

Diversity – Corporations

Honeywell's Commitment To Diversity: Robust Policies And Practices In Action

The Editor interviews Loria B. Yeadon, Chief Executive Officer, Honeywell Intellectual Property Inc. (HPI). With oversight of Honeywell's Intellectual Property (IP) revenue generation function supported globally by a team of more than 100 licensing executives, IP lawyers, engineers and other professionals. Ms. Yeadon is responsible for the licensing and enforcement of all patents, trademarks, copyrights, and other IP owned by Honeywell International Inc.

Editor: Tell us about your role at Honeywell.

Yeadon: As a \$23 billion company, Honeywell has over 12,000 issued patents, as well as an array of registered trademarks, copyrights and trade secrets. Its intellectual property portfolio covers a myriad of products and services, ranging from aerospace and automotive products to automated and control solutions and specialty materials. HPI owns and manages the IP assets of its global parent.

I am responsible for leading HPI and its day-to-day strategic operation that drives IP revenue generation through IP licensing, divestitures and other technology commercialization arrangements. Our IP commercialization activities reach all corners of the globe in line with Honeywell's global business focus spanning 100 countries worldwide.

Editor: How did you prepare yourself to step into this senior executive position at Honeywell?

Yeadon: After joining Honeywell in February 1999 as the Assistant General Counsel of IP in Honeywell's Aerospace Division, I made it my personal objective to excel in work assignments and use my strengths to make a all of my direct contribution to the success of each of the businesses, functions, or initiatives I supported. Early on, I realized that Honeywell's businesses didn't just need legal advice, but they also wanted a business-minded legal contributor who would help drive business results while helping manage calculated risk-taking. Using my patent and IP background as well as my licensing experience and business-minded approach to lawyering, I helped establish and lead a licensing program in our Aerospace's Defense and Space Electronic Systems division. Shortly thereafter, I was appointed to a new role at Honeywell as Chief IP Litigation Counsel, where I served as the strategic leader of Honeywell IP enforcements and litigation. In this role, I developed strategies, practices, and procedures for identifying infringements and unauthorized uses of Honeywell's global IP and led efforts to abate these activities in order to protect Honeywell's investment in its products and technologies. Under my leadership, Honeywell's IP enforcement function recovered more than \$100M in damages and license fees. Clearly, my prior assignments helped prepare me for my current role and these assignments also demonstrate Honeywell's commitment to developing individuals who exhibit potential and commitment to excellence, including diverse individuals in underrepresented categories.

Editor: Congratulations on being recognized this past fall as the outstanding alumnus of the University of Virginia's School of Engineering and Applied Science. How did you make the transition from engineering into law?

Yeadon: Thank you. My story was recently detailed in *Dear Sisters, Dear Daughters: Words of Wisdom from Multicultural Women Attorneys Who've Been There and Done That* (Editor's Note: Copies of this insightful



Loria B. Yeadon

reflection on diversity in the legal profession can be ordered at www.abanet.org/minorities/mwan.) It's not a typical story.

I decided to transition from engineering to law at the last minute on a whim. After applying my Electrical Engineering degree as fiber optic engineer for five years at Bellcore (now Telcordia Technologies), I yearned for more knowledge, but I did not want to go deeper into a narrower engineering discipline. About the time I was considering my academic and career options, Bellcore launched its inaugural patent trainee program under which two engineers would be selected to train as patent attorneys in the law department during the day and attend law school at night. Within days of learning of this program, it was clear to me that this opportunity was a perfect fit for me. I applied and was one of two engineers selected to participate in this program. I trained as a patent lawyer in Telcordia's law department by day while attending Seton Hall University's law school at night. After my first year in this program, I was admitted to the Patent Bar, and in four years, I completed my degree *magna cum laude*. I remained with Telcordia for 14 years until transitioning to Honeywell.

Editor: What attracted you to Honeywell?

Yeadon: Honeywell is a worldwide technology leader that manufactures products that touch the lives of most people everyday, whether you're flying a plane, driving a car, heating or cooling your home, furnishing an apartment, taking medication for an illness or playing a sport. I was attracted by the breadth and depth of the Honeywell's products and services and the company's commitment to quality, not only in its products, but also to its people.

Editor: How does Honeywell's commitment to diversity help it attract the best qualified personnel?

Yeadon: Honeywell encourages diversity in its hiring practices. Search firms specializing in the recruitment of diverse candidates help us to encourage minority candidates to apply. Two that we use in the legal department are Vintage Legal and Hughes Consultants. Our efforts have had the positive result of increasing diversity within our law department.

Editor: How does Honeywell's flexibility in work schedules help to retain the best qualified personnel and increase productivity?

Yeadon: Honeywell has a very robust program in enabling people to schedule flexible work hours and achieve work-life balance. I am one example of how Honeywell's flexibil-

ity has been a win-win for both the employee and the employer.

During the five years I've been working at Honeywell, I've had three very small children at home and I've remained active in the community and the bar. As a mother juggling the demands of family with the workplace demands, I have benefited from Honeywell's on-site Child Development Center, flexible work hours, and other family friendly policies. In addition, Honeywell has been very supportive of my service to New Jersey Supreme Court's Ethics Committee, the Industrial Advisory Board for the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Virginia, and the New Jersey Corporate Counsel Association as its Secretary and IP Committee Chair.

Many people think that if you allow an employee to work a flexible schedule or to work from home you are compromising productivity. The reverse is true. I've found that employees are more productive when given the flexibility to manage work-life demands and a work environment that allows them to have full, balanced lives.

Editor: Is a law firm's commitment to diversity an important criterion in Honeywell's selection process? Do any stand out as a model?

Yeadon: Absolutely. When we select outside counsel, we take into consideration the diversity of their staffing. To encourage their implementation of robust diversity policies and practices, each of the law firms we hire signs our outside counsel guidelines which reinforce their commitment to diversity. One example of a firm with a demonstrated commitment to diversity is Pepper Hamilton LLP in Philadelphia.

Editor: What benefits have you found by having a diverse team support you in IP enforcement and licensing and the other functions you supervise?

Yeadon: Based on my experience, there is a strategic advantage to having a diversity of approaches and ideas when developing an optimal legal strategy, which can only be as diverse as the teams developing them. Optimal legal strategies should take into account the culture of the companies involved on both sides and the global impact of the issues at hand. Often times the cultural issues are as important as the legal issues.

Honeywell is a global company, and we deal with customers, suppliers, and opponents with diverse backgrounds. Having a diversity of backgrounds and cultural experiences among the members of the Honeywell team helps us to better understand their needs, concerns, and strategies. It is an important attribute in all aspects of the legal, as well as business, issues we address.

Editor: What is the key to success in implementing policies and practices that put diversity policies and practices into action?

Yeadon: The key to promoting diversity in a corporation, law firm or any other organization is leadership. There must be a core focus on diversity with accountability through the ranks. A number of questions can help measure accountability. What specific actions have been taken to promote diversity? To what extent have diverse candidates been actively pursued? Does your salary structure ensure that all similarly qualified personnel are compensated similarly? What steps have been taken to ensure that the pool of candidates for promotion includes adequate representation of qualified diverse candidates? In response to the common excuse "there are no

diverse candidates ready for promotion," ask what is being done to develop diverse candidates to ready them for the next level? We have to get beyond excuses and ask ourselves, "What are we doing to really address the issue?"

Editor: From the diverse candidates' perspective, how can they make sure that they are visible in the pipeline for career advancement?

Yeadon: Achieving diversity in a company is not a one-sided deal. Diverse candidates who are truly interested in joining a particular corporation or being considered for a promotion need to be assertive in putting themselves into the recruitment/promotion pipeline. Career development and networking strategies are critical. Taking charge of your career is essential.

Begin by assessing your skill set and filling any gaps with training or pro bono work. You need to be ready when the opportunity presents itself.

To help plan your career path, get a good mentor. Find someone who is where you want to be and talk with them about how they got there. No one person is going to be able to give you a cookbook recipe on how to achieve your career aspirations. I've had multiple mentors. Many of the diverse professionals I've called upon for mentoring have been more than happy to spend significant time with me and share their vast knowledge and experiences. They have shared with me the tools of the trade and the ins and outs of dealing with certain issues arising in the workplace.

Diverse candidates face complexities that I don't think others in the profession face. Learning gathered early on from mentors can be extremely helpful in understanding and dealing with these complexities.

I urge diverse candidates not to limit themselves to diverse mentors. You want to get as much insight as you can from those who demonstrate a genuine interest in your career development and success. A mentor can be your boss, skip-level boss or their peers. Mentors can also be non-lawyers who are well-respected and highly-regarded as a high performer. Find out how they managed to climb the ranks and achieve their career objectives. Ask them to share their learnings (good and bad).

Corporation's diversity practices and policies help level the playing field and give diverse candidates access to opportunities, but ultimately, each of us is responsible for defining our own destiny and career success. If you are not happy with your career destiny, change it!

Editor: What resources can help corporate counsel promote diversity in the legal profession?

Yeadon: They can start with the Minority Corporate Counsel Association. As a member, Honeywell has benefited from its vast resources. For example, MCCA publishes studies, offers multiple networking opportunities, assists with recruitment and counsels on strategies to help law firms and companies to promote diversity within their organizations. (Editor's note: visit www.mcca.com for more information.)

I also think it is a good idea to do benchmarking with other companies that have done a good job in this area. For example, the New Jersey Corporate Counsel Association has in the past sponsored a diversity award to identify role models. NJCCA also has a diversity committee that can help in an advisory capacity. (Editor's note: contact Barbara Walder at njcca41@aol.com for more information.)