

## The Power Of Diversification

An Interview with Sherrese Smith, Global Managing Partner, Paul Hastings LLP

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Sherrese Smith is the Global Managing Partner of Paul Hastings. In this role, she helps direct the growth, management, and strategy of the firm. Smith previously served as the Vice Chair of the Data Privacy and Cybersecurity practice. She is known as one of the country's preeminent Data Privacy and Cybersecurity and Media and Technology attorneys. Consistently ranked as a leading lawyer in Chambers USA and Legal 500, she is recognized throughout the legal, media, communications and technology industries for her leadership, business acumen, and dedication to clients. Her work includes data privacy, cybersecurity and breach response issues, crisis response, regulatory investigations, and enforcement proceedings, as well as counseling on global privacy and cybersecurity matters. Smith is also renowned for superior advisement on crisis issues and, as a result, is regularly sought after by corporate board members and the C-suite. Before joining Paul Hastings, Smith served as Chief Counsel to Chairman Julius Genachowski at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Prior to joining the FCC in 2009, Smith was Vice President and General Counsel of Washington*



Sherrese Smith

*Post Digital. She was in charge of all legal and policy matters across 10 different business units in this role. Smith serves on the Board of Directors of Gen and Cable ONE. Smith is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and holds a law degree from Northwestern University.*

**FIRM BRIEF** *With widely recognized elite teams in finance, mergers and acquisitions, private equity, restructuring and special situations, litigation, employment, and real estate,*

*Paul Hastings (paulhastings.com) is a premier law firm providing intellectual capital and superior execution globally to the world's leading investment banks, asset managers, and corporations.*

**How do you describe Paul Hastings' culture and values?**

We are a culture of excellence. We pride ourselves on being entrepreneurial, collaborative and collectively ambitious. We compete against the most elite firms in the world for market share and our success has been underscored by our ability to provide clients intellectual capital and superior execution on their most challenging and complex matters globally.

**What have been the keys to Paul Hastings' industry leadership and how do you define the Paul Hastings difference?**

We have a clearly defined strategic vision and have been very disciplined and deliberate in our execution. We have added elite talent across a wide variety of practices to better serve our clients and to elevate our global platform.

One of our key differentiators is the diversification of our practices. While many firms may be stronger in corporate or litigation, we have invested strategically to be at the top of the market in both. Our diversification provides stability and enables us to weather market volatility better than our competitors. It has also fueled our record financial performance over the last several years.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

As Global Managing Partner of Paul Hastings, my role is central to steering the firm's strategic direction and ensuring our continued success and growth. I am involved in a wide range of critical functions, from shaping our strategic vision to cultivating and growing our client relationships to enhancing financial performance and operational efficiency to fostering talent development.

My role spans the entire spectrum of firm activities, including business development and profile raising; lateral partner recruiting and

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integration; growth in technology and innovation; and promotion and retention of our intellectual capital.

In my specialty as a data privacy and cybersecurity partner, I also continue to handle critical, high-stakes and often “bet the company” matters for my clients. This includes guiding them through cybersecurity and breach response issues, crisis response, regulatory investigations, and enforcement proceedings, as well as other global privacy concerns.

**How important is it for Paul Hastings to build a diverse and inclusive workforce to mirror the diversity of its clients and the communities it serves?**

Simply put, it is business critical. At Paul Hastings, we have a long-standing commitment to creating an environment that fosters engagement, inclusion, and belonging. This commitment extends from our hiring practices to our team structures to our promotion and retention strategies.

We believe that a diverse workforce enriches our perspective and enhances our ability to deliver excellent legal services to our clients.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the legal profession?**

Yes. We are witnessing more women take on significant roles within law firms, the

judiciary, in government, in public and private companies, as well as in education and the not-for-profit sector. We are seeing more women in the C-suite and on Boards than ever before.

However, there is still vast room for improvement. Women need to continue to actively advocate for themselves and those of us in leadership positions – both men and women – share the collective responsibility to help ensure these opportunities continue.

Growth and leadership can manifest in diverse ways and at different phases in one’s career. My advice is to remain open-minded and adaptable. I’ve also had many wonderful mentors, colleagues and friends that have mentored and sponsored me along my journey. Find your people – the ones that promote you when you aren’t in the room.

In addition to my role as Global Managing Partner at Paul Hastings, I serve on the Board of Directors of Gen (NASDAQ:GEN) and Cable ONE (NYSE: CABO). I am also the Vice Chair of the Northwestern Pritzker Law Board, a member of the board of the University of Maryland’s Journalism School and a member of America’s Public Television Stations executive board.

**Paul Hastings is a firm that is deeply committed to pro bono work. Do you see this as a responsibility for leading law firms?**

Pro Bono is a responsibility of our entire industry, but more importantly it is a cornerstone of our profession. Leading law firms have both the resources and the obligation to give back, to provide access to justice for those who might otherwise be excluded.

At Paul Hastings, pro bono is at the heart of who we are. Giving back to the communities where we operate and using our legal expertise to advocate for those who are under-represented is integral to our professional ethos and a vital component of our brand. Our commitment to pro bono work is exemplified by our involvement in high-impact cases. Our lawyers dedicate thousands of hours annually to pro bono work, impacting countless lives and communities.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in law?**

My advice for young people is three-fold. First, find and stay true to your passion – even as your career takes twists and turns, it tends to always lead you back to your original passion. Second, be intellectually curious. Your success in the legal field will hinge on your never-ending drive to learn more. Third, trust in knowing that you don’t need to know today exactly where you are going in order to end up exactly where you are meant to be. ●

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