

Winstead Hosts Diversity and Inclusion Discussion with Andy Cooper of UPS Airlines

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Winstead PC's Diversity and Inclusion Committee together with the firm's Airlines Industry Group recently hosted an all-attorney discussion about diversity and inclusion efforts with Andy Cooper, Vice President, Assistant Secretary, and Chief Counsel at UPS Airlines.

Cooper, who is the youngest and first African-American to serve as Chief Counsel at UPS Airlines, oversees all legal matters for the company and supervises a team of attorneys in Louisville, as well as outside counsel that represent UPS Airlines in the 220 countries in which it operates. He serves as an Advisory Board Member at the Harvard Debate Council Diversity Project and Board Member at the Lincoln Foundation. Cooper has also won numerous awards, including the 2019 Louisville Business First 40 Under 40.

Shareholder in the [Airlines Industry Group](#) and Chair of the [Corporate, Commercial Transactions & Outsourcing Practice Group](#), [Ehren Hartz](#), moderated the Q&A discussion with Cooper, which explored UPS Airlines' progressive and robust diversity program, the steps the company has taken to foster a culture of inclusion, and the goals set by the company for the diverse make-up of its outside law firms. On a personal level, Cooper also discussed how he, as a Black father and attorney, has been impacted by the current events surrounding racial equity.

"If this year hasn't shown how important diversity is, then I don't know what does," Cooper said when kicking off the discussion.

Cooper addressed the lack of diversity present in the legal field and noted that the issue is not with the pipeline of candidates, but instead with law firm placement and attrition. The way to remedy the problem, he suggested, is to change firm culture to support diverse and female employees in the form of strategic practice group placement for incoming associates, more time off for parents, and mentorship. Each diverse associate, he suggested, should have two mentors: one who is like them and has faced similar challenges, and one who is unlike them and can provide different perspectives.

Expanding on his advice to young, diverse associates, Cooper said: "Take this opportunity to learn and demonstrate your capabilities, mental agility and intellectual curiosity. Don't for a second give consideration to the notion that you are not entitled to the job or cannot do the work. Understand that you are part of a larger push to make the legal field better."

Cooper also explained that diverse teams are vital to corporate success as they produce better results because they leverage a broader range of perspectives and ideas. He furthered his point by sharing his perception about the distinct difference between diversity and inclusion in the workplace: having folks in the building is diversity, but actually having them at the table and contributing is inclusion.

"We have to set goals," Cooper said. "We have to expose our diverse attorneys to clients. We must routinely have conversations about what the firm can and can't do to be better."

Toward the end of the discussion, Cooper acknowledged the hesitancy surrounding difficult conversations about race and the injustices facing Black people in our society. It is important, he stated, to recognize that the default in America is white and to seek to include and broaden that whenever we can. Cooper says that everyone should roll up their sleeves and do the work to make themselves subject-matter experts on diversity and inclusion.

"We have to be vigilant and apply the salve of patience and love and action to keep racism from becoming raw and causing us pain," Cooper said. "We can't hide from the facts. We can't be so wishful that we lose sight of the way things really are."

About Winstead

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to our clients achieving their business goals. Winstead's business transactions and litigation practices serve key industries including airlines, financial services, healthcare, investment management/private equity, life sciences, real estate and sports business.