

How Diversity and Inclusion Work Improves Hybrid Teams






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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, conversations, dni, diversity, organization, inclusion, leaders, important, create, space, belonging, feel, question, companies, folks, learning, acknowledge, equity, world, co host

SPEAKERS

Ginny Bianco-Mathis, Mitch Simon

-  Mitch Simon 00:10
Welcome to another episode of Team anywhere where CEOs, leaders and experts are building teams, companies, organizations,
-  Ginny Bianco-Mathis 00:20
and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world. I'm your co host on the East Coast, Judy Bianca Mathis,
-  Mitch Simon 00:28
and I'm your co host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us team anywhere.
-  00:42
Diversity,
-  Mitch Simon 00:43
Equity and Inclusion is a commitment. It's a way of being in a way of leading. It's the continual commitment to make it safer, have better conversations, deeper conversations, and continually raise awareness of the different experience all of us are having today and Marie's router, an expert on diversity, equity and inclusion shares with us how to make your organization more caring, more empathetic, and more inclusive. As you team anywhere.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 01:12

Welcome to another episode of Team anywhere. I'm your co host, Ginni bianco, Mathis on the East Coast. And I am here with my wonderful co host, Mitch Simon on the West Coast. And today, we're excited to have a very distinguished guest. And I've been wanting to have her here for some time, and also to attack this issue, especially as we're looking at hybrid and virtual and what's happening in the world these days. And that person is Anne Marie shouter. And she is going to talk to us today about diversity and inclusion in today's environment. She's the author of being brown in a black and white world keeps going conversations for leaders on race, racism, and by logging our right. She has spent 20 years researching and working in this area. So she's gone through many different phases. And she works with organizations and trying to create sorry, healthy workplaces, communities, with leaders and the teams and the people themselves. Welcome. And, Marie,



02:33

thank you so much. It's great to be here with both of you to

M

Mitch Simon 02:37

welcome Emery it's always great to have Canadians on the podcast, Jenny.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 02:42

Oh, all right. All right, how wherever memory all and you are still in Canada, right? She normally goes back and forth between Canada and Barbados.



02:52

Wow. Reason life? Not your reason. Right. Right.

G


Ginny Bianco-Mathis 02:57


Okay, so let us begin. Where are we we usually begin with a lot of our interviews during this phase of the world of work. And that is a very tumultuous two years. What have you learned through this journey?





03:15


Hmm. You know, my, my biggest learning I could I would two things, one, how connected we all are, you know, and I and at the beginning of the pandemic, I was really hoping that our understanding of our oneness, and our connectedness would increase. I was really I was hoping for that. And I think in some ways it has, but not, not as much as I thought it would, for whatever reason. The other thing that I've learned personally, is that, you know, no surprise, we have very little control. You know, how that phrase humankind plans, and God laughs


 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 03:56
have you? Yeah, well, that's,


 03:57
that's I've had that tucked away in my mind for the last year because because of COVID, we made plans, and then we couldn't and you know, we went like you said, we went to Barbados, there was locked down. We didn't expect that there was a volcano in St. Vincent. We didn't expect that. Back in person. We didn't expect that we couldn't come home for a while. We, you know, so I think my my big personal learning has been just, we have no control. We think we do. We like to think we do, but we really don't. And so I'm learning at my in my older years to just go with it. Right? Just lean in and see what the learning is all about and go with that.

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 04:38
Love it. Yeah. And everyone is learning that some are fighting

 04:42
it. Yeah.

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 04:45
All right. No. All right. Well, let's get into the area that you love and add so much value to um, you talk about organizations and people practicing DNI and you influence or you emphasize is the importance not from a space of it's the right thing to do. But from a heart space and making it real. Could you explain a little more about what you mean? Yeah, I

 05:12
can ever seen inclusion work that requires us to learn, right? We need to use our brain in our heads, but it requires us to connect. It requires us to use our heart, we're, we're talking about understanding people better, getting to know each other more, using that awareness to create greater sense of belonging, and greater connection and build community in organizations. And that's hard work. That's connection, compassion, empathy. You know, all of those skills are important parts of diversity and inclusion or diversity, equity and inclusion work.

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 05:48
And that's a whole different dimension. Right, then what I have learned in the past, well distant past, around, you know, throw it over the fence. It's another program. Right? Going to the heart. Yeah, actually, then takes us to this to the my next question. How has this whole hybrid virtual coming out of COVID affected the DNI mission and purpose, do you think? Yeah, I



06:19

don't think it's affected the mission and purpose per se, but it's affected how we do it. Right? In many ways. Being in a, in a hybrid space, having people work remotely doing a lot of meetings on Zoom provides a layer of safety for some people, right, we're in our own environment, we can put ourselves on mute for a few minutes, we can turn off our video, if we don't feel like you know, showing up quote, unquote, today, I'm in education, it allows people to, in some cases, lean into difficult conversations. Because of those things, we can exercise a little bit more self care, when we're in our own space, surrounded by things that make us feel comfortable. And the ability to turn off our video for a second if we're having a moment or a chat feature. Right. To everybody or privately to the to the facilitator, you know, and we can check in with people, I do a lot of education and educational modules around race and understanding systemic racism, I check in with with my bipoc, folks, right, how are you doing? Right, you know, and, and we can put them in, you know, and you can put people in groups and not that you can't do that live. But I think, in some, in some ways, this remote learning allows us the remoteness allows us to, to engage in a different way. And in some ways to engage in a more open way. You know, I think we can, I think we're having conversations over zoom or over whatever platform that we're using, that we may not be able to have in person in a room with somebody else. Because it's uncomfortable. We have a layer of removal now. And I don't love it, because it's a layer of removal. But in some cases to have challenging conversations, I think it can help if we use the technology, right? Sometimes we do things anonymously. So we ask people to write their questions or write their responses, but we don't know who's writing it, because



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 08:16

Oh, yes, no.



08:19

So So d&i, you know, the mission and purpose remains, but the execution of it, in that regard has been has been helpful in some ways. Connecting people, on the other hand, is a little bit more is sometimes a little and sometimes a lot more challenging, when we're working remotely, or when we have some people working remotely and some people not. Because as you know, you can't stop by somebody's desk and see how they're doing. Right. You can't say, Hey, let's go for lunch. And let's have a coffee. We're in these little squares. Looking at each other. Yeah. Right. And so companies have to work much harder at building community and creating connection among their employees. There's some some things I see as a benefit. And some things that I see. That is that's really, really challenging. And because I believe that connection is such an important part of DNI work, that's definitely created a bit of a challenge.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 09:14

So you have to be more mindful, like you just said, the talking about zoom or any of these vehicles, it can be a barrier. And yet, with thought it can actually enhance



09:30

Absolutely, there's lots of things we can do with thought, right to help build connection even over online an online platform, you know, taking a few minutes at the beginning or any given of a meeting for people to

chat in small groups or, you know,

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 09:44

what, oh now for sure. Early So, and I also find having to roleplay some of that or if I had to talk to someone in an organization about a DNI issue. I As you said, might see the screen as this nice barrier of protection in a way. On the other hand, it could be quite frightening. Because now I have to deal with just you, and the real issue. And I can't use all those other things I, I play with, when I'm face to face that I, it's, we have to come up. It's almost as if I can embrace it and make it work or I have to find new places to hide. Yeah. Yeah. But let's get into the heart of this.

M

Mitch Simon 10:38

Question, Jenny. I was just wondering, sorry, Emery, what, what have you seen, you know, through zoom, or teams or whatever, virtually, where companies are, are addressing DNI and doing it in a really, really thoughtful way.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 10:58

That's the next question.

M

Mitch Simon 10:59

Well, you know what, I want to ask it now. Because I cuz I bet a lot of companies say, Oh, we've addressed it. It's, it's, you know, we've covered this, but I'm not sure if, you know, I would love to get your expertise on how to how to really, how to make people feel included when they're not in the office anymore. Yeah.



11:24

So I've seen I've seen companies do socials online, I've seen companies do cooking classes together online, somebody cooks and shares a recipe they all hop on. So they're doing something together in a little square, but it's not just a room. So they take it out of the workspace. And so they're not only seeing each other in the squares, because they have a meeting, they're doing something fun together. I thought that was quite ingenious. And the other things that I've that I've, and maybe companies were doing this before, and I just wasn't aware of it. But they're they're able to do like whole staff meetings, regardless of where people are, right, which allows a whole different sense of community, everybody can hop on they some some companies call them the townhall or something other than the huddle. And so as many people as possible get into the same space that adds another layer of inclusion, right, you're hearing the same, the same announcements at the same time, you're able to ask questions, you're able to unmute yourself. So those are some of the things that I that I've heard that I that I really think are indicative of our willingness to lean into this new way of being. The other thing is, and I've just lost my train of thought, let me think if I can get back. I have something genius to say, and it's gone.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 12:46

Well, it's gonna come back. And maybe this will trigger it for you. You shared some amazing things with me about what are the best ways to guide folks who don't get it? Right. Towards leading from this heart space?



13:11

Yeah, that happens. That's that's a lot, right? It happens a lot that folks don't get it. And part of the reason why I think folks don't get it is that it's easy to say, we're inclusive. Everybody's welcome here. What do you mean? Why do we have to talk about it? Why do we have to, you know, why did why is it a thing? And I think, depending on who you are in the world, how you show up in the world, depending on your level of power and privilege, it's very easy to assume that because you're having a good time, because it's a space that's safe for you that everybody feels the same way. Yeah, we're leaders in the organization because of our position of power. Things are usually pretty good for us.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 13:54

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.



13:56

Well, so that's a critical piece of of, of helping leaders to understand if they don't get it to say, well, you know, you can be in the same situation as somebody having a completely different experience. How do you know that everybody's having a good time in your organization? How do you know that everybody feels a sense of belonging? Have you asked? Did you and how did you ask, did you ask in a way that people could be authentic and their response? You know, was it anonymous? Or did you pull people this? You know, because, right, and so what we find, which is no surprise to either of you is that a lot of times leadership and management are having one experience in an organization, and everybody else is having, maybe not a completely different experience, but not the same experience. Yeah, trust or support or safety, inclusion, sense of belonging, those can all fluctuate depending on our position, depending on our identities, what we're coming to work with, etc. So, so that's the first thing right under helping folks understand that we can be having a different experience in the same situation and then I like to have a common conversation about inclusion because I think we can all go back to an experience at some point in our lives, you know, maybe some people can't. And that's awesome. But where we haven't felt included, where we haven't felt a sense of belonging, where we haven't felt acknowledged, and if I can tap into that for folks and I, and I can say to them, I do this often a workshop, what does it feel like to be included? Right, and we get the warm, fuzzy and like, you know, all the lovely words that we get trust and valued and support and seen and all of that. And then I say, what does it feel like not to be included? And then we get all the other words, right, like, yeah, safe, and I can't speak and nobody sees me and, and so wouldn't you want everybody in your organization to feel the first way? And it's a bit of a no brainer question, because of course, we want that. Right. But then when we connect the two, same situation, but different experience, and Isn't this what you want for folks, now we can have a bridge about? Okay, how do we how do we make sure that's happening? How do you know that's happening? And how do we make sure it is actually happening? And then we're back to the heart. Right? We're back at having a conversation about how it feels to walk into work every day. Yeah, the feeling how it feels? Yeah. And what we want people to feel when they're working for us, working with us.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 13:56

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 16:11

And it's only through a conversation, and I know that you try to foster those conversations on Hey, but what do you mean, we have these meetings? And, and everyone I call on everybody? And then we had this cooking thing? And the person says, I don't feel it. Yeah. That's where the conversation has to begin.

 16:37

Yeah. And we have to start where people are at. So if you're, if you don't get it, then we have to have a conversation about okay, well, like, let's start there. Let's talk about like, how are you seeing this? And like, maybe I can give you something else to consider that will open up your awareness and help you see a little bit more? Yeah, yeah. And I just remember what I was gonna say before, may I?

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 16:57

Yes. Haha.

 17:00

The the online platforms in some cases have shown us, we all some people have virtual screens, I do not as you can, as you can see. But in some cases, it's allowed us to really see inside people's lives in a different way. And what can we do with that information? Right, it's another way that we can get to know people, it's another way that people are asked to be vulnerable. And that vulnerability feels different depending on who we are, depending on our social location. And, you know, we've had we've seen, we've seen conversations in the media about safety at home, right, who's safe and who's not safe in their home space, and what it means for some people to not be leaving their home for five, six hours to go to work. And being in the home. Yeah. I started quite early telling people you know, what, if you don't want to put your video on for this, it's okay. I would love to see you. You know, and if you can put your video on for a second so I can see you so I can you know, but there's all sorts of reasons why we may not want to or be able to have a video on at home. That's a layer of awareness and understanding and compassion that we need to have for folks. So that we're not,

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 18:10

I have found that Yeah. So interesting. You brought that up. I personally have found that difficult, and have had the foot fortunately been able to have discussions. Well, why don't you want to put on? Yeah, you helped me understand there. Right. I said, My ego is so hot. I want you to see my face. Got understand?

 18:37

Yeah, that's a great question. And it's a question that I use often helped me understand. Yeah. Tell me more about that.

 Ginny Bianco-Mathis 18:45

Totally. And that has helped helped me a lot. What? Now you're asked to go in and help organizations. And

those of us in the field, see tons of different packages and tools that we can use? What have you found to be the best what really needs to happen for an organization to say at the end of a year or two years? We're making the debt?



19:13

We're making it down? Yeah, I'm glad you said that. A debt. Yeah, you know, it's first of all, it's not I get worried when I hear things like Initiative Program. That's not what diversity and inclusion is diversity, equity. And inclusion is a commitment. It's a it's a way of being and way of leading, that that we take that we that we move forward with. And we're always going to learn something new as the space becomes safer because we're having better conversations, deeper conversations, because we're raising our level of awareness. We're always going to learn something new. So it's a journey that never ends. Yeah. Right. Which is, you know, can seem daunting, and at this at the on the other side, it's such a beautiful experience to create spaces where people can show up as themselves. And where we can experience the benefits that everybody talks about with diversity. The only way you experience those benefits is if you have an environment where people feel safe, where people feel valued, where people are acknowledged where this neat guy, and you actually hear them, and then use that information to create change, whether that's internally in your environment, or changing a product or changing a service or changing how you do things. So I think if we, if we think about this as a journey that we're going on, some of the important things that I weave into programming is that it's not a one off, you know, we can come in and do a session for you on diversity.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 20:42

Can you do it all in an hour?



20:44

No. Definitely not. So that so that, I mean, we can we can kick you off in an hour, we can start the conversation in an hour, but but we go into spaces where there is a commitment, and, and a strategy to rule that out. And something that's gonna follow us being there, like it can't do this as a as a as a lunch and learn and then we're done.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 21:05

Yeah, yeah.



21:08

leadership has to get it. We, you know, before I, before I take on a new client, I meet with the leadership team, and we have to feel like we can work together over time, because it's gonna, it's gonna be some time that we're together. Yeah. So that for me, that's an important part that they have a chance to meet me and be like, yep, feels like we can work together, and I have a chance to meet them. And I feel like, yep, we can work together. It's a relationship we're creating. And then we I like to start with leadership first, when we're doing education, because that's my, that's where my heart is, I used to be a teacher. So

I've taken that love of teaching and learning into this work with me. Leaders need to start their learning first. We don't need to finish the leadership learning before everybody else starts because like I just said, we're always learning, but they need a head start. Because once we open up the learning to the rest of the organization, and people start wanting to have conversations, and have questions, and and are like, either excited or resistant, both sides of those leaders need to be leaders need to feel like they can step into those conversations with, you know, maybe not 100% confidence, but enough confidence to be in the conversation, even if they say, let me get back to you. I need to think about that some more or Wow, that's a really good question, huh? Let's, you know, let's let's ferret through it together, they need to be they need to be able to step into those conversations. So we leaders have to get it at least a little bit ahead of the rest of the organization so that they can facilitate and support those conversations and have a sense of what might be coming up for folks, because they're going to feel, you know, some of the same questions or resistance or fear as their teams are going to feel. And so how amazing that they've already that they know that that might be coming and they can they can help support their teams in those inquiry inquiries.

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Ginny Bianco-Mathis 23:00

Becoming familiar with that uncomfortable, possibly uncomfortable discussion?

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23:07

Yep. Yeah. And being okay with the discomfort.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 23:11

Totally. I heard one program where they took the leadership off for two days. And had them go through just a series of uncomfortable discussion about their biases about someone comes in and tells you X, what do you got? You know, just like you said, getting them prepared. And then they can Roma.

i

23:38

Absolutely. And that's important, right? That's one of the things we look to leaders to do. How are they going to handle it? Let's, that's why you would have Yeah, so I like to do my programs over time. I like to have like a, we can call it a drip, perhaps. Right. So I, I have a program that runs for 10 months, and we see them we see each other twice a month, so that you're learning a little bit of learning, you have time to absorb it, you go back into your environment, you notice things differently. You practice. You try things you questions, right, and then you learn something else. And it's it's right that's our brain learns in bite sized chunks over time. And when we practice it gets solidified into the way that we do things and our way of being. So that's another key thing for me that whenever we do any type of education, we do it in chunks over time.

G

Ginny Bianco-Mathis 24:30

Yes, totally. And I love some of the terms that you've used when we spoken before. And I'm sure it's in your book about making sure we understand the differences between the basics like inclusion and diversity. Make sure we know that what it really means to see someone. Right, right. And how all of these

skill sets are having these difficult conversations. increases all engagement. Absolutely no matter who had lunch, you're



25:06

absolutely, yeah. Once we started having conversations, difficult conversations about one thing, racism, let's just say, right. And, you know, I don't have to be a person of color to be like, Whoa, wait a second, we're talking about something hard. Maybe we can talk about the thing that I think that that, you know, is impactful for me? That's right. So I know, there's research that's been done in schools where they've had gay straight alliances, right, and they've increased LGBTQ positive space. And we know from that research, that once you increase LGBTQ positive space, everybody else's sense of inclusion, and safety goes up. So I think as soon as we start dipping our toe into those challenging conversations, as soon as we start acknowledging that there are things to talk about that are challenging, we start to raise that level of safety for everybody.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 25:58

Totally. And so glad you gave that last example, because that's how you then change the entire culture.



26:05

Yeah, and when you have the hardest conversations and the conversations that aren't as hard or a little bit easier to have,



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 26:11

right? Yes. Totally. Totally.



26:14

Yeah. And that's, I mean, you mentioned that terminology, we we, my personal opinion, is why we haven't come further than than I would love us to be, is because we're having a lot of conversations about the D, having a lot of conversations about diversity, more representation, right, more representation at all levels. And and I totally agree, representation is hugely important. We need to see ourselves, we just see ourselves in different levels. If if all of the diversity is in the frontline, or the or the entry level position, and then the higher you get, there's less diversity, then we kind of wonder, is there a room for me there? Can I can I rise? Or not? Can I advance in my career? So diversity is important for a lot of reasons. But if we don't have an inclusive space, that diversity just becomes a static, and it doesn't mean anything, it just look. Right, right. So we've been having conversations about diversity for quite a while. I don't think we've I don't think we haven't been having conversations about inclusion. For as long, we certainly haven't been having conversations about equity, which are conversations we need to have.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 27:20

And what does equity even mean?



27:22

Well, and what does it right, a lot of people don't worry about money. It's not about equity in your home, right, we need to, and that comes back to understand that we can be in the same situation having a different experience, right, that people lived experiences are different. And if we don't understand that people's lived experiences are different, we can't do anything about it, once we start to see that people's lived experiences are different, and really lean into that, then we start to create environments that acknowledge those differences that acknowledge those different needs. So the inclusion has to come first. If you're if your environment is inclusive, which is a process, which is something we create, then when you start inviting greater diversity, folks are going to stay



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 28:03

nice, nice because they, Oh, nice,



28:07

they're seeking, they're acknowledged, they're valued, of course, they're gonna want to stay. And that's, that's when we get the benefit of diversity. Because now if you value me, if you're, if you're seeing me, if you acknowledge me, if you're aware, and I feel a sense of belonging, I'm going to share my idea with you. Right, right, I'm gonna, and then and then you're gonna hear me, and maybe you'll use my idea, because it's fabulous. Or even if you don't use my idea, you've heard, right, I've had it, I've had a platform to share it.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 28:35

I love that the platform, so you're talking, we have to have the right conversations, we need to get leaders make it more of the norm and role model, you need to have these conversations. And we need to create the space and structures on and the statistics show that these can be separate groups that want to meet. And I've also heard that setting up groups where the main point is, we have different people in the room to continually talk about differences and inclusion have been useful, and changing the organization.



29:16

Absolutely. I'm glad you mentioned that. Because you know, we have employee resource groups, they're very popular. And it's really important for folks to have safe spaces to talk with with people like them, right. And human beings, we naturally gravitate to people's like us anyways. So employee resource groups are so so important for support for networking, for just having a place to talk and chill and know that you get me. Right. I don't have to explain the backstory. And we also need to cross pollinate. We also need to create spaces to have conversations across those groups. Not to mention that some people fit into more than one group.



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 29:56

Oh, yeah, but I love what you just said. Let's just start creating cross pollination groups. Yeah, Marie Emery, we can go on and on to a lot of other podcasts with you. Well, how can people get in touch with you by your book? Ah,



30:15

well, um, I am on LinkedIn, they can find me there, I have a website and reach router comm. It's not very creative, but it's me. So they can find me there. And they can find my book there being brown and a black and white world. Or if you're sleeping around on Amazon or Chapters Indigo, it's there to fabulous



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 30:35

niche.



Mitch Simon 30:37

Well, thank you. Thank you, Anna Marie for, for giving us a really good insight into diversity, inclusion, belonging, understanding, equity, and the heart and all of these, all these topics, which, as you point out, I think diversity is something that's easy to measure. And that's why people are not everyone's focused on it, some are focused on it. It's just when you get an understanding and belonging and equity, those are hard to measure, and hard to do. And so I think as humans, we avoid what's hard. And what I love from this podcast is that I understand that the more we are inclusive and the more we're understanding, the more we're caring and empathetic, the better we're going to be as humans, and the better our companies are going to be. And that's just the way it truly is. Absolutely. I'm looking at a bright more beautiful world. So



Ginny Bianco-Mathis 31:31

likes to he likes things that ended up I love



Mitch Simon 31:33

positive things. Emery thank you so much for staying in Toronto, so we could we could get that done before we go to Barbados. And thank you, Jenny, for staying out there in Virginia. And for our listeners. Thanks for listening. Please share this podcast with all of your friends, colleagues and relatives. And we'll see you next time on our next episode of Team anywhere