

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

THE SECRET POWERS OF
NEURODIVERGENT TEAMS

PUSHING FOR GENDER
PAY EQUITY

INCLUSION

WINTER 2022
+ ISSUE 7

*Creating Globally
Inclusive &
Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

SLALOM'S

IESHA BERRY

Leading the Charge on Implementing
Inclusive and Equitable Practices



Iesha Berry

Chief Inclusion,
Diversity, and
Equity Officer, Slalom

Armmed with more than 20 years of global experience in DEI across various industries, Iesha Berry is the first chief inclusion, diversity, and equity officer (CIDEO) and a member of the firm's global People Leadership Team at Slalom, a business, technology, and strategy consulting firm.

An empathetic leader driven by a passion for advancing diversity and inclusion, Berry is charged with leading Slalom's DEI efforts as a business imperative and fostering a culture in which employees feel valued, safe, and successful. She provides oversight and thought leadership for company initiatives such as inclusion councils, local market ambassadors, inclusive recruitment, and employee resource groups. Berry is also responsible for stewarding the firm's environmental,

social impact, and sustainability efforts.

Prior to joining Slalom in late 2020, Berry was senior vice president of market and site HR at Bank of America and previously served as an HR executive and head of diversity and inclusion for the wealth management division there. She has also served in leadership roles at Microsoft, Prudential Financial, and Pfizer.

Berry received an MA in human resources and industrial relations from the University of Minnesota and a BA in psychology from Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi. She serves on the board of the Racial Justice Institute.

Inclusion: Equity is now taking center stage over diversity and even inclusion. How can an organization best ensure equity?

Ilesha Berry: As equity takes center stage in our professional discourse and the public eye, I like to remind myself that equity is not new to this field. For over 30 years, inclusion, diversity, and equity leaders have worked in enterprise organizations to pursue equity in our practices and our ways of working.

What's new and exciting is our ability as DEI leaders to have open and transformative conversations with equity at the center, and to be clear about where previous efforts have stopped short of achieving true equity. Slalom officially added equity to our Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (ID&E) mission and vision in 2021. We talk about our equity approach as a journey and acknowledge that, like all meaningful change, the journey is a marathon and not a sprint.

We're in a moment of widespread growth and maturity of DEI as a profession and a strategic business priority. Other leaders may see the renewed focus on equity and incorrectly assume that DEI practitioners have shifted the goal, but that's not true. Work that we've practiced for years to understand how all employees experience the workplace, to notice gaps and differences, to give every employee what they need to be successful—those are the foundations of an equity program.

If your organization wants to do the hard work of pursuing equity, remind yourself and the organizational leaders around you that equity is your North Star. Push yourself to go further, be more transparent, and ask yourself, "What does true equity look like? How do we cultivate and embed equity in every corner of our organization?" This is our purpose, and while we make steps toward progress, Slalom recognizes that the work of equity requires long-term, continuous commitment to action.

Success will look different for everyone. Slalom's equity priorities are focused in four key areas: education, impactful conversations, end-to-end employee experience, and partnerships. Each of these focus areas has unique actions that my team and I—our ID&E Center of Excellence—will drive forward as part of our three-year road

"Do not be hardened by the tough conversations—just be more ready. For every conversation that feels risky and difficult, there is an equal opportunity for reward."

map. For example, within our education focus, we have selected a vendor to create a racial equity learning for all levels of Slalom leadership and all team members.

IN: In the last year, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how do you help your organization and team deal with the fatigue and the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity at Slalom?

IB: Know that there will be tough conversations. When I started in DEI over 20 years ago, I carried an idealistic sense that, surely, everyone would recognize the value that diversity and uniqueness bring to an organization, and we would all strive to create fairness and equity in our work. Well, I quickly realized that we don't all have the same paths and perspectives.

We must confront the systems and processes that hold us back from true equity. In the past, we have focused on representation, head count, and fostering inclusive environments. These are vital to achieving equity and cannot be overlooked.

However, we must go further. We must look critically at the systems and processes of our organizations, understand where the gaps and risks are,

and take swift action to address those opportunities.

Do not be hardened by the tough conversations—just be more ready. For every conversation that feels risky and difficult, there is an equal opportunity for reward. And remember the African proverb that says, "When you pray, move your feet." Even if the steps you take are small, the best way to inspire a change is through action.

IN: Tell us about your role and mission as Slalom's first chief inclusion, diversity, and equity officer. Is your focus on Slalom—or its clients?

IB: I joined Slalom as its first chief inclusion, diversity, and equity officer in late 2020, in the middle of three global pandemics: health, economic, and racial injustice. Our vision is to create a thriving culture of inclusion, diversity, and equity that is reflected and experienced across all our local and global teams.

I see my primary client as Slalom—every person who gives talent, time, and passion to our organization. I wake up every morning thinking about the individual experience and what it means for Slalom to be an inclusive, diverse, and equitable organization. As a growing organization with over 10,000 employees and 40 markets across the globe, we need to ensure that we are walking the walk—not just talking the talk—in every part of our organization.

When you build DEI priorities, people rightly will ask, "What does this mean for me? How am I part of my organization's journey around DEI?"



Making DEI feel real and impactful for every Slalom team member remains top of my mind and close to my heart.

My team focuses on three areas as part our three-year DEI road map: act, accelerate, and agitate. Action starts within the walls of Slalom through initiatives like increasing representation at all leader levels, increasing diversity in our recruiting pipeline, and ensuring pay equity. To accelerate, we use our collective power and amplify impact, like establishing go-to-market offerings around DEI to bring to Slalom's clients and partners. Agitate reflects our commitment to challenge the social, economic, and educational systems that contribute to disparity.

As Slalom's CIDEO, my mission is to accelerate the progress that we've made on our DEI journey and to get where we're going, together.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders like yourself?

IB: The most pressing challenge for today and in the years to come will be time, infusing our work with the right sense of urgency. We need to be driving measurable impact that enables

systemic and process changes in our core HR processes and recognizing the new ways of working that resulted from the pandemic. The time is now.

There is a hunger and a demand to see change, quickly. While I understand and share the same sense of urgency, I am committed to do the work, both short term and long term. It is deep and challenging work to create real change. It requires you to confront the systems and processes in place at your organization, challenge where there is disproportionate impact on some communities over others, and work swiftly to address those gaps.

As I shared, this is a journey—a marathon, not a sprint. Employees may not see and feel the impact of those changes as rapidly as they hope for. Part of our challenge as DEI leaders is to communicate with our clients—employees—and help them understand where we are focused and how we are working on their behalf. Ask yourself, “How can I

focus myself and my team to drive the most impact back to our organization? How do I work in a way that drives the most impact for every one of my clients?”

IN: What are some of the recent thought leader topics and trends in the world of DEI that organizations are learning about and implementing?

IB: I see a growing trend of connecting DEI with social impact and sustainability. We must think beyond the virtual borders of our organizations. Organizations are deeply embedded into the broader global community and, therefore, have a responsibility to be clear about what they stand for.

Slalom has been inspired by the vision of a world where people love their work and life. As a growing global organization, we have extended that vision of a world where people love their work and life beyond the employee experience and invested in our clients, our partners, and the world around us. That is why, recently, Slalom connected our ID&E Center of Excellence and our Sustainability & Impact team, with both teams now reporting to me. These teams play a critical role in how Slalom shows up with our employees, with our communities, and in our commitments to the environment.

Social impact has become a strategic business propriety, for its ability both to create change and to engage your employees. Employees sense that meaningful change can only happen if we invest in a more equitable future. Increasingly, employees expect their organization to serve the broader community, especially in locations where you operate and there exists unmet social, economic, health, and educational needs. I believe your social impact strategy must demonstrate what your organization stands for, speak to the heart of your mission or vision, and empower employees to give back. **IN**