

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

THE CASE FOR DEI
INITIATIVES IN LAW FIRMS

NATIVE AMERICAN
EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SEEN

INCLUSION

WINTER 2023
+ ISSUE 8

*Creating Globally
Inclusive & Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

**Leading the Charge
on Implementing
Inclusive and
Equitable Practices**

IRON MOUNTAIN'S

**Charlene
Jackson**



Charlene Jackson

Global Chief Diversity,
Equity, and Inclusion
Officer, **Iron Mountain**

Charlene Jackson has a career track record of leading cultural transformation, developing and implementing impactful diversity and inclusion strategies, managing change in complex organizations, translating strategic vision into tactical implementation, and driving operational excellence. Prior to her work at Iron Mountain, she was a member of the executive management team of Girls Inc., a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be “Strong, Smart, and Bold” through direct service and advocacy.

Jackson’s position at Girls Inc. followed a stellar corporate and entrepreneurial career. She has held executive positions in the financial services, energy, and real estate services industries. She joined Enron as a managing director after spending nine years with Salomon Brothers, where she reported to the chairman/CEO. At Salomon, she became the firm’s first African American female managing director.

Jackson received a joint BA from Claremont McKenna College and an MBA from the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. She received her JD from Harvard Law School.



The Iron Mountain Singapore team during International Women's Day embracing the 2022 theme #BreakTheBias.

Inclusion: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

Charlene Jackson: Culture transformation! Every company has a culture. The question is whether the culture is one where all employees have a lived experience of inclusivity and belonging. Many companies have attempted to increase the representation of underrepresented groups by holding great events, encouraging and funding employee and/or business resource groups of all types, engaging in diversity training, and supporting special occasions such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Pride Month, and Women's History Month, among others. All of these endeavors are good because they bring awareness; however, it does not appear that they lead to sustained change. Almost all organizations are still trying to figure out how to increase the representation of underrepresented groups, especially in the leadership ranks.

The issue in part is that transforming a culture is not easy and it does not happen quickly. Leaders must be willing to engage in the bold, courageous, difficult work necessary to create belonging, where the words said are matched by a universal sense of belonging—where people feel their contributions are valued and their voices are heard—and all employees have the opportunity to achieve their goals and meet the needs of customers.

It is a holistic approach to DEI. Real culture transformation requires the company be willing to fundamentally shift the way things are done by utilizing the appropriate metrics; auditing the systems, policies, processes, and practices to ensure they don't negatively impact inclusivity;

"If the goal is the attraction, advancement, and retention of underrepresented groups, there must be a focus on creating a culture that genuinely embraces belonging."

and creating a culture of accountability with consequences—from the board to the executive team to each and every employee.

IN: What brought you to this work and what is your greatest success story?

CJ: I began my career as an investment banker in the early 1990s, covering the domestic electric and gas utility industry. At that time there were some women but even fewer people of color—as you can imagine, very few women of color. I have never been hesitant about speaking up or trying to right a wrong. It just didn't make sense to me that there were so few people of color in the profession given the numbers graduating from top business and law schools that were the pipelines for these positions. After about five years, I approached our CEO with my mentor, Milton Irvin, to discuss the issue and offer some

recommendations. At the time it was not my intent to engage in the work but to raise awareness. The CEO responded a few weeks later and essentially indicated that he was in agreement and wanted me to lead the effort. After some negotiation, I agreed and began reporting directly to him.

His rationale was that I had grown up in the firm, was well known, had been a revenue generator, and would have the respect of the business leaders. Although I reported to the CEO, I met weekly with the firm's operating committee, which I had enlisted to oversee the initiative. It was during this period that I realized increasing the numbers was important, but more important was creating a culture where people were valued and actually wanted to remain. It became clear that if we were really serious about solving these issues, we needed to commit to the difficult work of changing the environment. With that idea as a backdrop, we engaged a cultural anthropologist from NYU who reviewed everything ever written about the firm from the day it began in 1910. The anthropologist was able to help us understand how the culture of the organization evolved—how it had adopted its values, its norms, its formal and informal road maps for survival, and how that showed up in current times.

We also hired a diversity consultant, but more importantly we hired a change management consultant—not a typical consulting firm but a Fortune 500 business that had a consulting arm, which at that time and still today has a good reputation in the diversity world. That firm was Xerox. So, with the help of Xerox, we were willing and able to make the heavy lift. Focusing on culture transformation and holding leaders accountable are critical to increasing representation. Suffice it to say, it is extremely satisfying that over 20 years later, McKinsey in its 2021 study of women in the workplace concluded that “the path forward is clear...companies need to do the deep cultural work required to create a workplace where all women feel valued.” For “women,” we can substitute any other identities that are underrepresented.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

CJ: Since the murder of George Floyd, companies have definitely put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and supporting social change and social justice. Firms are making very public commitments, writing large checks, and hiring chief diversity officers. However, if the goal is the attraction, advancement, and retention of underrepresented groups, there must be a focus on creating a culture that genuinely embraces belonging. In light of the pandemic and the Great Resignation, companies must be intentional



Above: Charlene Jackson (left) with Carla Harris, keynote speaker, and Edward Greene, Iron Mountain chief human resources officer, at Iron Mountain's live-streamed Global Diversity Summit in Boston, Massachusetts, in November 2021. Below: Charlene Jackson and Ted MacLean, executive vice president and general manager, Crozier Fine Arts.

ability—will garner surprising results. As a DEI leader, data is your friend and will tell the story much better than words.

IN: Has Iron Mountain made a commitment to sharing DEI data, and what has been the impact of that?

CJ: Every year, our company publishes the Corporate Responsibility Report, in which we voluntarily share our DEI data, goals, and progress as they relate to our environmental, social, and governance practices. I have been with the company a little over a year and plan to produce a separate DEI Annual Report in the near future. I believe transparency is key to progress—building trust with employees, customers, and other stakeholders—and it only helps us improve what we do when we're willing to look in the mirror and positively and proactively address what we see.

IN: How has COVID-19 changed your perspective and your work?

CJ: There's no doubt that COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we work, and it's changed the way we think about work and engagement. I think for DEI, the pandemic has pushed us to explore new educational channels for training, ways that include a global audience and are still engaging. You have to find the right recipe for creating accessibility and engagement through active dialogue. It's hard to totally replace the in-person setting and interactions, but COVID has certainly given us the opportunity to make DEI training and conversations available to everyone through virtual means. **IN**

in their efforts to establish an environment where employees want to stay because their contributions are valued. Although we are beginning to see a focus on equity, it is a more complex concept, and is often confused with, equality. Equity attempts to achieve fairness in outcomes by focusing on specific needs of an individual and/or group, whereas equality attempts to ensure everyone is treated the same.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

CJ: I am absolutely passionate about data. I know that doesn't sound very exciting, but to me, it's the key to building a truly equitable workplace. I manage by facts, and accurate data is the facts. I believe an organization must disaggregate their data and granularly look at representation in departments, teams, sites, regions, and business units. It's simply not enough to summarize the percentage of BIPOC individuals in your US-based business. That doesn't tell you the representation of all races, gender identities, and abilities. As I mentioned previously, utilizing the appropriate metrics—combined with the results from auditing your systems, policies, processes, and practices and creating a culture of account-