs
 - diversity groups
 - women's initiatives
 - practice groups
 - alumnae associations
 - bar associations

Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Strategies for Success:

Find mentors or like-minded colleagues

- › Informal mentoring opportunities
 - get involved
 - + being here is a good step
 - let people get to know you
 - + personally and professionally

Succeeding as a Lesbian in Big Law

Strategies for Success:

When to come out:

- › On your resume
- › In the interview
 - first?
 - second round?
- › With clients?
- › Others?



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QUESTIONS?

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