



Raymond A. Mason School of Business

WILLIAM & MARY

DIVERSITY GOES TO WORK PODCAST

EPISODE 48: LAMECIA BUTLER – INCLUSIVE AND IMPACTFUL SUPPLY CHAINS

Phil Wagner

Hello from the halls of the Mason School of Business here at William & Mary. I'm Phil, and this is Diversity Goes to Work. Buckle up because we're getting ready to take a deep dive into the real human lived experiences that shape and guide our diversity work in the world of work. Should be fun.

Phil Wagner

Welcome, listeners, to yet another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. Today, I'm joined by Lamecia Butler, who has an extensive experience in the corporate and nonprofit sector where she has led communication, marketing, community, and supplier diversity efforts for well-known brands, companies we all know and love, including Meta, Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, Super Bowl 50, Super Bowl 51, American Express, and more. She's worked with countless business professionals and entrepreneurs on a global scale to help them develop and achieve their goals. She's also a fellow communications faculty member. So we're going to nerd out, hopefully, a little bit on comm and supplier diversity today. But Lamecia, before we get, I just want to thank you for taking time to meet with us today. Why don't you tell our listeners a little bit more about who you are and the types of work that you do?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, I mean, I think you kind of summed it up there, so that was pretty great. But I think, in general, my position on my life is that I'm here to open the doors for others. And so I think that's really driven my career and what I've been doing, and particularly for the last seven years as I've been working in supplier diversity, you know, looking for ways that wherever I am, be it working with the NFL on the host committee, opening doors for local businesses there, or specifically now at Meta, looking for ways that around the globe we can make sure that diverse businesses have an opportunity to grow and connect by providing goods and services with their businesses. That's the goal that I look for in life. I am a daughter of entrepreneurs. I myself have been an entrepreneur, so I understand all the struggles that diverse-owned businesses have encountered and are encountering today. So when I look at my role, it's a way to one promote what they're doing. So that's where the marketing comms comes in. Telling the stories of those diverse suppliers, how they're able to work with corporations, and then making sure that internally, our team members who are helping with those efforts are getting

recognized and that our company can continue to grow on our trajectory of spending more with diverse-owned businesses and providing more opportunities.

Phil Wagner

I'm really excited about the topic that we're going to talk about today. I was once a faculty member at the University of South Florida when we hired Terry Daniel to come in and be Assistant Vice President over supplier diversity initiatives. And I have to tell you, though, I was deeply involved in sort of the theoretical and applied management perspectives on diversity and inclusion. I had spent very little time in supplier diversity and honestly couldn't even probably give you a good working definition. So maybe we should start there for our listeners because I think we take a management lens on this podcast most of the time. When you're talking about supplier diversity, Lamecia, what are you talking about? What does this mean? Who does this serve? What is this?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, and I think that is important. So, thanks for taking a moment to pause on that because I think a lot of people think DEI automatically transfers to supplier diversity, and that's not the case. So when we think about supplier diversity, it's really around the procurement, the sourcing of goods and services that your organization is buying. And I use the word organization because, to your point, it can be an educational institution. It could be hospitals, et cetera. So, what is your organization buying, and how are you making sure that your supply chain is inclusive? And for us supplier diversity, here at Meta, we look at five categories typically, so they vary by where you sit in the globe. But our main five categories are minority-owned, so racial ethnic, minority-owned, women-owned, disabled, veteran, and LGBTQ plus. So those are our five main categories. Again, you may not see that represented across the board in different areas of the globe. However, I would say women-owned is the leading diversity factor that we see, and that has translated all across the globe. And so our efforts in someone or someone for our supplier diversity team, but also we work. And at Meta, we sit in what we call the we sit in finance, but we sit in the procure source to pay organization. So, it's the lifecycle of how vendors work with us. And so we're responsible for introducing those diverse suppliers to the people who are making those purchasing decisions, making sure that once they're onboarded, they have that great experience, that they're learning that they are performing according to expectations and then, ideally, that their business will grow within Meta over time because of the great work that they've been doing. So that is essentially what supplier diversity is introducing those diverse-owned businesses into the supply chain and giving them an opportunity.

Phil Wagner

Oh, my God, that was so well packaged. I catch that. I grab hold of that. That's so good. Before we jump in and talk about some of those specifics, actually, I want to go back a little bit because you tee up your narrative as a fellow communications person, faculty member, scholar, practitioner, you know, the importance of story and narrative, anchor point. And I'm really curious about your story, your journey. What inspired you to dedicate your life to this?

Specifically, how does this connect back to your value systems? I really want to know why is this the thing that makes your heart sing.

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, so growing up, we love stories. My mom, we were always reading at the library, and she also made us write stories. So, in preparation for school, we were constantly writing. So that was a muscle, both reading and writing, that I just grew organically just by nature of how my mom was. And throughout that, as I was looking and going into college and, what am I going to do? The never-ending question that you ponder. At one point, I thought that I wanted to be a sports reporter. So I was down that track, was interning doing all of that, and then I realized I didn't like being in front of the camera, but I still love telling the stories of the athletes, or even better, once I got into public relations, I really love the community aspect of the work. And so that's what led me to go and pursue my MBA, really think about how could I help organizations at a more strategic level. Think about the impact that they could have with their companies. But that marketing and Collins piece never left me. No matter what I did, there was know the opportunity. And even with my current manager, I remember he and I worked we've worked together. Now, this is the third time we've worked together, but he came up to me, and he's like, hey, I heard you had a peer background. I'm working on this press conference. Do you have any contacts? And, of course, I did. So those opportunities never left. So, I always felt encouraged by the fact that I knew that that skill set mattered. And particularly for supplier diversity, telling the stories of our diverse suppliers matters so much. We at Meta and our team we say that we're not here to change hearts and minds, but we do know, though, that the stories are what changes the hearts and minds of the individuals who may have some misconceptions about whether or not diverse suppliers can operate at the scale and produce at the scale that they need. And so by demonstrating through storytelling, we do a lot of videos and telling not only are they doing this for Meta, but they're doing this for X, Y, and Z companies. Then that kind of releases that tension and that apprehension that they have to work with those diverse suppliers. So, it's a more powerful tool than people understand. And that's why we also try to get the diverse suppliers to understand. When you're coming up to that corporate representative, you have to know how to pitch yourself and help them understand what you're doing as well.

Phil Wagner

This is so good. Normally, on this podcast, I like to think that my questions are so well organized and they follow this nice linear chain. Today is not going to work that way. I'm so sorry. I've just got a million questions because this is an area where I'm trying to harness my skill set even more and better understand just sort of the intricacies. So I want to talk about maybe some of the challenges. So you've got such extensive experience here. What are some of the biggest challenges that diverse suppliers and I hope that terminology works, what are some of those biggest challenges that those diverse suppliers face when they're trying to do businesses, particularly with large companies?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, I think the greatest thing that people think is the biggest challenge, and I'll push back on it a little bit is, and the reason why I'll push back on it is because I think there's been some growth across the industry. And I think you've seen over the last two years, especially since 2020, a lot more corporations really saying, we're interested. We want to do work with diverse suppliers. So I think that entry that door is a little bit more open than it was. So I don't think that's the greatest barrier. When we think about it, there's four things that we kind of came up with that are really the challenges that I think diverse suppliers have. So we called it the four P's. So you see my marketing background coming in, the four P's. So we talked about the pitch, but even before the pitch, it's the preparation. So how do you prepare to truly understand what that corporation is buying, whether or not they're buying the good or service you had? So, how do you prepare for that conversation? Then it's the pitch itself, and do you truly understand what they wanted? Did you provide that in your pitch? Do you have the right people on your team in order for you to be a true competitor in that space? If you're in this request for proposal, which we call RFPs if you're in that bidding system, are you really pitching yourself the right way? And then let's say you pitch, and then it's kind of cheating here, but there's two P's here on this one, which is patient persistence. And I think this is probably the hardest part for diverse suppliers because you've met the supplier diversity professional, you've met the marketing person who's probably going to hire you or someone in IT. However, there's silence, and that's the nature of the business because procurement can be a hurry up and wait, hurry up and wait process. And so learning how to maintain those relationships over the course of that, I think that's probably the most important part is that persistence, but not bugging someone. So, not emailing me every day, but making sure that you had a very tangible and meaningful touch point where if you reach out to me, you're adding value. I saw Meta was doing this, and by the way, we also work on that. So just want to make sure you remember our qualities there. And then the final one is performance. So a lot of suppliers think, okay, I got it, I'm in. This is going to be the million-dollar contract, which let me dispel any rumors there. There are million-dollar contracts, but the likelihood are so few and far in between. So do not think that when you work with a corporation, that's going to be your big ticket. You really have to perform, and through your performance and continued performance and showing the results and the impact that you have, that's when you have the opportunity. I've seen some businesses focus on all four of those parts, and they have been doing really well with Meta. We've been able to see them grow because by nature of them doing well on this project, they can get promoted to another team, another team hires them, and they've seen tremendous growth, even not just within Meta. I think that is another thing that I would caution diverse suppliers is to remember that the supplier diversity space it's a small space. We really know the other professionals. And so it's an opportunity for whenever you're speaking to Meta, you might also be speaking to our peers at other organizations without knowing it because if we don't need it, but someone else asks us for a recommendation, if you do a great pitch, we're going to remember you, and we're likely to recommend you.

Phil Wagner

That's fantastic. You mentioned sort of post-2020 moment, and it catches me because I think there are multiple things that pop in my head. Number one, I still see this as a relatively new space. Now, of course, it's not supplier diversity is not new, but what I mean is, even in the diversity-themed textbooks we might use to teach diversity and inclusion management, we're starting to see more content on supplier diversity as part of corporate DEI initiatives in there. And I know those aren't explicitly linked, but they're coupled. You mentioned 2020, and that sort of jars me to think about how that history has shifted. Did that shift in 2020 come as a COVID spawn moment or a post-George Floyd moment? There's been a lot of change, but what has spawned that change? And then maybe the question is, where does that change lead us in the next 5 10 years?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, so I'll give a hopeful answer of where I hope it leads us. But to answer your question, yes, 2020 was a post-George Floyd the conversation about racial, economic injustice that really did spur a lot of corporations to, as you know, we saw the pledges coming up, here's what we're going to do, here's what we'll do for these communities. Et cetera, et cetera. And some have delivered. Thankfully, we at Meta delivered. We said that we would spend a billion dollars with diverse suppliers starting in 2021, and we did that. And then, we also had a goal to spend 100 million with black-owned businesses, and we spent over 306,000,000 in 2021. So, we delivered on that promise. The one thing that I will say about that is that we've had that commitment before George Floyd. We had actually put that commitment and our spend goals in place in 2019 and had socialized that within the organization. However, when 2020 came, we made it public. So we were always pushing for those goals. So that gets me into what I hope will happen because I will tell you, the number of supplier diversity professionals has increased tremendously. I've been to several conferences where the rooms are full now, and we didn't have that years ago. So I was at the Disability In conference in July, and it was standing room only. There were over 200 professionals in that room, and we didn't have that before. So that lets me know that one, corporations are investing in the supplier diversity professionals, being in the spaces where diverse suppliers are, and then also getting the training and the development that they need. So NMSDC also hosts what they called the Business Leadership Seminar. They changed the name this year, but I think that was the name of it. And that's also an opportunity for us to share best practices and learn from each other and how can we grow our programs. So that was also another packed room. So what I'm hoping will happen is that one, corporations will do more than just have these pledges, have these individuals in place, they will allow them to introduce and open the doors for diverse suppliers, and then we can continue to collaborate and work together. That's really our push for Meta is really not just to think about Meta, but to think about the industry itself and how can we all collaborate.

Phil Wagner

That's so good. Let's go one level deeper here, right? Your call, your invitation is like, stop checking the box, folks. So if you're relatively new to this space or you're just struggling to wrap your head around it, and you look to Meta, and you say, jeez, billion dollars, like, my gosh, I

can't start there. Where do you start? Or how do you recommend those companies deepen their journey in an authentic way that's not just about checking that box?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, so one of the ones that we talk about in our mission is that we want to create opportunities for diverse suppliers who do business with us and the people in the communities they connect. And the reason why that mission is important is because we have centered our work around the diverse supplier. So that means we're consolidating about who do they need to be connected to, how do we make sure that they're growing, et cetera. So I think if you take away the thoughts of how much spend you're doing, et cetera, if that's not your first goal if your first goal is how do we grow and develop these diverse suppliers and everyone that will look differently. We actually don't have development programs for diverse suppliers, but we are thinking about how do we grow them within our organization. So, I think that's the first way is to think about how do you center the workaround. Really? What is the outcome that you want for diverse suppliers? Then, we talk about amplification of three things. So, we talk about amplification of processes. So, thinking about your procurement process, where are the areas where diverse suppliers might get lost in the system? How do you make sure that they are visible? How do you make sure that you have accelerated payments for them? And then again, just the growth and discovery. So for us, when we thought about growth and discovery, we created a special tool for diverse suppliers. We did it in conjunction with a diverse supplier where anybody, through SSO single sign-on, they can actually search for diverse suppliers that they can include in the procurement process as they are trying to purchase something. So that's number one. The other part is amplifying connections. So, like, how do we do proactive referrals? What tools do you have where people can easily reach out to your teams to learn more about diverse suppliers? When we think about diverse suppliers, we also know that there's more opportunity for them amongst each other sometimes than it is with a corporation, and especially because some of them are smaller. And so, you may want to bid on something, but you may not have all those qualities. So, we take a lot of time, and part of my work has been around building our diverse supplier community. We I'm proud to say that we had our first-ever global event in London a couple of weeks ago, where we brought our diverse suppliers together, and we just had a happy hour for them to meet each other and to meet other industry professionals. So we had other corporates there, we had other NGO organizations, and we did this quite often. That was actually our fourth event this year. So when we're in different cities, we're bringing them together to connect with each other, and that's important. And we've seen how that has increased collaboration. We have a Facebook group because, hey, we're Meta, so we have a Facebook group for our diverse suppliers so that they can connect, they can say, hey, I'm going to this conference, or hey, I'm looking for this. Does anybody have a resource here? And so those connections are important. And then I think the final thing, again, to get beyond the checkbox, which does have a little bit to do with metrics, but it's to be transparent and to think about amplifying the visibility. So, one of the main reasons I came to Meta was that they wanted to do their first-ever diverse suppliers report. No one was requiring Meta to do it. We just wanted to do it. We wanted to be transparent about the results we're doing. It is still, to this day, one of the biggest things. When

you go to our website, you can see our year-over-year data from the time that we started reporting, and that transparency allows people to dig into what we're doing well where we need to improve. And I think more people need to be transparent about that. And then I think just taking what we're learning, reinforcing those learnings globally, and helping people just think about how do they have influence in their organizations. We use the word influence because it's relevant to us. But how do you use your influence to impact the communities by purchasing with diverse suppliers?

Phil Wagner

I could write a whole dissertation on the themes that you just laid out, and that was like last two minutes. And they take me down forward different paths. So, I want to come back to global supply chains, and I want to come back to ROI and metrics, but I want to go back to the diverse supplier first. And so you talk about it, all things are not necessarily equal. And I'm wondering what you see in terms of systematic or structural barriers that exist that make it difficult for those diverse suppliers to win out on corporate contracts, even when supplier diversity programs are in place. Right. How do we address those?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, I think one of the systemic issues that we have is, and this may be controversial, but it's around the collaboration that we see within the NGOs. So when, there are nonprofit organizations that are advocacy organizations that are serving these diverse suppliers, but you have them for every diverse category. Right. So you have one for women, minority, LGBTQ, veteran, disabled. We know because of intersectionality, which is a big part of DEI, that some of these diverse suppliers fit in multiple categories. So, when you think about I as a diverse supplier, I am trying to get noticed by as many corporations as I can. However, I also have limited budget. So, where do I choose to put myself into this space where I can have the maximum exposure to corporations? And so that's a challenge there. Whereas if we had more collaboration amongst those organizations, where they were able to have a universal database of all the diverse suppliers and the diverse suppliers could identify across the categories and then we as professionals in the space can go and search for those diverse suppliers, that would be phenomenal. I mean, that is so groundbreaking. It would save so much time and money instead of us going to five different conferences each year, or some of us even more than that. And so I think that's one of the biggest systemic things is that we just need a little bit more collaboration amongst our organizations that are serving those diverse suppliers. And then I think secondarily, we all need to think about again how do we talk about the work and the impact that supplier diversity can have so people can understand that it's not just a nice to have. We really do need to provide this because we know diverse suppliers they are more likely to hire within their communities. So the economic impact that they are bringing to their local communities as a result of them getting these contracts are so important. And so when you think about people who have to have conversations with policy, and they're talking about the impact that their corporation is having. These are the things that matter, and we just need to have a greater focus on that. And you were talking about this, I think, in another podcast, you know, we have this corporate soup of ESG and all these other how do we make sure that we're

playing nicely with all of those other departments and teamings so that we all have the one goal in mind.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, that's so good. And you tee up the next question, which goes back to those metrics. Right, because this is good for us internally, too. So how do these corporations then ensure that their supplier diversity efforts really deliver? Like ROI? They actually move metrics. What metrics even matter the most in this conversation?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, so I think one of the things we at Meta, we're really proud to be part of the million dollar roundtable, which means that we, along with, I think now there's 29, 31 of us, don't quote me, nine out of us that are there, but that's only corporations that spend a million dollars or more. But what does that really mean? When you think about that, there may be other corporations or other organizations who have a significant amount of spend with diverse suppliers as it relates to their annual budget. So we think that it's so important to move beyond the spend number and to really think about other efforts. So when we look at our spend, what we're kind of thinking is a health dashboard or what makes sure that our diverse spend is healthy. So, one of the things is that less than 50% of our total diverse supplier spend can come from our top ten suppliers. So what that means is that we have a better distribution and that all of our spend is now concentrated with ten suppliers. You won't always see that in the supply chain, and it's only through transparency that you can look through that. I think also we're looking and we're tracking at the total number of diverse suppliers that we use every year and that we contract with. So we're looking to see if that number increases over time. If so, that means that, hey, great, more diverse suppliers are introduced into the supply chain. However, that can also be supplemented by another number that we use. We call it same-store sales, but it's basically the year-over-year return of suppliers that we used the previous year. So, how many of our suppliers are staying within our supply chain? Because that's also a sign of health as well. They're not just one-and-done suppliers. We don't want that. We want them to grow. So those are just like three metrics alone that combined are making you think about, okay, what are we really doing to introduce suppliers, keep them in the supply chain, and grow their spend?

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I love that. Keep focus, too. I think that shows some depth and some intentionality. Again, Beyond that checking the box, I want to go back to we talked about sort of global supply chains here as corporations globalize their supply chain. What are some best practices for implementing supplier Diversity Programs internationally versus domestically? Does that play out the same? What differences matter? How does that work?

Lamecia Butler

Yes, so it does not play out the same. And we learned this. We decided to increase our efforts across the globe in 2020. So we launched in both Latam EMEA, which we call Europe, Middle

East, and Africa, and also a Pac on a Southern Asia Pacific region. And what we have learned is that each of those regions are so, you know, that phrase around think global, act local really matters. And particularly in Europe. That's important because one of the things that I would say that everyone needs to learn quickly and get up to speed are the regulatory issues, especially as it relates to classifying diverse suppliers holding diverse supplier data. All of that is so Important. We were just over in Amsterdam at the beginning of September for a conference, and we were just learning about the history behind France and why classifying and holding data for people around ethnicity isn't a practice for them. So, you have to understand those nuances in each country in order to determine what and how your program can have an impact. So that's important. I would say making the best of friends with your legal teams so that they can review and make sure that everything you're doing is up to par. And there's a Regulation called GDPR that I won't even get into, but most people who have heard it, they know what you mean, and they're just like, be with you, good luck. And then I would also say finding those nonprofit organizations, those advocacy partners who can help you. So I think really more so across the globe. We've leaned more heavily into those relationships as we have started to increase our efforts. So, in the US. It's very well known and, you know, kind of who the players are, and you can easily fit in. But because supplier diversity is so new across the Globe, there are a lot of suppliers who don't even realize they qualify, that they don't even know that there is a such thing as a certification, and that corporations are looking for them because they hold these ownership status that they do. And so helping. And we've done this in Latium. Where we actually created a specific Instagram account where we just talk about what it meant to be certified and what supplier diversity is. And so, as Puerto open the doors to diversity and just being able to highlight those nonprofit organizations as well and talk about the opportunities for diverse suppliers. So it's less about, hey, come do business with us. And that's ultimately the goal. But first, we want them to understand. The unique role that their business has and the opportunities they have as a result. So how do you partner with them to find and they need more suppliers to be registered and certified as well? So, how do we have that partnership?

Phil Wagner

That's fantastic. Again, there's a wealth of knowledge there. I want to get a little bit more specific here and think about the trickle effects here. So, a lot of supplier diversity programs really focus heavily on Tier One supplier spending. Right. So, how can corporations better support capacity building and growth for diverse suppliers at the Tier Two and beyond?

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, and transparently. We haven't done a lot of work at Tier Two. So where we stand, we have been reporting, we've had some of our select tier-one suppliers in key categories start to report. So we've had our reporting going for two years. But the ultimate goal of that, and we're starting team, is already in advanced stages of what the next phase of Tier Two looks like. But I think our goal is one to identify these areas. One, uncover if there is spend with diverse suppliers that we don't know. Two, identify where we think more spend can be devoted to diverse suppliers and then making those introductions. And so one of the ways that we've

done that in the past is when we do go to the conferences. And in the past, we used to have these huge booths, and people could come in, but what we would do was we'd bring in someone from our contingent workforce team. So if they can come in and meet all of the IT staffing providers who are interested in providing staffing services, they have a specific knowledge that they know exactly what questions to ask. And so we're just providing that entryway for them. We've also done that with some other teams in the past as well. Construction, bringing vendors to our actual data centers and allowing them to hear directly about what does it take to be a Tier Two supplier or a subcontractor for this Tier One supplier who's doing the work. So it's one, educating exactly on the requirements of the suppliers who are already in our supply chain. Making those introductions are just as important as well. And then there will have to be the follow-up. So that's where the reporting comes to measure whether or not Tier Two spend is growing.

Phil Wagner

So, if we're thinking about this in terms of there's a global problem related to inequity, we can help address that problem through creative means. Let's talk a little bit more about sort of the creativity or the innovation that's happening in this space. What are you seeing? I mean, in terms of innovative approaches beyond maybe traditional supplier diversity programs that really empower diverse entrepreneurs suppliers, anything innovative that we should keep our eye on?

Lamecia Butler

I have two thoughts on that. There's one that I think is it creative. Is it innovative? Maybe not as creative. However, does it open the door for more suppliers? Yes. And so for that, it's around the certification process. So recently, the US Black Chamber they launched within the last year their Buy Black certification. Why is that important? Especially because it's only for US businesses. However, it's free. And so when you think about certifications that are also offered by these other larger organizations, there's a cost to that. And again, what we're looking for as a corporation when we're looking for certifications is that someone has validated that this business truly is owned and operated and controlled by who they say they are. They do the goods and services, and that there's a valid reasoning that this business will stay in business for the duration of our contracts and beyond. So when we are looking for people who can quickly provide that validation to those businesses and therefore allow them opportunities into our supply chain, that's important. I think it's key to mention that at Meta, we don't require certification, but we do highly encourage it. And when we're talking about our diverse supplier spend, we're only talking about our certification numbers. So, the spend that we report externally is only what we can validate because someone has a certification. So I think anywhere where we can start to drive more visibility of diverse suppliers, where there's more of a direct exchange of information of what they're doing, what they're providing, and that way we can quickly get that to the decision-makers in our organizations is going to be important. The other part that I would say is there's been talk, and I think this kind of goes back to your systemic question, but we know that access to capital is a big issue for diverse suppliers. It's not the main issue, but it can be an issue for some. And so when we are designing and thinking

about our procurement systems, we are a component of what we call the net now movement. So, how do we encourage faster payment terms for diverse suppliers? So, within Meta, usually, you submit an invoice. If you're a diverse supplier, you're tagged in our system. So that means that you get a faster payment terms than everyone else who's net 60, net 90, whatever your contract terms are. And so we recognize that that's important because of the quick turnaround that we need to put that money back into the hands of diverse suppliers because they don't have access to capital in that ways. So I've seen a lot more companies starting to join that movement, the net now movement of getting these faster payment terms for diverse suppliers and really advocating with their senior leaders that this is a change that needs to happen.

Phil Wagner

So my final question is for you, and perhaps you can put your public relations hat back on and really sell this to us. It's no secret there's a lot of diversity fatigue, and alarmingly, we're seeing that fatigue really being weaponized to push back against corporate diversity initiatives. So, I'm wondering if you have advice in your role. Final question here on how we can transform that diversity fatigue into something meaningful, maybe fostering an equitable, inclusive supply chain. I mean, you're all about this work, so sell what we might do with this in the years ahead.

Lamecia Butler

Yeah, I think if we keep the momentum that we have going when we are able to really continue to tell the stories, which will then allow people to have more opportunity and say, people, I mean, diverse suppliers, give them more opportunities to shine, to grow their businesses, to contribute to the economy even more. And that story alone, and if someone's tracking and watching that impact, that can fuel and continue to support. I think it's so important for people to find the champions, but not just find the champions, but promote the champions and tell their stories because everyone's looking at some point to be recognized. So, how do you keep people engaged and involved? I think that's part of it. You can't get tired. Unfortunately, it is a tough journey, but I think there's so much more. And with the more recent conversations we've been talking about, this is the moment to go deeper, to go harder, and to continue down the path that we're going.

Phil Wagner

So good. Thank you. This has been such a stellar conversation. I mean, you bring new insights to me. I walk away with greater clarity. I hope our listeners do, too. Let me say thank you so much for taking time to join Diversity Goes to Work. What a great conversation this was.

Lamecia Butler

Thank you for having me. It's been great.

Phil Wagner

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