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Orange Has Largest Women-Owned Law Firm in US

SERVICES: Walsworth tips to female majority on equity partners

■ By DEIRDRE NEWMAN

The proverbial glass ceiling does not exist at **Walsworth Law Firm** in Orange.

The 80-plus-lawyer operation recently became the largest certified women-owned law firm in the country after receiving certification as a Women's Business Enterprise by the **Women's Business Enterprise National Council**, based in Washington, D.C.

The designation validates that a business is at least 51% owned, operated and controlled by women.

Benefits of this certification include access to updated lists of executives at hundreds of major U.S. corporations and government entities who are interested in using companies that promote diversity, as well as access to mentoring, education and advocacy, such as research on significant business issues that affect women.

"For clients looking to work with diverse law firms, this is the gold standard of the industry," said Partner **Dee Cohen Katz**, who has been with Walsworth for more than 20 years.

Female lawyers comprise 54% of Walsworth's equity partners, compared with the national average of 18%. They also account for 60% of Walsworth's steering committee, compared to the national average of 41%.

The firm realized it had reached a tipping point in 2014 on the mix of equity of partners—which shifts with newcomers and departures—according to Katz.



Cohen Katz: "gold standard" on diversity

The firm applied for certification from the WBENC in the middle of last year and was notified toward the end of the year, she said.

It reached the milestone of a female majority in a purely organic way, said Katz, emphasizing that Walsworth does not go out of its way to hire women.

"There has always been a feeling at the firm that we're going to hire the best people, and if you work hard, opportunities will be given to you," she said. "For more than 20 years, I've felt like I was on a level playing field like everyone else. I was encouraged like everyone else."

Firm founder **Jeff Walsworth**, an industry veteran of nearly 40 years, said he was proud of the fact that his firm is now owned by a majority of females.

"I could not be more proud of the great team of lawyers, the work we have done and the client relationships we have developed over the last 25 years," he said.

The law firm started in 1989 and also has offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco. It offers legal services in a wide variety of litigation and transactional matters, including business law, real estate law, employment law and environmental law.

The Women's Business council, founded in 1997, is the largest third-party certifier of businesses owned and operated by women in the U.S. ■