

DAWN SILER-NIXON

Partner / Tampa

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Dawn has spent two decades partnering with her clients to help guide and direct their employment decisions to avoid the time and expense of litigation, and creating and executing a strategy to defend them through trial should the need arise. Dawn uses depth of knowledge and expertise to ensure that clients exceed their Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) goals, while avoiding legal landmines.

She is committed to knowing her client's businesses. Dawn's familiarity with her client's businesses and industries and knowledge of current legal trends is beneficial to her clients in preparing for and thwarting any potential adverse actions. It is for these reasons that employers turn to her to defend them in administrative proceedings and state and federal court actions involving sex, age, national origin, race and other discrimination claims. Dawn has extensive experience handling ADAAA and Family and Medical Leave Act claims and has successfully litigated multiple plaintiff Age Discrimination claims in state and federal court.

Dawn provides regular training and counsel to employers on a variety of issues to ensure compliance with new laws and emerging trends. She provides helpful tools, including checklists for employers to use to detect and prevent potential claims and acts as a partner to employers in evaluating day-to-day employment decisions from disciplinary actions to termination. As a Certified Diversity Executive, Dawn routinely provides DEI advice, training and workshops designed to allow employees to recognize and combat their biases and create safe spaces where employees can bring their full selves to work and engage in courageous conversations across differences.

Dawn is the Firm's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Partner with responsibility for the oversight and implementation of the Firm's Diversity Strategic Plan. As the Firm's DEI Partner, Dawn is a member of the Management Group and the Firm's seven (7) person Executive Committee, the Firm's highest governing body that sets policy and compensation. Dawn is recognized as a Certified Diversity Executive through the National Institute for Diversity

EDUCATION

- » University of North Carolina School of Law (J.D., 1993)
- » University of North Carolina (B.A., 1990)

BAR ADMISSIONS

- » Florida

COURT ADMISSIONS

- » U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit
- » U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida
- » U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida
- » U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida

FIRM LEADERSHIP

- » Executive Committee
- » Management Group
- » Diversity Executive Council
- » Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Partner
- » DEI Practice Group, Chair

Certification.

Representative Experience

- » Successfully represented a large regional power company in a family and medical leave act claim. Obtained judgment and costs in favor of the company in 2009. Judgment was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals.
- » Won a non-compete trial before the District Court, including the enforcement of a one year injunction against the former employee and his new employer in 2008. Injunctive relief was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals.
- » Acts as the Labor Relations Management Team for a national supply company, providing advice, training and expertise on labor relations and management issues in 2008-2021.
- » Develops robust and individualized Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plans for employers, including a 3-5 year strategic plans, employee resource group charters/development, training/workshop cascades for depth of knowledge and understanding and ongoing support and guidance.
- » ***Per Florida Bar rules, information on litigation and other legal successes has not been disclosed but is available upon request.***

Honors & Awards

- » *Certified Diversity Executive*, National Institute for Diversity Certification
- » *Fellow, American Bar Foundation*
- » *Best Lawyers in America*, Employment Law - Management and Litigation - Labor & Employment (2005-2025)
- » "500 Leading U.S. Corporate Employment Lawyers," *LawDragon* (2020-2024)
- » CW DEI Trailblazer Award (2023)
- » *The Legal 500 United States*, Recommended attorney in Labor & Employment - Labor and Employment Disputes (2020-2021)
- » "Florida Super Lawyers," *Super Lawyers* (2013-2021, 2023-2024)
- » "100 Most Powerful Corporate Employment Lawyers," *LawDragon*, (2015-2019)
- » "500 Leading Lawyers in America," *LawDragon* (2018)

- » "League of Extraordinary Women," The Helen Gordon Davis Centre for Women (2018)
- » "Legal Elite," *Florida Trend* (2018)
- » "Client Choice Award - Employment & Benefits" - *International Law Office/Lexology* (2016)
- » "Most Influential Black Lawyers," *Savoy* (2015)
- » *Delano S. Stewart Diversity Award*, George Edgecomb Bar Association (2012)
- » "Women Worth Watching," Profiles in *Diversity Journal* (2011)
- » "The National Black Lawyers - Top 100"
- » *Florida's Top Lawyers*
- » *Florida's Diversity Council Promoting Diversity First*

Memberships

- » U.S. District Court Middle District of Florida Merit Selection Committee (2024-present)
- » Client Advisory Board, Saxon Advisors (2024)
- » National Bar Association
- » American Bar Association
- » American Bar Association - AIDS Coordinating Committee Chair
- » The Florida Bar
- » Hillsborough County Bar Association
- » George Edgecomb Bar Association
- » Member, Diversity Law Institute
- » 50/50 Women on Boards, Steering Committee
- » Board of Directors, The Florida Holocaust Museum (2022)
- » Board of Directors, National Pediatric Cancer Foundation (2019-2021)

News & Insights

- » SourceBook - Co-Editor, FordHarrison's Labor & Employment Law Sourcebook, Hiring
- » April 28, 2025 - Federal Courts Temporarily Block Enforcement of U.S. Department of Education "Dear Colleague Letter" Barring "Illegal DEI" in Education and Certification Requirements

- » April 24, 2025 - Executive Order: Restoring Equality of Opportunity and Meritocracy (April 23, 2025, President Donald J. Trump)
- » March 26, 2025 - Crackdown on Antisemitism in Education is Not Just Limited to Students
- » March 21, 2025 - EEOC and DOJ Release Joint Guidance on "DEI-Related Discrimination"

Events

- » April 30, 2025 - The Allyship Exchange: Insights from Innovators - Part 3
- » March 19, 2025 - The Allyship Exchange: Insights from Innovators - Part 2
- » February 20, 2025 - The Allyship Exchange: Insights from Innovators - Part 1
- » January 30, 2025 - "Advancing Inclusion in The New Political & Legal Landscape"- The National Disability Inclusion Roundtable™ | Houston, TX
- » December 11, 2024 - "Advancing Disability Inclusive Hiring in Your Contingent Workforce Program" - The National Disability Inclusion Roundtable™ | Nashville, TN

Offices

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