

Chiesa Shahinian Leadership On Strategy Behind Rebranding

By **Nick Muscavage**

Law360 (December 2, 2021, 4:03 PM EST) -- Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC recently unveiled its first-ever mission, vision and value statements as part of a firmwide rebranding initiative.

The mission statement and values were announced on Nov. 19, and represent the first time the West Orange, New Jersey-based firm has articulated its vision since its founding in 1972.



Patricia K. Costello



Jeffrey S. Chiesa



Francis J. Giantomasi

Its mission is to "deliver legal services with a commitment to excellence, empathy and respect in the pursuit of justice and client objectives," according to the firm's announcement.

Chiesa Shahinian said its vision was to "be a leader among New Jersey law firms with sights set on opportunities to grow and support client needs with forward-looking practices and continued investment in New York, the Mid-Atlantic and beyond."

Its values, it said, include being kind, maintaining high ethical standards, advocating for clients, investing in its employees, and promoting a diverse and inclusive culture.

Dawn Afanador, chief marketing officer at Chiesa Shahinian, said that these takeaways were the result of a research process that included multiple employee surveys and interviews with clients and industry experts, and a two-year partnership with Fastlane, a full-service branding agency.

"The feedback gathered from this exercise has undoubtedly informed the many cascading features of

CSG Law's new brand, which will continue to take shape and be implemented over the coming weeks and months," Afanador said in a statement.

The firm said it anticipates that its website, offices and client merchandise will continue reflecting its new brand and proclamations into the first quarter of 2022. The firm is also designing a new building to serve as its headquarters.

To learn more about Chiesa Shahinian's rebranding efforts and what its mission and vision statements mean to the firm, Law360 Pulse spoke to the firm's managing member-elect Patricia K. Costello and two of its executive committee members, Jeffrey S. Chiesa and Francis J. Giantomasi. The interviews were edited for length and clarity.

Why did the firm decide 2021 was the right time to undertake its rebranding mission?

Chiesa: In 2019, Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi, or CSG Law, expanded its services and launched new practices through the addition of more than 30 attorneys. It was at this time that we began to contemplate a process to formalize and streamline the firm's brand and all of its messaging. We felt it was important to develop a unified and consistent presence that would truly represent the firm's commitment to its clients, employees, and the community at large.

Do you believe Chiesa Shahinian is already achieving some of these goals?

Chiesa: CSG Law has seen tremendous growth during the past 20 months, with key additions to service offerings to meet client needs. It is important to note that this expansion has been measured and focused, and while the firm has grown in headcount, it has also enjoyed extremely low attrition rates. We believe that while we have defined our mission statement for the first time in writing, we have been following this mission in practice for many years. This, coupled with our values, has helped us to successfully transition to the next generation of leadership with a keen focus on the future.

What is the benefit of having a clearly defined mission statement and values?

Giantomasi: For the CSG Law team, a clearly defined mission statement is the foundation for everything we do; moreover, our shared values keep us connected and engaged especially during times of uncertainty. Committing to mission, vision and value statements now means that we will build the future of the firm together, and in a focused and deliberate matter. This is especially important as we embark on major projects such as the design and development of the firm's new headquarters. In addition, as we continue to expand and attract more attorneys to our firm, these statements provide a clear message as to who we are and what we stand for. For our external constituents – clients and other contacts – these statements define our service and commitment ideals in a concrete way, ensuring we uphold the high standards we have set for ourselves.

Why do you feel it was important that achieving equitability was important to include in the firm's value statement and rebranding?

Giantomasi: Over the past 20 months we have witnessed how the work of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee and the Women's Initiative defines our company and culture – keeping us connected through our shared values and vision even while we remain in a remote work environment. While we formalized the firm's mission, vision and value statements through this process, we wholeheartedly believe that these statements were already in practice long before the rebranding. Committing in

writing to the standards we hold dear was an important and meaningful part of this process.

How do you believe the firm can achieve its goals of promoting diversity and inclusion?

Costello: Diversity and inclusion have long been a focus at CSG Law, with our Women's Initiative leading the way on the firm's commitment to the support, development and advancement of women. When I was named the firm's managing member effective Jan. 1, 2022, I joined many other women at the firm who are in leadership roles.

Notably, women comprise 58% of our practice group leaders and 31% of our members, or partners, which is more than the national average of 25%, according to the 2020 National Association for Law Placement Report on Diversity in US Law Firms. The firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee has recently expanded its focus, continuing to build an inclusive culture that encourages, supports, and celebrates the diverse voices of our clients, employees, business partners and the community at large.

During the pandemic, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee launched the firm's first ever company-wide training program, as well as a variety of community outreach programs including fundraisers to support social justice, community food banks, and educational programs focused on providing opportunities to disadvantaged youth from high school through college and law school. In addition, the committee has played a pivotal role in the expansion of the firm's pro bono activities, which aligns squarely with our vision.

--Editing by Peter Rozovsky.