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Kleinbard Plots Management Transition With Three New Leaders

The firm has set a plan in motion for three younger partners to take the lead.

By Lizzy McLellan | January 16, 2018

Philadelphia-based [Kleinbard](http://kleinbard.com/) (<http://kleinbard.com/>) has operated with multiple managing partners for decades. Now, one by one, the longtime trio of lawyers running the firm are [handing over the reins](#)



From left, Michael Frattone, Mary Beth Gray and Matthew Haverstick of Kleinbard LLC.

<https://www.law.com/sites/americanlawyer/2017/12/28/change-at-the-top-many-law-firms-remain-unprepared/?back=law>) to the next generation of leaders.

Business and finance partner Michael Frattone is the firm's newest managing partner as of Jan. 1, taking David Hyman's place. Mary Beth Gray is set to take Robert Bodzin's managing partner position at the beginning of next year, and Matthew Haverstick is scheduled to become the third managing partner a year after that, replacing Howard Davis.

The 31-lawyer firm has operated with three managing partners for about 30 years, Davis said. Before that it had four.

"It's allowed the managing partners to have strategic leadership roles while also having an active practice," Davis said. Also, "it's allowed us to focus on various areas where each of the managing partners has strengths."

A few years ago, Kleinbard hired a consultant to help with strategy, and that included leadership planning, Davis said. Having three managing partners was working, but the firm decided it needed to have staggered terms, so the body of managing partners would not experience too much change at one time.

"We really were trying to be forward-thinking," said Frattone, and succession planning had been a topic of feedback in the lateral marketplace. He noted that with himself, Gray and Haverstick taking over as managing partners, the firm intentionally brought in representation from both the litigation group and the business and finance group.

Davis is in his 19th year as managing partner and Bodzin is in his tenth. Before stepping down, Hyman was a managing partner for 13 years.

Fratton and Gray both came to Kleinbard in the late 1990s from positions at large Philadelphia firms—Fratton from Pepper Hamilton and Gray from Morgan, Lewis & Bockius. Gray spent a few years away at a consulting firm but eventually returned to Kleinbard in 2012.

“I do a lot of work in succession planning and ownership transition,” she said. “It’s gratifying to see we’re practicing what we preach.”

Of the three new or soon-to-be managing partners, Haverstick has been a partner at Kleinbard for the shortest amount of time. He [joined the firm \(https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202746106718/conrad-obrien-government-team-heads-to-kleinbard/?back=law\)](https://www.law.com/thelegalintelligencer/almID/1202746106718/conrad-obrien-government-team-heads-to-kleinbard/?back=law) just over two years ago.

“The key attraction for me to Kleinbard was that when I talked to folks here there was a strategic vision ... and it wasn’t born out of crisis,” Haverstick said.

Kleinbard bills itself as a firm with “big firm talent” and “small firm creativity.” Many of its lawyers have prior experience in the industry, and come from Am Law 100 and 200 law firms.

Because of that, Gray said, it can be difficult to reach goals on diversifying the lawyer ranks by gender and minority representation. As the firm’s first woman managing partner, she said she does not want to “waste that opportunity” to make the firm more diverse. The firm has hired two female associates this year, she said.

“My primary goal would be to have us look more how the market looks, how the client looks ... we need to be less white, we need to be less male,” she said.

Additionally, Gray said, as the market continues to change, Kleinbard will need to evolve in order to attract talent. Specifically, she said, the firm will need to provide the technology and flexibility for lawyers to work well both in the office and remotely. That will be top of mind when Kleinbard moves to a new office next year, she said.

Generally, Haverstick said, Kleinbard is well positioned for the future with its size and specialization, in a legal market where midsize and small general-practice firms are often consolidating or being absorbed (<https://www.law.com/sites/newyorklawjournal/2017/12/13/amid-law-firm-merger-boom-transformational-talks-on-the-rise/?back=law>) by their larger counterparts.

“There’s going to be no middle anymore,” Haverstick said. “There’s going to be megalopolis firms and small law firms, and that creates a lot of opportunities for firms like ours.”

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