



Raymond A. Mason School of Business

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LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS PODCAST

EPISODE 104: KEN BOUYER – WINNING THROUGH INCLUSIVENESS

Ken White

From the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, this is Leadership & Business. The podcast that brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world. We share the strategies, tactics, and information that can make you a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host Ken White. Thanks for listening. Three out of four companies say diversity and inclusion is a priority, but saying it and doing it effectively are two different things. One organization is out in front in terms of D&I is EY, also known as Ernst and Young. The multinational professional services firm and one of the big four accounting firms. For years EY has been committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce while making employees feel included and heard. Ken Bouyer is EY's Director of Inclusiveness Recruiting for the Americas. He leads the team that finds the best talent on college campuses and elsewhere. For Bouyer and EY, diversity and inclusion is a priority. And as the organization continues its efforts in this arena, it continues to experience success in many other areas as well. Bouyer joins us on the podcast today to discuss diversity and inclusion. Why EY makes the investment and what you and your organization can learn from it. Here's our conversation with EY's Ken Bouyer.

Ken White

Ken, thanks for being here. Busy day ahead, you'll be the keynote speaker at the student diversity symposium, and we'll talk about that in a minute, but welcome. Welcome to William & Mary.

Ken Bouyer

Well, thank you so much, Ken. It is great to be back on this beautiful campus.

Ken White

So your field, you are the Americas Director of Inclusiveness Recruiting. How did you get into that?

Ken Bouyer

It's a great question, and sometimes I still ask myself that you know a little bit of background. I'm actually an accountant, so I came into EY many, many years ago, a little over 27 years ago, in fact, as an auditor, and spent many years doing audit for the firm and many years in our consulting advisory practice before essentially being tapped on the shoulder to say hey we have this need and opportunity diversity space and we would love you to lead this effort. And so I jumped at the chance and so through happenstance through luck. But certainly, I am thrilled to be in this role. I absolutely love it. It's incredibly challenging, but I really applaud the firm for taking a position and wanting to move the needle in the diversity space.

Ken White

We tell our students all the time opportunity you just never know where you'll end up.

Ken Bouyer

So true.

Ken White

Yeah.

Ken Bouyer

I never would have literally an accounting major business major diversity. I never would have seen that in my future.

Ken White

Well, when you're going to college, it was a job that didn't exist right.

Ken Bouyer

That's very true.

Ken White

Yeah.

Ken Bouyer

You're dating me now.

Ken White

So what do you like most about it?

Ken Bouyer

What I love about is every day waking up thinking about how will I change and challenge the makeup of EY. That is a thrill. And I'm on the road a lot. I'm at a lot of universities. I will present at many conferences. I'll spend a lot of time with our clients. Believe it or not, speaking about diversity, they try to tap into EY's strategic direction, where we're fairly well known in the business world for being one of the leaders in diversity. So spending time with our clients who are either interested in setting up a program or devising a strategy or who want to take it to the next level. So I do a myriad of things, but every day I wake up thinking how will I change the makeup of EY. There's no greater feeling.

Ken White

Yeah, nice. There was, and I'm sure you've seen it, a LinkedIn study not long ago that surveyed companies, and the response was 78 percent of organizations say D&I is a priority. Is that true?

Ken Bouyer

Well, I would say yes. I'm sure they do feel it's a priority. But the question is, what are they doing frankly to address the issue? And so that's what as I go out and speak at conferences, you know, whether it's business conferences or industry conferences. I hear a lot of people talk a good game, frankly, Ken.

Ken White

Right.

Ken Bouyer

But really, as they say, the rubber meets the road with your investments, with your commitment, with your people that you have dedicated to really moving the needle, and I think that's still lacking in some institutions and some organizations.

Ken White

Sure, exactly why. Why I asked the question, you know when, when we talk to companies who in organizations who are involved, they say what I'll hear is we do it because we want to reflect our customer base. That makes sense. Some say we do it because it actually pays off. It affects the bottom line. Others say culture internal culture is improved. Those three. What do you think, all, some, none?

Ken Bouyer

I think all in some form or fashion certainly depends. Right. One diversity is really complex in and of itself. When you think about bringing different cultures and people and how you define diversity within your organization, I think at a baseline. You've got to figure that out.

And then you do have to start with the why right everything in life. I believe we have to start with why what's the purpose. Why do you want to do it? For they may want to reflect their business their customers, if you will. Some it is a cultural thing, and some it's just, you know, a business. Whatever the issue may be, I want to go into a new market. I want to expand globally. I don't have the people to understand how we operate business in China. You picked a country, so it could be all the above. But I do think you have to start with why. I think to jump into the pool without an understanding of why is this important to our business. I think you're going to have some challenges frankly moving a needle because you don't know what needle you're moving.

Ken White

And people aren't going to follow unless there's a reason and a strategy, of course.

Ken Bouyer

That is correct. Ken, I believe that you know on this issue there. Some people will start to invest because it's the quote-unquote right thing to do. But frankly, many people that doesn't move the needle for them. That's not why they're going to invest or commit time and effort to be engaged in diversity. So I think from a business perspective what, how will that make your business grow? How will it make it better? There's certainly an element of it's the right thing to do. I believe that, but not everyone may believe that concept. But how will it impact our business? Well, our business may grow 50 percent if we expand in a new market. If we go to Latin America. Where we have no idea on earth how to do business in Latin America, well, you may need to think about engaging folks who grew up there who know the culture. How do you expand? That can have an impact on your bottom line. Start with why. Why do you want to do an invest in D&I diversity and inclusion? I think that's a great place to be, and then you figure out how you make it work within your respective organization.

Ken White

And there are so many stories of companies and organizations that did go to a new market and made massive mistakes because they didn't have people from that culture on their own team.

Ken Bouyer

That's correct.

Ken White

I mean, there's all jokes and advertisements we've seen in the past and so forth.

Ken Bouyer

That's correct.

Ken White

How do you define diversity, and how do you define inclusion?

Ken Bouyer

Great question, and I think one for those of you out there who are thinking about working with an organization. You know that definition of diversity is incredibly broad. And I'll take you quickly through an evolution. I think with the firm, we've been at this for over 20 years at EY. In the early days, I'd say we just focus on this thing called Diversity, i.e., let's go out and recruit people into the organization who are just different. So it was really just about recruiting difference. We define it now and in back then, frankly was really what we call minorities right. So if you're African-American or Latino or Native American in some spots, if you're a woman, if we were short in certain spots in the firm, we would focus on those groups. Now it's much broader. It's veterans. It's people with disabilities. It's, frankly, the LGBT community. It's certainly all of the minority groups that we've talked about, but we also talk about things like diversity of thought and perspective. We talk about generational difference. So our definition has expanded greatly as it should because the other piece around inclusiveness, and this is where in my mind, the magic of diversity really happens. Diversity is the focus on difference in hiring different people and bringing different points of view. Inclusiveness, though, is how do you leverage those difference. Most organizations and we were guilty of this way back when. We would go out and just hire people who were different but wouldn't focus on the inclusiveness piece. So if you went out and hired me and I was different in your organization, but your expectation was I come in and be just like everyone else in that organization, you lose the power of that diversity. You lose the power of diversity of thought and perspective that I could bring to that organization based on my experiences in life. So the inclusiveness how you leverage the diversity is the magic of the whole D&I component, in my opinion.

Ken White

Right. Interesting. It's not easy, of course. I was just giving I was asked to give a talk the other day, and we were talking about communication, but it got onto multigenerational, and you had a number of baby boomers in the room. Unfortunately, there were a couple of millennials who felt really beat up, and they just rolled their eyes as soon as it came up. Those are massive differences, and sometimes there are groups that just won't give. So how do you build that culture that inclusivity where everybody is saying everybody's opinion counts, and this moves us?

Ken Bouyer

Yeah.

Ken White

How do you build that?

Ken Bouyer

This is huge for us. At EY, we have probably 67 percent of our total firm are millennials. Sixty-seven percent a huge number, right? But we have boomers, we have Xers, and we have so many different folks. You have to listen. You know, we have what we call people advisory forums. We bring together all those generational groups you talked about, and we sit around a room and have real frank conversations. I would give millennials a lot of credit in our firm for a number of things one. You know, about a year ago, we went to an all-jeans firm like, literally wearing jeans every day. You could do it. Certainly, you dress your client.

Ken White

Sure.

Ken Bouyer

But as a matter of policy, we said hey, you can wear jeans every single day. That was because our Millennials asked the question, and we listened. So I do think you know these groups, these generations have great ideas. We have to sometimes, as the older folks in the firm get out of their way. We certainly have a point of view. We bring it, but you have to listen. You have to have the right mechanism and modes that people can voice an opinion, and you do what's best for the organization, but you have to listen.

Ken White

And I think it's interesting how there are so many commonalities actually amongst all the groups.

Ken Bouyer

That's right.

Ken White

And we not don't necessarily think of that at first.

Ken Bouyer

That's right.

Ken White

We're all people.

Ken Bouyer

That's right.

Ken White

Right. And we are driven by the same thing.

Ken Bouyer

That's right. We want to be part of a purpose-driven organization like we are at EY. I just want to do a seamless plug. I know building a better working world is kind of our tagline if you will, and how we live and whether it's with our clients or within our communities, we have to build a better working world. Purpose-driven and millennials are a big part of it. The Xers, the boomers. That's what we're about. And that's what we do every single day.

Ken White

We'll continue our conversation with Ken Bouyer in just a minute. Leadership & Business is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. Once again, the Center for Corporate Education is offering its popular certificate in business management program in April. It's a five-day experience designed for the working professional who wants a better understanding of business. Each day is devoted to one business-related topic, including communication, operational effectiveness, strategy, managerial accounting, and leadership. The five core topics taught in our highly ranked MBA program. To learn more about the certificate in business management, visit wmleadership.com. Now back to our conversation with Ken Bouyer.

Ken White

How have you changed over the years the way you recruit new talent?

Ken Bouyer

Yeah. Part of this recruitment process is when you think about very specialized majors that we hire, and we hire a broad spectrum of majors from engineering, believe it or not, turning to accounting, business, finance, economics majors, and the like information systems. But what we have to do in some of those areas there are many groups that are still underrepresented. Right. So if you think about the broad definition of STEM, science, technology, engineering, math. When we look at and do our scans, there are a lot of women who are not or young women who are not choosing that STEM field as a major. So as a firm, we're investing in the high school level. And frankly, even the middle school level. And how do we build pipeline? So when you think about diversity when you have to define what it means your organization. You have to find out where are your differences and where are you lacking and short in certain areas. And what we've decided to do as a

firm, one of the many things we do around diversity, is to help build pipeline. So by investing at the high school level, bringing our people and experts to talk about what it means to have a career at EY or in professional services, and then trying to change the makeup of people who come into a William & Mary or you would ever university and major in accounting or becoming an engineering major how do we shape the makeup. Well, you've got to go earlier. That's one way we've changed and evolved our recruitment strategy at the firm.

Ken White

That's big because you're not going to win everyone. I mean, this is a major investment with not probably a huge return at first, but maybe the industry will see it.

Ken Bouyer

We're planting trees, Ken. I like planting trees, and you know we have great recruiters and a great firm. We'll get our fair share. But we ultimately, all of us have to plant trees somewhere for the greater good. It's about the greater good in this one.

Ken White

And have you been to high schools yourself?

Ken Bouyer

I have. Every year I've been in many high schools. In fact, not too long ago was, that I went to grew up in New York City in Queens Holy Cross High School, I spoke about my career. I'm often in high schools. I often go to high school programs over the summer. If I had a lot more time, I could tell you about them, but I am there. I've even been in some middle schools. Next, we're gonna go to the baby wards at hospitals talking about the professor.

Ken White

That's a young age to be talking about career. What kind of reactions do you get?

Ken Bouyer

Yeah, we don't we play games, and we hand out a lot of things, but we talk about accounting in a way that they can relate. You know, we hope we would pick, like, for example, I'll pick a cartoon, and I'll speak to how do you think the cartoon is made and how where do you get money from. I try to break it down in terms of things they can relate to. I talk about brands. So we have a lot of clients who are well-known brands, Starbucks. I'll give an example Starbucks, so I'll bring a Starbucks cup, and I'll talk about the value of Starbucks but how we at EY help Starbucks, how we've consulted with certain organizations. So brands that they can relate to, and I talk about the quote-unquote

behind-the-scenes stuff that they don't see right. That's how we hopefully will reach them because they can understand in terms of brands.

Ken White

Great.

Ken Bouyer

So that's what we do.

Ken White

Now you're going to actually in about an hour we're recording on Friday, February 16th, here in the morning. I've got the agenda in front of me. Pretty soon a couple hours, you'll be the keynote speaker at the student diversity symposium, and thank you to you and Ernst and Young for helping us put this all together. We're you going to talk about?

Ken Bouyer

Yeah. No, it's our pleasure. You know, certainly, the Mason School here is so important to us. We have hired so many great people we have terrific alumni, and so I try to come back whenever I can. Forget about the beauty of the campus but certainly the quality of the people. I'm going to talk about a number of things. One, I'll talk about what it means to have unconscious bias. I actually think when you think about in terms of diversity, appreciating and respecting difference is really important as you go on this diversity journey. And so one things we speak about in the firm often is this thing called unconscious bias. We all bring a bias to the workplace, and we all bring a bias to the university, and sometimes bias is okay. But it's important to recognize that we all have a bias and how do we pause before we make a decision. Why should we pause before we make that comment? And I think a lot of people are really not understanding that we have a bias. But again, how do we tackle that? Certainly, at the university level, I firmly believe this is the right place to have true and real discussion around difference. I'm different. Let's talk about where you grew up, how you grew up what religion you practice. Let's just have great dialogue. We may not agree on the issue, but we should be able to sit across the table and have true dialogue. And I think if we're going to make a difference in diversity, frankly just for the nation, we have to respect one another. We don't always have to agree, but we should be able to have dialogue. I want to encourage students to learn, to ask questions, to diversify teams, and working on group projects. Those are some of the concepts that I'll speak about today.

Ken White

Do you see a difference in in the older generations in terms of the bias they bring compared to the millennials? I do. I think they're more accepting than maybe their parents and grandparents were. What do you see?

Ken Bouyer

It's interesting. Not in all cases. You know, I think this could be another podcast. But I think as you think about the current environment, and I'm on a lot of campuses around the country, I hear, unfortunately, about some of the incidents that are happening now, whether that's a nation a notion of social media and the reporting aspect we're hearing about these things more frequently. There certainly tends to be a lot more of these incidents in quotes on campus. So there was a point time where I felt that the younger generation grew up with more diversity were more accepting. I'm not always so sure, and I'm a pretty optimistic guy. So I think this work that universities need to do to tackle this issue, to be open about it, to have discussions on it. And I think we have to continue to do that because I don't think we've won this race by any stretch.

Ken White

So as you talk to students or anyone in terms of D&I, what advice do you give them in terms of accepting and understanding that boy, we can, we can really win as an organization, as teams, and as individuals when we do this?

Ken Bouyer

Yeah. My message will be, students, you have to, for all of us, frankly, develop what I call a global mindset. There's a lot of research out there on global mindset. What does that mean if you go out and you can Google it? It talks about specific competencies in developing a global mindset. It's things like, you know, cultural competence and cultural dexterity, if you will, but a lot of it has to do with how do you do business around the world for professional services firm like EY. We have clients that are global in nature, for sure. And I personally have been on audits or consulting engagements around the world and growing up in New York City. I vividly remember my first trip to China. And I would tell you that I brought a New York-centric mindset to the client, which wasn't ideal but really, through that experience, I recognized the biases that I had and how much I needed to develop my quote-unquote global mindset, not this was the early 90s. The firm is laser-focused on this now, but for all of us out there, and certainly students, you think about the students who are sitting next to you from other parts of the world, the country even. Do you have real conversations with those students? Do you understand what holidays they celebrate? Why do they eat those foods, and how does your culture work? But having real conversations, I think that's going to be huge. So developing this thing called a global mindset and students can practice that every single day. You can read. You can watch the BBC you can you know go on certain websites. Get out of a US-centric mindset because if

you want to be successful, you know a successful business leader, a successful entrepreneur, you have to understand how business operates outside of Virginia, outside of the US, and frankly out and about in the world.

Ken White

That's our conversation with Ken Bouyer, and that's our podcast for this week. Leadership & Business is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. The Center for Corporate Education can help you, and your organization meet and exceed your goals with business and leadership development programs that fit your needs and get results. If you are interested in learning more, visit our website at wmleadership.com. Also, if you have any feedback or suggestions pertaining to the podcast, we'd love to hear from you. Email us at podcast@wm.edu. Thanks to our guest this week Ken Bouyer. And thanks to you for joining us. I'm Ken White. Until next time have a safe, happy, and productive week.