



# The Sweet Spot Between Microaggressions and Empty Words: Threading the Needle on Associate Feedback

In the News

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The American Lawyer article, “The Sweet Spot Between Microaggressions and Empty Words: Threading the Needle on Associate Feedback,” includes comments from Shelley Smith, Archer’s Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer. With associate feedback recently coming under scrutiny, the article discusses law firms and their partners’ possible struggle to deliver appropriate guidance to associates while keeping diversity, equity and inclusion considerations in mind. While partners risk inadvertently incorporating microaggressions into feedback, not offering feedback to associates is another form of discrimination.

Shelley is quoted in the article stating, “People from underrepresented backgrounds more broadly perceive circumstances in ways that people who aren’t from underrepresented groups aren’t even aware of.” Shelley advocates for better firm training to address cultural unawareness and develop partners’ abilities to offer constructive feedback.

When asked further about firm-driven solutions, Shelley said, “You really have to be trained to be intentional about [mentorship and feedback], understand that a lot of the time underrepresented lawyers don’t feel they have the same access to that mentorship or sponsorship,” Smith said. “It’s about being intentional about extending yourself and providing sponsorship and opportunities...[associates should] feel like they’re getting support and not just criticism.”

To read the article, [click here](#) (subscription required).

## Related People



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