

FRAUD TALK – EPISODE 108

Accountability at All Levels

Deidra Jackson, founder and manager of Opus Strategies, discusses the intersection of compliance, ethics and culture when building a diversity, equity and inclusion program within an organization. She shares actionable advice and real-life examples of how to not just check the boxes, but make a real and lasting shift in company culture.

Transcript

Courtney Howell: Hello and welcome to *Fraud Talk*. I'm Courtney Howell, community manager at the ACFE. Today, our guest is Deidra Jackson. Deidra is the founder and managing partner of Opus Strategies, a public affairs firm that provides expert guidance for clients across many different industries, regions and sectors. Thank you for joining us today, Deidra.

Deidra Jackson: Thank you for having me, Courtney.

Courtney: All right, so today, we'll be focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging within the anti-fraud profession. Before we dig in too much into that topic, could you give us the scoop on Opus Strategies? How would you describe your firm?

Deidra: Absolutely, Courtney. Opus Strategies is a strategic communications firm. We have clients that we provide a variety of communication services for. Everything from public to media relations, crisis communications, advocacy. Anything that falls underneath the government relations umbrella, including regulatory work.

As well as we support a lot of education and workforce development, career readiness initiatives across the country. In general, we on the front end provide external affairs for our clients, and then also, internally, we help them with a lot of recruiting efforts. It could be marketing from workplace experiences that range from middle school to higher ed.

Also, as we talk about that career readiness and that workforce development system, incorporating a lot of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives within their work as well.

Courtney: Awesome. Now, we had talked a little bit before this. I know you have a pretty interesting and unique story about how you came to be where you are today, so I was wondering if you could share that with us.

Deidra: Sure, sure. Well, I started my career, I would say — Well, I don't want to start just with my professional career. I have to give a lot of credit to my internships that I had while I was in college at Howard University. For my freshman year, I had an amazing career counselor my freshman year that told me I needed to start interning immediately during the school year every summer, just to get a good sense of what I wanted to do, understand what industries were out there, and how communications plays a part in pretty much all of them.

From journalism to corporate communications to government relations to even in the educational space, with speech pathology and communication. You do that in your freshman year. By the time you get to your senior year,

you have a great understanding of career opportunities that are out there. I was grateful for that advice and solely took advantage of all of those opportunities.

From there, let's see ... BASF, which is the largest chemical company in the world, hired me to manage their communications and government affairs program. We built it from literally, I don't want to say scratch, but it was almost scratch. I had an amazing team and leadership team that I reported to. They literally supported me doing some great innovative things.

When we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion, I was fortunate to have two great people for the site management and for the government affairs function to really allow me to use my voice and to do some great things during those few years. I think the interesting part of the story, which you were alluding to, is how I started my own firm.

I was having a conversation with the person that I was reporting to at the time. He told me that he really, I don't want to say could not do anything for my career, but the way the company was set up was that the technical careers were... They have a scale. You get promotions. You move up to another role. The communications professions, not so much. They're very flat. You can stay there for a long time, get promotions, but your role may still be the same. There may be some opportunities internationally, but it's pretty much the same role and you just grow in it and continue to be there for a while.

During that time, he had noticed a lot some things that I was doing externally. I would say at the time, like with trade associations, government affairs that the whole industry got to benefit from. I like that work, quite honestly.

I can sit in an office all day, but I really like to get out with the people, and I like to make change and big change when I'm there. Again, the support from the people that were around me, allowing me to just really get my hands dirty with those things, and giving me the time and the space and the resources, financial resources to do that was very impactful.

From there, he said, "Deidra, I really see the benefits of your work. You're just better outside of the company," in summary. I remember at the time thinking am I on candid camera? Whose boss says this to them? I talked to a couple of friends outside of the company that had communications firm, government relations firms, someone I really trusted, C.J. Blache, who had been a lobbyist in Louisiana for a very, very long time.

Rodney Braxton. Again, people that were senior to me that have been doing this for a long time. I confided in them. I asked them, "Here's the situation, what would you do?" Both of them, unequivocally, with no pause or anything say, "Do it. Take it." I remember C.J. saying to me, "Do you think you can do it? Do you think that you can go out and get clients? Who do you believe in?"

I said, "I believe in myself."

I think at that time, he said, "Okay, well, let's go."

It's all he needed to hear. With that, I shortly went back and said, "Okay, I'll do it."

That relationship went from being internal to the company, they were my first client. That was how I was able to build my firm in 2013 and continue to build since then. In October of this year, it will be eight years that Opus Strategies has been a communications firm. We have had with the economy some slow times, and some times that are extremely busy, busy, busy.

That is my story. Probably a little bit nonconventional, but it's been the journey that I've appreciated, and the slow growth has been amazing for us. I am fortunate to do what I love and to be able to do it with my own voice.

Courtney: I love that. When we talked about it earlier, something that really stood out to me and that you mentioned just now is that your boss told you, “Hey, I see you exceeding outside of the company,” and having that sort of belief and support and motivation to take a risk is rare. I just think it’s really cool and that you actually went for it. That you’re like, “You know what? I can do this,” because career changes are scary no matter how prepared you feel.

Deidra: Sure.

Courtney: Well, you also touched on the mentors that you had at the beginning. I really want to come back to that a little bit later.

Deidra: Yes.

Courtney: But something that I think you mentioned that kind of leads me into our main topic today — diversity, equity and inclusion — is the courage, because I do think it takes courage to speak on these things. It takes courage to make a shift in company culture. So I want to just jump right in and start off on the broad high-level area, because in the ACFE and in the anti-fraud profession in general, we often talk about tone at the top.

Which I’m sure you and many of our members will automatically know what I’m talking about, but just in case some of our listeners haven’t heard that term, it’s basically the idea that the leaders in a company really set the tone for a company’s culture, and whatever behavior they’re modeling that’s what’s going to trickle down into the rest of the organization. Kind of starting there...

I think it’s really an integral part of building an ethical culture and building a diverse, inclusive culture. I see a lot of crossover between that idea and then our main topic today of DEI. Just to start out, I would like to hear from you, what does DEI look like at a broad organizational level. What are you seeing and what are some areas that you see as successful?

Deidra: Sure. I would say DEI holistically, we have seen DEI is not new. Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are not new. You think back and you think about the history of where this comes from. It comes from the 1960s, right after the Civil Rights Act. How do we, from federal policy, how do we change all of the policies that were discriminatory, horrific in this country. How do we do this on paper because this is how it starts because it’s our federal law. As we can see, now we’re in 2021, and these laws have been on the books since 1964.

Then we see what has happened from there until now. We have to start there. I just wanted to make that point about historically this didn’t just happen last year and let’s pay attention to it. This has been in existence for decades. Then when you qualify that, like what is this? What are these initiatives and why are they necessary?

It comes from that history. It comes from why companies, governments, institutions have to pay attention to how they are treating people from all races, all ethnicities, and genders for that matter. When I think about DEI efforts, and I will speak to the most current ones, I see that people are being a bit more intentional as it relates to what that is individually for their organization and for their company.

For instance, I see a shift over the last almost twelve months or so. Prior to that, I would say like when I started my career in the ‘90s, we would see diversity efforts, and it would be painted with one brush across the board, whether it would be towards races, ethnicities, males, females, what have you. Now, I am starting to see, and I hope it is because of just the evolution of where we are, that all of these people that are doing it well are not painting it with one brush.

People that are doing it well are doing things like, “Okay, well, let’s have initiatives for Black people. Let’s have initiatives for Latinx. Let’s have initiatives for females. Let’s have initiatives for Asian-Pacific Islanders, what have you.” Being able to implement a great DEI strategy is being able to understand cultures, being able to understand

what's your North Star in your organization, where you are, where you want to be, and devise a plan, a strategy to get there.

Overall, to answer your question, that's what these efforts should look like. They should look like that, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's just good business, no matter what industry you're in. There will be people that are superstars and rock stars that have been really working on it every year, having internal champions. You talked about the top-down before.

Your efforts will not work if it's not, I will say, a company culture, and if the leadership does not demand and make sure and hold leaders accountable to the efforts that they are creating. In a nutshell, Courtney, I think that would be my definition of what diversity, equity and inclusion efforts are today.

Courtney: I love that. I like how you broke it up into where it all started. Probably it was even...

Deidra: Oh, I've been on that.

Courtney: ...going on before that.

Deidra: You have to understand this is not just some new compliance for the day because everyone got upset last year. No, this has been going on for a very, very long time. I would say we, as a country, have been doing a poor job at it, and not just in the workplace. It happens in education, health care, banking, economic development, all of these things. It's across the board.

Courtney: Definitely. Also, we have a pretty global audience, or membership. I know that just like this isn't new for us here in the U.S., it's also echoing all throughout the world. I think pretty much everyone is taking a really close look at what they have been doing and where, like you said, finding that North Star and envisioning where they want to go moving forward.

With that in mind and thinking about the work that you do, what are some of the things that when you're working with an organization, what would you typically recommend for organizations who are actively trying to improve and build this type of culture?

Deidra: I would say two things. One, you have to look at it in its entirety in your organization. You can't just fix one piece of it in one functional area and let the other ones just take a pass at it. It has to be across the whole organization because for the most part, there are interdependencies within those organizations that everyone has to, if not report up, they're reporting sideways, diagonally. So everything works together like one big machine.

When we are going to assess an organization and helping them on different levels, operationally or from a communications perspective, there are typically four targets that we look at. We always start with employees. We always start with recruiting, mentorship, professional development.

Look at if there are any existing diversity, equity and inclusion practices that have been implemented since you're onboarding an employee, and what happens if you're doing annual evaluations, performance evaluations, whether it relates to the task at hand. One of those tasks should include diversity, equity and inclusion, particularly when you're dealing with management.

Also, from a procurement standpoint, when you're recruiting vendors, when you're working with other organizations outside that help your company run, how are you recruiting these employees? If they are a minority-owned business, if they are a veterans-owned business, if they are woman-owned business, how are you helping these companies that traditionally have been underrepresented, marginalized, help them to succeed?

What type of programs that you have in place or metrics to ensure that you're being equitable, that you're being fair? Also, the next one would be I would say an expansion of accountability. It should not just lie with your board

of directors. It should not just lie with your C-suite executives. It should lie with every person that is within your organization, and that should be... when we talk about some of those challenges of making sure that these efforts work, making sure that they're sustainable, that is the key reason why they're not sustainable.

For instance, people lose jobs and they travel and relocate. You don't want to have like three champions that are champions for diversity, equity inclusion in a company of like 10,000 people. If those three people go somewhere, then what happens to their initiatives? They need to be embedded in the structure and it needs to be known that this is something that's important to us.

We need to do a better job every day. I always tell my clients, "You can never do enough. Like you can never say, "Oh, we've made it," and, "Yay, gold star for us." No, there's always more work to do. That just comes from how I'm driven as a person. I'm always trying to outdo myself. You know what I mean? Like trying to do better. If there's something else that I want to do, how can I do this, how can I do this better? Continuing education and learning is very key for me in all aspects of my life. That's another piece of it, just expanding that accountability across the whole organization.

Then you think about how do you do that. We have exercises and really tough conversations of being able to tie metrics to these efforts. I talked earlier about performance evaluations and things of that nature, where it's not just that for the function, the role that you're in, but being able to measure and reward for diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

How do we do that? How do we measure that? How do we embed that into our human resources function, into our... instead of compensation for some high-level... or I would say leadership roles within a company. They get bonuses for other things. They should be getting bonuses for creating diverse teams and mentoring and providing opportunities for employees that traditionally have not had that opportunity to be included in advancements.

This is what that looks like when you talk about that expansion of accountability and the leadership creating a culture across the whole organization. Then lastly, really making significant policies to encourage inclusion, not just lip service, not just words, but really making them policies. There are repercussions for those policies, and being very, very strong about that zero tolerance for a lot of things that I have experienced, all of us have experienced, and just setting a very, very clear example from the top of how things should operate within this company.

It's just looking through things, Courtney, with a different lens. It takes work on everybody's part to do that. Just every individual can make a change every day. I like to tell people... I think we spoke about this earlier when we talked about the massive philanthropy that's happening over the last year, billions and billions of dollars from large corporations, foundations organizations, to speak to racial justice, inequities across the board.

It's needed, no question, but if you think about the amount of money that it takes to just do the right thing every day and to make changes in how you act and your mindset, that's free. You can do that every minute, every hour, every day. Just do better. I shy away from projects that are very well-funded, but I see that they don't have the structure and the sustainability to make maximum impact.

Without those individual changes and that ownership and that accountability on all levels, it is money down the drain. I encourage not only do you put the resources behind you because you must have that. I've seen, unfortunately, a lot of roles that have been created: chief diversity officer, VP of diversity, equity and inclusion. When I talked to some of these people that are in these roles, they may be embedded inside of an HR function. They may not have a budget to go along with their role.

If you are taking these roles, if you are creating these roles within your organization, it is important — I cannot stress enough how important it is — to provide the support that those individuals need or those departments need to actually do their job and to do their job well. It's just, again, good business sense.

Courtney: So many good nuggets in there. I found myself coming up with a lot of questions that I wanted to ask to dig in even deeper. I think maybe to start with, we could talk about... because you're talking about you need resources, but you also need to have the culture side of it as well. I think something that a lot of organizations might get tripped up on is creating a list of things that they should do in order to be in compliance.

Yet, they're still not creating that culture where people do feel comfortable and people do feel safe and people feel welcome to voice concerns or have tough conversations. How can you make sure that it's not just checking off the boxes, but you're actually making progress in the culture and shift?

Deidra: From a leadership perspective, it is very difficult to make decisions and planning and create strategies on this topic without having a diverse team. That's the biggest. There's no way you can create a strong diversity program if you have a team that is not diverse. You have to include people that are from a certain background, have had certain experiences to be able to help and shape what that looks like for your organization.

I even go so far as to include, in all of the efforts that I do, speaking to people throughout the organization. I want to speak to everyone, from the administrative assistant to the janitorial service to the procurement office, to the accountant, every nook and cranny of an organization to understand... Well, first of all, it takes trust. You have to establish trust with people so they will speak freely to you and they will be honest.

When you do that, you will be surprised at the feedback that you receive. Fortunately, I have had great leadership that has encouraged me to do that. Any given time, you will see me speaking to everyone in the building. Just getting intelligent information and seeing how I can make things better across the board. If you do things in a silo, you will always fail.

I have encouraged my clients not to do that. A lot of pushback sometimes. Oh no, we don't want to talk to that group. We don't want to talk to them, and I'm like, okay, well, you're just wasting your money. What are you doing here? If you really want to change something, if you really want to create something that's sustainable and change this structure and this culture, then this is what has to happen.

I would say, Courtney, first of all to avoid that, you include diversity within those decision-making processes. If you're dealing with a vendor, be sure that you have done your due diligence on who these people are, just as individuals personally, but also their success at creating these types of programs. Just dig a little deeper, unpack it a bit. I've seen a lot of shops pop up in the last few months.

Now we're a diversity, equity and inclusion consultant, and that's great because it's a new industry, and people can do very well in it. But you also need to, I would say, make sure that who you are hiring, if you are hiring someone externally to do the work, make sure that that team, particularly the leadership team, is reflective of the message and the mission that you are trying to incorporate within your organization.

Meaning, to be specific. If they don't have any Black people on their leadership team, that's probably a red flag. If they don't have any Hispanic people, if they don't have any females. I don't mean one, or one here or there, I mean, your team just looks really diverse. Apparently, they get it right within their own organization, so the chances that they'll be successful with yours are way higher than if they don't. I always encourage that.

Courtney: Yes, absolutely. Got to practice what you preach.

Deidra: Absolutely. We all do.

Courtney: Yes, exactly. Another thing that you had mentioned that I am interested in, and I also think many of our listeners and members would be interested in, and you touched on it a little bit earlier, is about how every single person in the organization can make a difference, can do things right now today to help support DEI at their organization.

What are some things that you would recommend, some steps or just actions or things people should start thinking about if they're actively trying to make a change within themselves in a career, professional side of things?

Deidra: I would say the number one thing, and I just encourage this in general, is to be a better listener than you are a talker. I see a lot of times in settings, particularly in, I would say, the industries that a lot of your members are part of, which would be accountancies, federal government, law enforcement, law, auditing, financial services. A lot of those industries are primarily, I would say, if you look at the makeup of the leadership, they kind of look the same.

They would probably be male. A lot of them would probably be white males. We talked about the history. Going back to like the 1960s. It is not lost that if you are used to being in a room with people that look like you every day, you act in a certain way, you move in a certain way. You're just accustomed to that. Then all of a sudden, here come all of these diversity initiatives that we actually have to pay attention to now, and we have to incorporate this into our lives.

The way we are used to working, some things you just can't say. Like some things you are... "I don't understand why this was offensive." As these exercises and these activities are happening throughout your workplace, or you just may be reading new things, watching new movies, just understanding things that are going on around you because they're current events, is just to really listen. Don't talk, don't debate, but really listen to what people that are different than you are saying as to why they feel this way.

Why things are so exhausting to them every day. How they have to really put a lot of those things in the drawer when they come to work, and then be a whole different person, and then carry all of this weight of what's going on around them, perform 100%, and then come home and just be cognizant of that. That when you see a Black or Hispanic person or an Asian-Pacific Islander come in the room, most of the time they don't just come into a workplace without carrying a lot of pressure, anxiety with them when they come into a work environment.

Being able to listen. When we're in meetings all the time, we are probably sick of so many Zoom meetings that we've had to be on over the last year or so, we all share that. That's not a diversity, equity and inclusion issue. That's just across the board. I think that being able to check yourself sometimes. Your opinion, while it's important, other people have opinions based on what they have lived, what their experience is, and it matters.

Being empathetic of that, understanding that everybody's viewpoint has value, and making sure that you're including that in your work product. Making sure you're including that in your initiatives, or engagements that you're working on, and being very intentional about it. Some of my most amazing experiences are with people that have seen me in a room, let's say we're in a conference room with 20 people, and they have intentionally called on me.

I may be the only woman in the room, I may be the only Black person in the room, and that man intentionally called on me because he wanted to let other people know that I had something to say. It was going to add value to the conversation. Furthermore, adding value to whatever we were working on into the organization.

So that's intentional. When we talk about those individual choices that we make, the mindset shifts that we need to create. People don't have to do that. They do it on purpose and they do it for a reason. When we talk about leadership, leadership is not easy. Leadership is hard. Leadership is doing things that go against the grain sometimes for the better good.

If each of us could do that, just say do something once a day that is something unconventional, something that will probably upset a lot of the people in the room, but it's the right thing to do, imagine how much we could accomplish if everyone just gets in the custom of not being afraid, not thinking about what people will say, but you know in your heart, it's the right thing to do. It only takes one person to change lives.

I am here because not only do I have an amazing family and I've had amazing teachers and professors, but I have great people that have been able, throughout my career, that have done that for me. I'm able to exceed, excel, and I make it a point to do that for other people that are coming behind me.

Courtney: That's beautiful. I really liked that you finished that by sharing areas where you get that strength and that determination to just keep doing what you believe to be true and what you know will make change. I guess something for me to take away from that is like finding that North Star that you mentioned earlier and just like really sticking to that. When those uncomfortable moments do arise, thinking about that, grounding myself in that, and then just making my actions align with it

Deidra: All of that comes from, Courtney, when we talk about mentorship. When you enter a new organization, traditionally it has to do with your network. If you are coming from an underrepresented population, where you don't have the same network as other people have. You haven't had people to sit down with you on the golf course and say, well hey, this is how you do this, this is how you do that.

You're just coming in blind, just on your merits and on your hard work. That's one thing. To succeed and to truly transcend what you are supposed to be doing there and creating a whole new environment, you have to have a support system on the inside to coach you, to mentor you. If you don't, again, I can't stress enough, if you don't come from that background, it is difficult to create. It has to be created.

You have to have people on the inside that can pick you up when you've had a bad meeting or you made a mistake. These things, they're very fluid, so embedding that into the culture from a cultural perspective because we all learn differently, we all have different experiences. It makes all of the difference, *all* of the difference.

From recruiting to advancement to supplier diversity, all of those nuggets we spoke on earlier, you will start to see the impact of those small touches throughout that whole cycle of recruiting and onboarding and bringing someone in to make sure that those people succeed.

You're setting them up for something bigger than they could probably ever imagine. When they have that, they in turn, turn around and do that for other people, like I was speaking about my own experience. If I had not had that, I wouldn't know what that was.

Courtney: I like that we brought it back to mentoring and recruiting. What are — if you have any things that you've seen off the top of your head — some unique ways that you see organizations recruiting, whether it's employees or vendors like you were saying, just some unique strategies that you've seen out there.

Deidra: First of all, I can't stress enough how early people in this field can start that recruiting pipeline, if you will. You can really start as early as, I would say, probably middle school.

Courtney: I heard you say that earlier. I was like, "Oh, they go early."

Deidra: Yeah yeah, like super early. We're probably the only country that starts kind of late on this thing. When you look at like Europe, other countries of that nature, they have apprenticeship programs to where they are speaking with you about careers and coaching, just from an aptitude perspective, or things you may like to do, at a very early age. Like 10, 11, 12 years old.

We're one of the countries that, and it irritates me to no end, but we do well in foreign languages, but most people in other countries, they speak by the time they're in high school, they're speaking four or five languages by the time they get out. By the time they become in adult. All of that plays into diversity. All of that plays into appreciating someone else's culture and understanding it.

I think of that early integration and introduction to careers, particularly in this field when you talk about things that are as specialized as fraud detection, prevention, compliance issues, laws, policies to that nature in the industries

that your members work in. I can tell you that there's always room for improvement in most career fields, but particularly in this career field that you probably won't learn about until you get maybe to college.

Just think about if you could, when you think about your pipeline 5, 10, 20 years from now, and you're saying, "Oh, we have a shortage of forensic accountants, or we have a shortage of this." Just think if kids were introduced to how cool that could be when they are in middle school, in high school, and then they start taking specific classes that will help to train them. To do this in their post-secondary life, it would be amazing.

Those are things that can be done, such as just visiting schools and speaking about what I do. Creating programs with your local, just community support organizations. When you talk about diversity, equity and inclusion, working with organizations such as maybe The Boys and Girls Club, or talking to different churches that have after-school programs.

There are countless opportunities to where you can go and find minority students that are excited about learning and introducing them to other pathways for success. Working with HBCUs is a huge one that is overlooked. HBCUs traditionally are not as well-funded as predominantly white institutions. Not that the kids aren't as bright and as smart, it's just that it comes down to funding, exposure and companies that are innovative and progressive that can go and say I want to partner with these universities. I want to create internships and fellowships with these students because they are being overlooked. That is a huge, successful educational system that has been overlooked traditionally, but I think now we are seeing how powerful and how strong they are and where you can certainly start to partner and create some programs to help with your diversity, equity inclusion efforts as it relates to recruiting.

When you talk about supplier diversity and vendor management, I believe that there are some companies that have done a tremendous job. What they have done is they have said, they've made accountability with metrics and in performance. Here's where we are, here's where we want to be, here's the timeline that we want to be there. Particularly when you're working with minority companies, we talked about the structural inequities as it relates to financial services and funding.

I would probably not be wrong in saying that it is very difficult for a lot of minority businesses to get funding in certain areas as it relates to business. If that funding was available, if alternative types of funding were available for those businesses, if companies would partner with these institutions to create these avenues, you would see a rise in minority entrepreneurship.

You would see mentorships that really make sense when you're trying to teach a smaller company how to become a larger company, how to not fall for certain pitfalls that you may fall for, because they've done it, they've been able to recover. That can save a lot of money. Being able to set those goals from a vendor management perspective. Being able to create metrics and evaluate those metrics on an annual basis and being able to stick to it.

Like I say, constantly improve. If we're going to say we're going to have 30% minority businesses that we are working with, can we increase that? How is this going? How can we better mentor? How can we better set these companies up for success? Those are some of the ways right off the top that you can make some quick transitions, some quick decisions on who to partner with to help you meet your goals in those two areas, and also to create some just sustainable, lasting partnerships that are going to...

Again, diversity is great for business. You will see being able to strategically do things that don't cost a lot up front. You know what I mean? It's just making different decisions and doing things in a more innovative way. Those are some very high-level and quick things, adjustments that can be made in a short time period that can help you meet your diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Courtney: I just looked at the clock and saw that we're almost out of time. So I wanted to finish with one last question and just ask you, is there anything that I didn't think to ask you that you would like to share? Basically, what do you want our listeners to walk away with today?

Deidra: Two things. We talked about those four points — I'll repeat them — that you can really kind of categorize your diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. That comes in the recruiting bucket, number one. Two, expanding that accountability across your organization. Three, embedding your efforts into the entire company and how the company thinks.

That's setting people up for success by teaching them how to look at diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in a different way. Not just as a compliance thing, but as how this is how we will move moving forward. Here's *why*, educating people on why this is important, and showing them ways to do that. You can't tell someone to do it and you don't equip them with the tools they need to get things done.

Then lastly, making those significant policies that will encourage diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, and doing it strongly, boldly, and doing it from the top. What was the next question? Sorry.

Courtney: No worries. I was asking what you wanted people to walk away with, and you said you had two things, and I think that was your first thing that you wanted to share.

Deidra: Yes, that was one. Secondly, is not discounting the individual efforts that everyone can do every day. That doesn't have to be a part of a plan. It's just being a better person, listening. Remember, I spoke about listening instead of talking. Listening more. That's why we have two ears and one mouth.

It's amazing what you can learn when you listen, and really understanding that we have so much more in common than we have different, and understanding that that's a strength and not a deficiency.

It's not me against you. It is we are both dynamic, we are both amazing, we are both very different, and that's a great thing. Moving forward in that spirit, it's just your organization, your association, your company will be better for it. Quite frankly, it is where the world is moving and has been moving for a very long time, so it's exciting to see what will come with all of this renewed interest in diversity, equity and inclusion, and I'm excited to see it and be a part of it.

Courtney: Thank you so much, Deidra, for speaking with us today. It's been a joy. I just have tons of ideas based off everything that you've said today. I hope that our members and our listeners do as well. I'm sure that they will.

And thank *you*, listeners, for tuning in today. You can find this episode of *Fraud Talk* by visiting [ACFE.com/podcast](https://www.acfe.com/podcast), or wherever you listen to podcasts. This is Courtney Howell, signing off.