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Nextions firm wants to connect with its clients by looking ahead

By John Flynn Rooney
Law Bulletin staff writer

A Chicago-based consulting firm that works with lawyers, law schools and corporations recently changed its name and added leadership consulting and executive coaching to its services.

The Athens Group, which began providing diversity and inclusion consulting services to businesses and individuals in 1999, is now known as Nextions.

“Our leadership development model is based on asking the right questions, making the right connections and taking the right actions,” said Arin N. Reeves, Nextions president.

When Reeves and her team work with clients, they ask about the next question that should be asked, the next connection that needs to be made and the next action to take, Reeves said.

“It’s those three things that you need to get to the next level,” Reeves said.

Reeves, who has a law degree and whose Illinois law license is on inactive status, has worked with law firm managing partners and executive committees.

Her firm has worked with law firms in mergers, when there have been layoffs, and when hiring employees, Reeves said.

Reeves and her colleagues consulted with Barnes & Thornburg LLP by helping the firm update its diversity plan, along with conducting strategy and planning sessions with the firm’s diversity committee and department leaders, said Kathleen M. Anderson, a partner with Barnes & Thornburg’s Fort Wayne, Ind., office who serves as chair of the firmwide diversity committee.

Reeves “has really provided us with a framework to move forward on our diversity and inclusion programs,” Anderson said.



Arin N. Reeves

“She’s helped train people who are in charge of implementing our different activities and programs.”

A number of lawyers, including sole practitioners, law firm members and lawyers working for corporations have signed up for coaching, Reeves said.

“They want develop these [leadership] skills for themselves,” Reeves said.

Other law firm clients include Baker & McKenzie LLP. Another client is Northwestern University, including the law school. Allstate and Altria Group are among Nextions’ corporate clients, while government clients include the City of Chicago and the Cook County public guardian’s office.

Reeves also has worked with Exelon Corp.’s legal and finance departments on diversity issues and cultural assessment initiatives, said William A. Von Hoene Jr., Exelon’s executive vice president, finance and legal.

Reeves is “perceptive, hands-on and easy to understand,” Von Hoene said. “One of the things [Reeves] does exceptionally well is to bring practical suggestions to bear on problems that are inherently difficult to understand.”

Nextions’ other staff members are Rolisha H. Tutwiler, the client development manager and Jacqueline F. Aman, a research specialist.

“One of the things our research has told us is that you cannot be an effective leader if you don’t have a diverse team and if you are not an inclusive leader,” Reeves said.

Nextions also uses more than a dozen independent contractors who serve as executive coaches, Reeves said.

In addition to her juris doctor, Reeves also has a Ph.D. in sociology from Northwestern University.

“I think the Ph.D. really helps inform the research and consulting side because we do a lot of research as part of our work,” Reeves said. “I think the two [degrees] really work very well together.”

Reeves periodically writes a column called “Diversity in Practice” for Chicago Lawyer magazine.