

# Podcast: How Law Firms Combat the Great Resignation (Part 2)

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The Coronavirus's impact on workplaces has led to what many are calling "The Great Resignation." It's impacting every industry nationwide, leaving many employers scrambling to retain and replace employees. In this second installment, we'll discuss strategies for improving workplace culture, staying nimble, and empowering employees to be their authentic selves.

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**Mag Bickford:** Hello, I'm **Mag Bickford**. With me today is **Eliska Plunkett**. She is our Human Resources Director, as well as our Chief Diversity Officer. She also has many years of practice as a management labor and employment lawyer. So we will spend some time continuing to talk with Eliska today about different types of guidance for employee retention in light of the Great Resignation. Also on our talk today is **Margeaux Roush**. Margeaux is the Director of Talent Acquisition for our law firm, and it's her job to identify potential talent and bring them into the fold. And we appreciate everything that she does in that regard. Lastly, **Heather Morse** is also on the call. Heather functions as our Chief Marketing Officer and she brings lots of good ideas for retention as well.

This will be the launching place for our continued discussions on the Great Resignation and what we, as a firm, are doing to get ahead of that trend. Margeaux, you wanted to comment a little bit more on the topic of culture.

**Margeaux Roush:** Absolutely. I think one of the things that we've really noticed here at McGlinchey is that shift in incorporating and pivoting our culture and focusing on additional qualifications that have been underrepresented in the legal population. I think the firm has money and finances and effort behind diversifying the population of attorneys that we have here at McGlinchey. We have engaged with Mansfield and we are part of the Mansfield cohort for mid-size firms. We are focusing on the entire person when we're looking at a resume. We are trying to find out if that different perspective that this person brings can help us push forward those values that Heather was talking about.

[In] the Great Resignation, one of things we've really noticed is that dollars are not the only thing that matters to attorneys that we hire. There are an incredible amount of positives that McGlinchey brings to the table that a number of other firms don't. We are not, you know, an AmLaw 100 firm where you're going to be working 3,000

billable hours a year. We're focusing on making sure our employees have full knowledge of the soft benefits that we bring to the table, whether it is the wellness aspect or the culture aspect... all of the things that we bring to the table. Just coming to work in a place that you actually like. When you look at associate turnover right now, a number of reasons that people are leaving is because they don't feel valued. So by our focusing on those culture shifts and really making our employees feel valued from the day that they walk into the firm, I think we really are setting ourselves up for success.

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**Mag Bickford:** I agree, Margeaux. So Heather, tell us a little bit about the wonderful job that you and your team in marketing and business development do and how they give us the opportunity for growth and development within these goals for our culture.

**Heather Morse:** Thank you so much. And I think this is such a great conversation to have because it's happening! And I think, really, the first step in everything that we're dealing with is to accept fact that we continue to be in a pandemic. That we don't know when it's going to end. That, is it, you know, what, we're now beginning year three of this? And you know what, as I'm talking to people, I don't see an end anytime soon. So what does that mean? Well, it's accepting there is no going back to anything. This is it right now. And whatever "it" is today might not be what "it" is tomorrow.

So we need to remain flexible, nimble, and resilient. Three things that lawyers are really known to be good at, right? No. So it takes a village here and it's taking a team to bring these ideas that we have to be flexible, we have to be nimble, and we have to be resilient because things are changing daily. And so rather than looking at these as hurdles that are blocks, they're just challenges. And how do we get around those challenges?

And I will tell you this right now, it's not going to happen organically. We have to be very, very intentional with what we are doing. And that is where McGlinchey has been fantastic because I am given the resources in my department, whether it is people, whether it is time, whether it is resources of money, whether it's resources of new technology, to help us bounce around a lot of these challenges that pop up on any given day. What are we going to do? My team right now, we are focused on how we can meet the business needs of our clients right now. What is going on with them? How do we help them? How do we help the attorneys adapt their practices to meet this new need and the growth of their businesses?

So Mag, you're a great example this is that, as a labor and employment attorney so much is coming up and there are changes that are happening daily. So making sure that my team is there ready and able – whether it's getting a webinar together overnight, whether it's getting a client alert out the door within, you know, an hour of a decision coming down, whether it is getting a news opportunity because new regulations came into place in the city that we're in right now. All of these things take the ability for my team to be aware of what is going on out there, and to have really good relationships with all the attorneys in the firm so that we can execute on whatever is happening today. And that is going to be different than what happened yesterday. And I have no idea what is going to happen tomorrow. But I do know that my team is prepared to pivot to meet those needs, whatever they are.

**Mag Bickford:** I've seen that pivot happen on a daily basis. And as a recipient of all those great efforts, you know, I'm so appreciative of you and your team.

**Heather Morse:** And you know what, we're excited about it. Because the thing is, we partner with the attorneys in the firm. We are an extension of their businesses. We're not extension of their practice of law, but we are the extension of their business, of what it is that they do. And you are as Members of a firm or Partners in a firm, you are owners or co-owners of a business. And our goal, our mission is to help you be as most successful as you can, whether it is the firm as a whole, whether it is at the practice group level, or whether it is at the office level, or the attorney level.

We have our challenges like everybody else, but at the same time, we have a great support system throughout the firm. And just to get the recognition, I think that goes to the culture of the firm.

And so we are always working with the attorneys in different ways and making sure that we are meeting their needs. You know, I'm very lucky that I have an in-house team that is incredible, that we are positioned to be able to meet these needs. We have great in-house business development professionals. We've got a branding and communications team that are top notch. We have great partners outside of the firm who help us execute on all of our goals, whether it is our PR firm, whether it is our technology partners out there. So I'm just really excited that I get to create this platform and then see it come to fruition. And we've just had great years of seeing these things change and take off, which has been for me as a professional legal marketer, just really exciting. Because I see the lights turn on and I hear our attorneys talking about the programs that we brought in and we've rolled out to them, and to see how those projects and those programs have been it into their businesses. And that's just, it's just really exciting.

So it's really fun for me doing what it is that I do to have the support of the firm leadership whether it is, you know, our policy committee or any of the section/practice group leaders. It's just really fun for us to come into work on a daily basis. It's, you know, we have our challenges like everybody else, you know, there are those nasty little RFPs that come in and our Chambers submissions that are all past due. But at the same time, we have a great team and we have a great support system throughout the firm. And just to get the recognition, I think that goes to the culture of the firm, is to see our administrative professionals, whether it's my team or Margeaux's team or Eliska's team, just really recognized for what it is that we do and the value we bring. And that goes back to that culture of the firm is that we are valuable members of the operation of this business. We have not just seats at the table, but we have voices at the table. We have direct lines to the firm leadership.

The line that I hear more often than not and just let me know that I was in the right place is when our Managing Member, whether it was Rudy Aguilar who was Managing Member until 2021 or Michael Ferachi, who's taken over since then, is when they sit there and they start to reply back. When I ask, you know, "I've got a great idea, I've got a crazy idea." And they start to give their feedback and then they just stop and say, "you know what, you're the expert here. You do what you think is right." And that is just music to my ears because it allows all of us to blossom for what it is that we do. And that makes the firm a better business and a better place for people to want to work.

**Mag Bickford:** Well, thank you, Heather. You know, I will say this, I affirm everything you said, but it also seems like you guys are in every place at every time. I don't know how you manage it, because you have a big load, but again, on behalf of the firm, I am so appreciative of all that you and your team do.

Eliska, this time last year, you got appointed to the role as our first Chief Diversity Officer. And you do this in conjunction with your HR responsibilities, which are two very big roles. Tell us about this process, your new role, what we're doing in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and tell us all about it. It's so exciting.

In my new role as Chief Diversity Officer, my primary focus is making sure we're creating an environment where each and every person associated with the firm feels enabled, empowered to be their authentic selves.

**Eliska Plunkett:** Thanks, Mag. In my new role as Chief Diversity Officer, my primary focus is making sure we're creating an environment where each and every person associated with the firm feels enabled, empowered to be their authentic selves with everybody else in the firm. In short, meaning that people feel valued and appreciated and welcomed and supported for who they are, and not having to hide or downplay any aspect of themselves. It's been an interesting year. I have been reading and learning and trying to grow, trying to listen, in particular, and understand. It's been a very humbling experience as well, expanding my understanding of what diversity is. So it is challenging, but I also find it very rewarding and very exciting and I'm really looking forward to maintaining our current initiatives and growing the initiatives that we have.

We've been a member of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) since 2009, one of the founding members. And we have really gone all in with that program and it has been, probably, our diversity platform that we're building from. What I'm most proud of is that our managing member, Michael Ferachi, was one of the first leaders to join the Leaders at the Front initiative of the LCLD – basically a personal pledge that he will do his best to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in any way he can. Specifically Michael pledged to use his voice to advocate for systematic changes and to uproot inequity wherever the opportunity presents itself. And for me, as a Chief Diversity Officer, working with Michael, with a Managing Member who is that personally committed makes a huge difference for me. It's not window dressing, it's not theater. It's real and it's meaningful. It's sincere and substantive change, real change that I've been asked to participate in and to drive.

**Mag Bickford:** Some of the things that come to mind, you know, as part of Michael's commitment to Leaders at the Front is we've made an intentional choice to diversify not only the firm in general, but also the leaders in the firm, right, Eliska?

**Eliska Plunkett:** Absolutely. One of the things we did was to put term limits in for positions in terms of firm governance, both for succession planning and for representation on our current committees. And that does change the face of the committees. It changes the perspectives that are being shared in those committees. And we can make very purposeful, meaningful change when we continue to put new voices and fresh perspectives forward in firm governance.

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**Heather Morse:** To take that forward, in my work with Michael, we're really looking to the future as well, which brings in the ideals of our #McGlincheyForward campaign, which is really about the future of the firm. It's something that Michael was really passionate about as we were rolling in and he was taking over as Managing Partner, we worked with him to develop his ideas and to put them into words. A lot of times we have great ideas, but being able to put them into words and then to be able to act on those words is just really important. And we have this all up on our website as part of our promise to people who are joining McGlinchey, either as a client or as a member of our team, of our McGlinchey family. But with our #McGlincheyForward initiative it's really about evolving the firm for the future. So we're focused in on change. We are focused in on the firm's culture. We are focused in on empowerment, making sure that people here can bring their A-game every day, and they're given the tools to do the job. I mean, the hardest thing is when we ask people to do something and you don't get the tools. The one thing is we get the tools and the support to execute on these things. We are focus focused i, on growth of the firm. And what does that look like? And then of course, gratitude. And that gratitude expresses itself in so many different ways. It's gratitude for the things and the gifts that we are given, and the way that we treat other people. But it's also gratitude within our communities, so there are a lot of different ways we can envision that and explore that and create something there.

But when it comes to leadership, and Eliska and Margeaux, when you were talking, it just reminds me that we are working to identify the future leaders of the firm. You know, in law firm life, we see a lot of times a vacuum in leadership, and we have so many incredible leaders, natural leaders in the firm. And they might not know that. They might not see that in themselves. So I'm working to help create leadership pathways here at the firm, making sure that we are bringing people onto the committees, to make sure that we are giving them the training that they need and the support that they need to be leaders in the firm. We know that a lot of great leaders do not volunteer for leadership, and we want to invite them into leadership. So that's something that we're exploring in 2022. And I feel that's really going to set us up once again for that #McGlincheyForward. And to make sure that our firm continues to evolve and grow and meet the needs of that next generation.

Everyone has different perspectives. How do we meet the needs of that next coming generation? Whether it's that next coming generation of clients, or our next generation of industries.

Gen Z has arrived in the law firm. We want to make sure that we're meeting the needs. Once again, we've got five generations working in a law firm, and everyone has different perspectives. And this young group who are growing and coming of age during COVID are going to have different needs than those who are currently here. And so we are always going to be looking to see, how do we meet the needs of that next coming generation? Whether it's that next coming generation of clients, and our next generation of industries. So we're looking at different industries. We are looking at different practices. We are looking at making sure that we are evolving and that we are keeping our people, retaining our people and not losing them over their lives. You know, really, people want to have, this work/life balance means something different now than it did when we were all coming of age. It really means something different to the younger people who are just coming out of school or just entering school, college and law school. So it will be neat to see how we continue to evolve.

**Mag Bickford:** Thanks Heather. So in our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, Eliska, you and I have lectured on this together a couple times now. I have to admit, I stole your analogy several times, and that is

“diversity is inviting people to the dance, and equity is dancing.” And I guess inclusion is dancing too. One of the ways that I see us having wonderful dance is through our affinity groups. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Eliska Plunkett:** Mag, our affinity groups started a number of years ago, I’d say five or six years ago. And at first it was really a networking opportunity, a platform for diverse attorneys to meet each other across the firm and discuss issues that were important to them. And it’s really taken off. It’s really something now that provides substance and content and learning opportunities to all of us here at the firm.

So we’ve put meaningful money and opportunity and focus on our attorney resource groups, allowing them to bring in speakers, putting content into our bimonthly newsletter, having them educate us as a firm on what’s important. What are we missing? Where should we be going? What should we be doing differently? And so they’re really drivers of change in the firm now.

**Mag Bickford:** I can’t help but agree. We’ve talked about a lot of things today, and they’re all so exciting and they’re just making McGlinchey, every day, a better place to be. And our hope is that the people we talk to in our recruitment process see all the wonderful things that we see and they want to be part of our wonderful experience here at McGlinchey.

Thank you for joining me and Eliska Plunkett, Margeaux Roush, and Heather Morse in our discussion of The Great Resignation. Stay tuned for more content from McGlinchey on this very important topic and the concepts best recommended for staying ahead of issues for your employees on your teams.

*Thanks for tuning into this episode of “More with McGlinchey.” If you have a question or would like to propose a topic, we’d love to hear from you at [podcast@mcglinchey.com](mailto:podcast@mcglinchey.com). For additional resources on this topic, please visit [mcglinchey.com](https://mcglinchey.com). On behalf of the law firm that brings you more, we hope you’ll join us next time.*

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