

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

THE CASE FOR DEI
INITIATIVES IN LAW FIRMS

NATIVE AMERICAN
EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SEEN

INCLUSION

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*Creating Globally
Inclusive & Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

DELL TECHNOLOGIES'

**VANICE
HAYES**

Leading
the Charge on
Implementing Inclusive
and Equitable Practices



Vanice Hayes

Chief Culture,
Diversity, and
Inclusion Officer,
Dell Technologies

“Leading with empathy is [a] big topic I hope falls out of the ‘trend’ zone and becomes more business as usual.”

Vanice Hayes serves as Dell Technologies’ chief culture, diversity, and inclusion officer, responsible for the company’s global culture, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. In this role, she partners with leaders and employees across the organization to deepen and advance Dell’s culture of inclusion and to build a workforce that better represents the customers the company serves. During her more than 23-year career at Dell, Hayes has held a range of global and regional learning and development and HR leadership roles.

She received her undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin, and her master of education administration from Texas State University.

Hayes has always had a desire to help others grow and develop in an inclusive environment and feels fortunate to be able to do so in a corporate setting. Prior to joining Dell, she taught secondary school, equipping her students for success

through math. She also established an after-school program supporting at-risk students. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two daughters, planning family adventures, traveling, and exploring new restaurants.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Vanice Hayes: Flexibility is here to stay. Over the past two years, a lot of companies learned how to work remotely, but few learned what it means to be truly flexible. To us, flexibility means having ownership over how and when you work and the space to fulfill the demands of work and life. We've been on this flexible work journey for more than 10 years, so when the pandemic hit, we knew how to work in a way that kept team members feeling supported as we delivered for our customers.

We truly believe the future of work is hybrid. Our sites reopened on March 7, 2022. That said, we've been clear from the very beginning that for roles that can be done remotely, the way you work is a choice—those who want to come into the office can do so, and those who want to work from home can continue to do so as well. To us, work is an outcome, not a place or time.

For that to work, and for this hybrid model to succeed, you really need a workplace culture built on trust and inclusivity. As companies balance their in-person and remote team member base, inclusivity needs to be top of mind, and there needs to be a push to maintain equity in a virtual world. Technology can help bridge that gap in a lot of ways, especially when you think about all of the collaboration tools that have become second nature to how we work—from pervasive use of video conferencing in Zoom to the ease of instant messaging, collaborations, and calls from software like Microsoft Teams. At the end of the day, we want all team members to feel they have an equal seat at the table, no matter where that table is.



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

VH: There needs to be a focus placed on inclusive and empathetic leadership. These past two years have completely changed the way we relate to each other and to ourselves. Leaders need to take the time to understand how their teams are feeling and how their emotional well-being impacts the work they do each day. Our teams are juggling multiple responsibilities—kids, parents, pets, and more. We want to make sure our leaders are tuning in to the person behind the work—not just their work product. We're making it a priority for leaders to check in with their teams to ask how they're really doing and how they're feeling. We are also continuing to encourage true flexibility across our organization so teams feel they have the bandwidth to show up for their job and their home life. This concept of emotional well-being at work is incredibly

important to us at Dell. It's a shift in mindset from what many of us have been programmed with over our careers—but it's an important shift I'm proud to be part of.

IN: What brought you to do this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

VH: I have an insatiable curiosity, and I love trying new things. I would say my willingness to tap into that curiosity and explore new ways to drive change is what brought me here.

I started out as an engineering major, then switched to focusing on mathematics. I received my master's in education administration and became a teacher with the goal of creating positive change among our next generation. Shortly after, I learned about a position at Dell, where I intended to spend a few years in corporate education before returning to the classroom; however, more than 23 years later, I'm still here. People ask me why I've stayed. The truth is, I'm constantly challenged with opportunities that deal with transformation and driving change. In my current role, I feel honored to help cultivate our inclusive culture day in and day out and create a space where all team members feel valued and like they belong.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

VH: My greatest success story professionally is a good example of the success that can come from bringing people together. I was tasked with solving a problem no one could figure out. As I'm a former mathematician, you can imagine how this piqued my interest. I was determined to solve this problem. I spent time talking to people about what was happening, learning from others and ultimately creating a team that collaborated to get the job done. I'm happy to say we solved the problem in record time, and we did so with a process still used today. It was a great lesson in coming together to solve problems for the greater good. In a lot of ways, that's translated into the work I do today.

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When it comes to my biggest challenge, in my current role, I'm running a race that does not have a finish line. I know this, and in a lot of ways, I agree with that sentiment because you should always be working to nurture and improve your workplace culture. We have a very high standard for how we work and how we lead here at Dell. We make commitments to our people, our customers, and our partners, and it's important to me that we deliver on those. It's my job to positively influence how we all relate to each other and that we lead with inclusivity in all we do. It's a tall order when we think about how all of us are wired as humans and the biases we hold on to throughout our lives. But it's a job I'm honored to have.

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

VH: The workplace conversation has dramatically shifted over the past few years. The conversation around talent attraction is incredibly important and top of mind for many. We want to attract and retain fantastic, diverse talent, and as an industry, we need to expand our talent pools to do that. One example is focusing on skills and experience when looking at our job requirements. Inside our organization, it's important to focus on supporting the development and growth of our team members and getting them ready for their next role.

Leading with empathy is another big topic I hope falls out of the “trend” zone and becomes more business as usual. We need to make sure we're coaching leaders to drive connection within their teams and truly check in with how they're feeling. We know when teams feel supported, their work also excels.

Ultimately, we want to make sure we're doing our part to keep our team members happy, challenged, and fulfilled at work. We spend so much of our day doing our jobs, and we want to make sure our team members are finding purpose in what they're doing each day. That means creating a supportive culture that embraces differences and inspires you to bring your whole, authentic self to work each day. **IN**