



Raymond A. Mason School of Business

WILLIAM & MARY

DIVERSITY GOES TO WORK PODCAST

EPISODE 45: ASHLEY MARCHAND ORME – USING DATA TO HELP CRAFT YOUR DEI NARRATIVE

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 another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. Season three. How exciting. And today, we're kicking off season three with a great conversation on data insights related to diversity in the corporate space. We know that in 2021, workers returned from the pandemic to a workplace with new demands mounting demands for corporate leaders to take concrete steps to promote racial equity, social justice, and beyond. Those calls were clear, and organizations responded, but that doesn't mean that it's been an easy journey along the way. Today's guest knows that quite well. Ashley Marchand Orme, Just Capital's director of Equity Initiatives, is an expert on data-backed corporate diversity insights. She has a wealth of experience leading DEI efforts and board-level oversight, and her background as a journalist and an editor lends a unique perspective to her work as a fellow communications professional. I'm quite excited for that lens today. So welcome, Ashley, to season three of Diversity Goes to Work. We're excited to have you here. Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit more about who you are, what you do, and maybe a little bit of the story how you got there?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Awesome. Well, first of all, Phil, thank you so much for having me on the podcast. Thrilled to be with you and your listeners. As you said, I'm Ashley Marchand Orme. I serve at Just Capital as a Director of Equity initiatives on what's called the Corporate Impact Team. I lead several initiatives to help companies better understand the metrics they can use to benchmark their equity practices. I'm also working as part of the Corporate Racial Equity Alliance, along with Just Capital's Partners, FSG, and PolicyLink, to develop corporate performance standards on racial and economic equity. I got into this work, actually, in a very roundabout way, as you were alluding to. I started my career as a journalist, really wanting to amplify and elevate stories about communities of color that I just didn't think you were getting the kind of coverage and framing that I thought was deserved and appropriate. I wound up eventually taking an editorial position at the National Association of Corporate Directors, where I was

asked to cover stories related to board diversity and board-level oversight of DEI. I then transitioned into a role, doing more qualitative research there at NACD and eventually education programming, all the while continuing to cover issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and belonging for corporate directors at that full board, committee, and individual director level. And so from NACD, I joined Just Capital in 2021. But I'll just also quickly note that this work is fascinating to me. I grew up in a family in the Deep South. Both of my parents are from Louisiana. They're both African American and grew up in a segregated society. So it's been very clear to me from day one the importance of these issues and how critical it is to elevate DEI to really continue to push our society in the US more toward that equitable ideal that we have talked about for hundreds of years.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, there's been a great social push towards these initiatives, but your work specifically explores corporate impact. So, let's sort of set the agenda today. In your view, what is the role of the corporate sphere in advancing some of those broader social considerations related to diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, justice, and beyond?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Well, I think it's important to first acknowledge the role that corporations play in our society and just the vast amount of influence corporations have over community wealth, health, politics, philanthropy, among so many other aspects of our lives. Just Capital is a nonprofit organization built on the mission to really make our economy work better for all Americans. And that's going to require both public and private sector engagement. And the private sector is massive. It's estimated to be, I've seen estimates, around four and a half times bigger than the US government. So we really need that deep engagement of the corporate community to really help advance us more toward that equitable society we want. We also just know, practically looking at our more recent history, that three years ago, in the aftermath of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many more, that there was this response among corporate America to actually address inequities. We saw so many commitments from companies saying that they were going to focus on racial equity within their own four walls but also within communities and within society more broadly. So, we know that communities have committed to doing this work. And our polling at Just Capital continues to demonstrate that the majority of Americans think that CEOs have a role to play in advancing racial equity especially. So, there's definitely been corporate commitments to focus on this. We know corporations have a massive role to play in society, so we really want to think about ways to leverage all of that influence for good.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, absolutely. I was teaching a course recently where we are looking at organizational reckoning with the DEI space, and we're looking back to examples from the 1940s, examples from, like, PepsiCo, who made notable efforts pre-civil rights movement organizations. Corporations, I think, always have the potential to outpace and set the agenda for social momentum. So I think there's certainly a role to play here. What I'm hoping we might do

because I don't often get to nerd out with a fellow communications professional, Ashley, is I'm hoping that we might frame our conversation today under that lens. That work for you? Sound good? All right, so.

Ashley Marchand Orme

Yeah.

Phil Wagner

Here's what I want to do. I want to break this down into two dimensions, all right? Communicating within the corporate DEI space first and foremost, and then maybe communicating outside of that space. So, let's talk about communicating in the realm of the DEI landscape in corporate America. We know that writ-large data shows that the public expects organizations to be leaders, to be frontrunners in this conversation on DEIB. Your data finds this, too, noting how it transcends political affiliation, ideology, identity characteristics. But it doesn't always feel that way, right? Like, can we talk a little bit about the noise? And gosh, I don't know of a more salient time to be talking about anti-DEI or anti-woke noise than 2023. How do you continue doing meaningful work in this space in a space that's continuously fraught with that pushback?

Ashley Marchand Orme

It's such an important question and obviously such a timely one. There are certainly terms and issues that have been politicized. We talk about things like DEIB and broadly talk about ESG, all these acronyms that have been politicized, but we find at Just Capital time and time again through our polling. And I know anecdotally I know that there's just so much agreement across different demographic groups that includes race, age, gender, political ideologies around issues that actually ladder up to DEIB. So one quick example is that we found in our polling within the last year or two that when it comes to racial equity, the majority of Americans, I think it's 77% of Americans, have said that in order for companies to advance racial equity, they need to pay their workers a living wage. We've seen the link that Americans have in their minds between things like living wages and equity, and those issues like wages, those worker-centric issues especially, continue to rise in terms of Just their prioritization among the American public. So definitely have seen politicization of these issues. But I think when you actually break down these acronyms and break down these broad umbrella topics like diversity or equity, inclusion, and belonging to the individual issues, I think there's still broad agreement among the American public that these are important issues. I think companies are seeing this. They're going to continue to see their workers pressure them to focus on these issues because these are all things that impact our day-to-day lives, how we live our lives, how we're able to provide for ourselves and our families. So definitely think these issues are going to continue to be important. And the ways that corporate leaders address this sort of anti-DEIB environment, I think, will be very telling, and workers will know if a company is continuing to have focus on these issues or not. But really, this is an opportunity for companies to really show up, I think, for their workforce, regardless of how public they want to be about it. I think the worker experience is what's critical here to ensure is equitable.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, absolutely. It's so easy to hide behind sort of the flimsy shadow of semantics: DEI, ESG, woke. And I think beyond that, the data is clear. Your data is clear. There's a reason why this focus is still whatever we call it. There's a reason why this focus is still just super important. After all, your data at Just Capital reveals that the organizations have made a lot of great progress in this area. And I think so often we don't spend time to acknowledge the work that has been done. So, we rob the dignity of those that have benefited from this work. But gosh, there's still a lot more to do in that space. There's still a variety of equity issues that need to be addressed. Can you talk to us on some of those and what your data finds, and sort of what Just Capital is doing to address those?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Sure. And I'll start with just some context setting I think is probably obvious to most of your listeners. But, this work is necessary because the United States is a diverse nation. That's one of the benefits of living here, and it will increasingly be so. Companies have workforces that include women and people of color who, among others, have historically not had access to the opportunities they should have had access to. So these issues matter to stakeholders like workers, like customers who come into your store and engage with your employees. These issues matter to investors and to those who live in communities impacted by companies' actions. The areas we've seen the most progress over the last couple of years are those honestly where the investor community, especially the institutional investors, have been most vocal. So, we've seen improvement in areas like transparency around workforce demographics and some increase in the percentage of companies disclosing pay equity information. So, looking at whether companies are actually conducting pay gap analyses to know the difference in pay for similar work among different demographic groups within their workforce at Just, we've conducted research that also suggests that companies leading on DEI outperform their peers. So, I would just let folks know continue to watch the space at Just Capital for additional research on that. But when you look at the Broad Russell 1000, you isolate the companies that are like in the top 10% in terms of their performance on DEI issues that we track. They tend to outperform even in difficult economic environments like what we faced, especially last year. So I think that's encouraging. I'll also just note quickly: Just Capital produced a corporate racial equity tracker in 2021 and then again in 2022. And that tool itself looks at 23 different data points for the 100 largest US employers. And those data points roll up under key areas like antidiscrimination policies, pay equity, racial and ethnic diversity data, education and training programs, response to mass incarceration, and community investments. That looks at things like investment in K through twelve schools, for example. So those are some of the issues that we track and are going to continue to be analyzing. And then we also just more recently launched a tool called the Just Job Scorecard, which really helps the full Russell 1000 benchmark their performance against peer companies in seven key areas, and I won't list all of those, but that includes things like hiring, stability, and hours. Again, wages and compensation is a big one and things like benefits. So those are just some of the areas that we focus in on and are helping companies to understand their performance around when we think about things like corporate justice.

Phil Wagner

And so, to be clear, we talked about hiding behind the flimsy shadow of semantics earlier. Often, when we talk about this, companies who do this have outpace their competitors. We're not talking just about diversity; it's not just throwing diverse folks together, and yay, we outperform. You're talking about a specific, meaningful, intentional, hands-on focus to engagement in those other dimensions, too, right?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Definitely, and that's where more of the equity part of this conversation comes in. Diverse representation is important. It's great.

Phil Wagner

Absolutely.

Ashley Marchand Orme

At the end of the day, if you've got a diverse workforce and that's all you have, then that's not enough, right? We look at things like representation within leadership to understand who has a voice and not just a seat at the table but a voice in the conversation. We look at issues around, like I said, some of the community aspects of whether the company is an active member of their community and supporting education for students and is thinking about things like engaging with local small businesses as suppliers to really not just help advance equity within their four walls, but to really think about their role. And again, going back to what we were saying earlier, their influence more broadly in society.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, that's great. We talked earlier about the data that reveals how much the public is sort of hungry for this conversation, that the public desires to see organizations and the leaders who drive those organizations do more in this space. I'm wondering. I'm sort of taking a skeptical lens here, just to play a little bit of devil's advocate. Is that fair? I mean, is it fair? After all, these are organizations, not politicians. Is it fair to put the burden of societal progress on the shoulders of organizations, corporations, and the leaders who drive them?

Ashley Marchand Orme

I think workers and other stakeholders, more broadly in the public, their experiences are valid, right? I'm certainly never going to be one to invalidate that. So, if they have difficult experiences, those are valid, and I don't want to take away from that. I think part of why people look to corporations, specifically corporate leaders, to really show up for these issues and really lead is because there is that understanding of just how much companies and corporate leaders can actually influence our society in positive ways. So I think honestly there's some hopefulness in that, that if things don't feel right now that we need change so that the great power, influence, wealth of our corporations is actually helping to push our society in some helpful directions. I think part of what's difficult here is that the marketplace also just needs more transparency from companies to determine where progress is being made.

Disclosure on human capital and social-related issues is just low across the board. Has been low continues to be low, though we are seeing some progress in certain areas. So I think that in and of itself is a major challenge to being able to even track performance and be able to make determinations of whether there's been broad progress made in certain areas. So I think that's one important thing to keep in mind. So, at Just Capital, like I said earlier, we track a lot of information about companies. And to be more specific, we typically look at the Russell 1000 and we analyze and collect about over 200 data points from the Russell 1000. And I can tell you human capital disclosures, even among the Russell 1000, are just low. So, I think that's one area where we could see improvement and then get a better understanding of where progress is being made. So, at this point, progress right now looks like seeing even Just more transparency for companies.

Phil Wagner

Does that come as sort of like a function of how we're seeing, you know, new proposed regulations surrounding ESG reporting coming from the SEC? I mean, does it have to come from a central force in order to mandate that? Or are you sort of trying to incentivize a self-report system where people are just doing this because it's more the right thing to do, and this is how we move the gauntlet forward?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Well, I think the long term, the way that we'll see sustained and continued transparency is really if we see voluntary transparency from companies, but we know that regulators step in when they think that transparency isn't coming fast enough. We did some polling a couple years ago. Maybe it was like a year and a half, two years ago, of the American public. And the American public essentially stated that they want to see more transparency from companies and that they would be willing to have the government sort of step into that role to push toward more transparency. And we know state governments, in some cases, are doing more of that. So there's a federal government level, but then there's also state-level regulations that are pushing companies more and more toward transparency. So I think, you know, we'll see how things play out with the SEC and whatever proposal they end up coming out with. But I think the broad sort of stroke is that the American public wants more transparency. Investors want more transparency to help them make decisions about companies. So, I'm expecting we'll see more transparency in the coming years. It's just a matter of who ends up being the one to push companies to actually open up and provide this data.

Phil Wagner

Yes, it comes from sort of an authentic place of this is just how we do business, hopefully. And I think that tees up another question, which is a little bit more on the how function. Like how might corporations communicate their DEI values or their DEI work, or their DEI efforts in a way that fits in overall just brand identity, corporate mission, and the public expectation? I mean, doing work in the landscape of DEIB is important, and it makes sense a lot of times align to brand. Like if you're a fitness brand, your work deals with bodies, so there's size diversity. It probably intersects with sports, so there's racial equity. We've seen that sort of

blow-up Nike. If you're a bank, it makes sense for you to advocate for racial disparities and socioeconomic status. But there's a lot. I mean, there's so many different dimensions of this work you mentioned, like prison reform. We're talking there's so many different dimensions. So, do you recommend corporations go all in on all DEIB issues, or do they stick closer to those that are aligned to brand identity or the social moment? I mean, how do you recommend getting in the right place in a way that is authentic?

Ashley Marchand Orme

I mean, really, it's important for companies to pause and think about how they're prioritizing their DEIB issues, how's that been done in the past, if it's been done, and how can they do it better in the future. And really, it starts with understanding who your key stakeholders are. That's likely, and it should obviously include your workforce, your customers, those in communities that are impacted by your company's operations. So, understand who the stakeholders are and get really good at listening to them. I think that's one key area all companies could probably get better at is better understanding how to create that process of continued listening to understand what's important to their stakeholders and to their investors, too. I think prioritization is important based on what you're hearing from your stakeholders. I think some of what you were also alluding to is really important. The idea of really understanding the company's positionality within an industry, for example, there are different industries that have seen or participated in in the past variety of activities that have in some ways exacerbated inequity. So, really understanding where the company is coming from, the individual organization, but also the industry can help point toward the areas where progress is really needed where some repair work and reckoning might need to happen. And then I think the other thing that you sort of touched on that's really important for companies is just think about how to do this authentically. That has been certainly a message of the public in the past several years is to focus on authenticity. That we've seen what happens when companies do things like greenwash or equity wash. The American public knows when that happens, and I think is really looking for leaders to be authentic. And that really starts with having a senior leadership team. I would also say a board that really understands the importance of these issues and really can set that what we call the tone at the top of the organization so that everyone within the organization knows this is a priority knows that this isn't a bolt-on sort of project, that we are really going to do the work of integrating equity within our organization and tie that back to things like strategy, tie that back to the importance of culture and even how we think about hiring. The questions we ask candidates when they're coming in so they know that DEIB is important to our organization. So it's really about being authentic. Understanding how you can prioritize based on listening to your stakeholders and then really following through is obviously critical after that point. And that could be a whole additional podcast episode on the follow.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, just good communication from the board because I think we give boards just like not even a free pass. We forget that tone from the top and the important role that boards play in moving the needle forward on these initiatives.

Ashley Marchand Orme

Definitely, and the board plays a role in oversight, meaning that if they feel the senior leadership team is not making progress or is not prioritizing these issues, the board then can ask those critical questions of how are you weaving this into strategy? How are you thinking about the ways that our culture is influenced by our DEI practices or the lack thereof? So, there certainly is a critical role for the board to play in all this.

Phil Wagner

I want to go back to that point on authenticity because even when I'll make assumptions here, but even when authenticity is the anchor point, it can still be just a complicated space to communicate within. I'm wondering if your work reveals anything about the time function for a response. So, for instance, as we record this, there's a lot playing out outside of the four walls of where we're recording. I mean, there's a lot playing out in the anti-LGBTQ space. You look at Target's blowback for know Pride Month celebration. You've got state legislators limiting care on gender-affirming care and banning books and drag shows. And there's the post-Roe v. Wade realities that are complicated and absolutely have organizational implications. And so as organizations try to authentically communicate their values in this space, there's case studies for, hey, maybe just wait a little bit because if you communicate too quickly, and I worry what that might do. So I'm wondering if your work gives any suggestions for get in while the get-ins good, you know, we often point to the George Floyd moment, and if you're Jeff Harmoning, CEO of General Mills, and you're anchored in Minneapolis at that moment, you have to respond. But when it maybe is a little bit more geographically distanced, you're deciding how and when do I communicate because the world's moving so fast. What do you do? Any recommendations from your work?

Ashley Marchand Orme

I think, again, it starts with listening to your employees, listening to your workers, listening to your customers. I think companies have gotten really good about understanding their customers' buying habits. And I have a little bit of a marketing and communications background, too, where I studied things like the development of personas and how companies truly deeply try to understand their customers to help get folks in the door create habits so that customers can continue to buy product and services. I think companies have been really smart and data-driven in certain areas of the company. I think we need to translate that over to equity-related issues for whatever groups you want to name, the people of color folks who are in the LGBTQ space. I think we just have to get smarter about how we're understanding who the stakeholders are for any given company. I think we've seen at Just that, yes, the American public does want corporate leaders to stand up in these critical moments where there are big social issues in the news, that folks are looking for corporations to be leaders. In terms of timing of when and how companies respond, that certainly is up to the individual companies, and they've got to get good at understanding that. That's why they hopefully have their PR departments and their communications departments thinking about these things a little bit more critically. But I think at the end of the day, what's important to underscore is that the American public is looking for companies to better understand how they impact the lives of

people on a day-to-day basis. We all show up for work. We all go in and purchase goods at stores, for example. We all see advertisements that elevate narratives in our minds about certain people groups. So there are so many different touch points that companies have to actually think about the messages that they're portraying and also how they're creating an environment for certain behaviors to flourish or not. And so I think, yes, it is difficult. I'll acknowledge that it's difficult sometimes for companies to understand where to focus in which issues specifically, to quote-unquote, stand up about. Part of one way we're trying to address this at Just Capital is we continue to do our polling. I mentioned earlier that we poll the American public. We use that polling to help inform the ways we prioritize issues for companies. We're like an eight-year-old organization at Just Capital, and over that span of time, we have partnered with organizations like the Harris Poll and have polled representative samples of Americans to the tune of 160,000 plus people at this point, and we use that polling to help drive the importance of issues. A quick example of how that's played out in recent times is over the past year, especially our polling, and some of our focus group work has shown that the American public really wants corporate leaders to pay attention to wages and the financial well-being of workers. And that issue has always been important, but especially in the last year plus, I think we've seen the inflationary environment really be a factor in this, that wages is elevated to the top. So, I think that's important for leaders to know. But we're going to continue to point to those issues that the American public raises. And the last quick thing I'll get in here too, is I mentioned in my intro that I'm part of the corporate racial equity alliance. With that alliance, we're part of this multi-year effort to really paint that picture of what equity truly looks like for companies. We know there have been questions among companies of what issues to focus in on. We're trying to paint that picture by providing a set of targets with interim milestones that companies can work toward to become more equitable in their practices, within their company, their industry, community, and then more broadly in society. So we're aiming to bring some clarity in the space, at least through that effort.

Phil Wagner

I love that you're helping to develop the narrative, right, the story that catches fire and actually moves progress forward. There's a great piece about two years ago in HBR and overselling sustainability reporting. And don't get me wrong, data-driven insights are important, but that piece notes that reporting is not a proxy to progress, right? So just because you've gotten real good at tweaking your numbers or selling the data the right way, if you can't bring that alive, if you can't turn that into practical outcomes, you're not doing anything of real value. And I think that's so important. So, I appreciate the work that you do in marrying data to pragmatic outcomes. I've got like two more questions. I really have like 74 more questions, but for the sake of time, I've got two more. Because you talk a lot about bringing your people in, right? And I think that's such a critically important function of this work. This might go in a little bit of a different direction, but can you share on any strategies for engaging or communicating with employees internally, specifically helping to loop them into these efforts? We know it takes an all-hands-on-deck approach. Can you share strategies on weaving in those who might be apathetic or skeptical so that really this becomes an all-enterprise effort and not just isolated to just folks of color, just women, just HR, just some division, but really is all hands on deck.

Ashley Marchand Orme

That's so important. I think one of the sort of missteps we've seen in the past from companies is wanting to isolate these equity issues, especially to being just about HR or just issues about women or people of color, when really, if a company gets equity right, this is something that benefits the whole company. We talk a lot about this in our standards development work with the Corporation Equity Alliance, which is that idea of what we call the curb-cut effect. It's built on this premise that the disability rights community had been advocating to get curb cuts placed in sidewalks so that folks who had mobility issues and folks who were in wheelchairs could more easily access sidewalks and move about. Those curb cuts were made in sidewalks, and that benefited everyone. I'm a mom. I use a stroller. I'm better able to access sidewalks and walk around my neighborhood and streets of my city because of the work that the disability rights community did. Because we made things more accessible and more equitable for one community. The rest of folks benefited from that as well. And I really do believe that that's true. I think because of what we were saying earlier, we're certainly seeing the politicization of a lot of equity issues. But at the end of the day, when we sort of take a step back, a society that's more equitable for all means that, for example, women, let's take women in the gender pay gap issue, for example. Women would be able to earn as much as their male peers for doing similar work. That puts money in their hands that they can invest in their families, and their homes, and their communities. And so there are certainly positive impacts from becoming more equitable from that sort of standpoint. So, I think this comes down to a couple of things. It's, again, focusing in on tone at the top, ensuring that leaders know the importance of them, signaling that these are issues that are important to us as an organization. I think companies need to help focus, especially their workforce, on the idea that a more equitable company means that the voices of folks will be heard better so we can talk about the correlation between diversity and equity and things like innovation that benefits companies and having more voices and diverse perspectives add to conversations. So I think some of this is just reminding folks of the importance and all the vast research that's been done up until this point about the links between things like diversity, equity and inclusion and outperformance and innovation, diverse perspective, and the benefits that brings. But I think it really, again, starts with tone at the top. It's important to continue to focus people on the benefits of equity. And I understand that in some cases, focusing on things like equity, like closing the pay gap, might not be as exciting to people who are already sort of in the majority and being paid well. But again, this is something that's going to be beneficial for our full society. I think it's just really important to kind of stay grounded in that.

Phil Wagner

I have one more question for you. If it's okay and if you get this right, I feel like you could have a bestseller here because I think one of the things that we're all in the DEIB space trying to figure out is how do I continue to do this work amidst the noise? And I'm wondering how you feel about the future. I mean, we've really relied so heavily on this business case for diversity that we've talked about. And I think partly we've been able to do that because we've had a socio-political climate that largely feels like it's receptive to this work. And I'm not Pollyanna. I know that there have been, like, it's not always been ripe for this, but it seems like it's gotten darker, it seems like it's gotten harder. It seems like it has shifted more aggressively now, with

political and social pushback coming from so many sides. Do you worry that it's going to become less advantageous for corporations to really do this work under the business case? In the current fraught political climate we live in, does that change how you all communicate about the importance of this work?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Well, I think the business case is certainly important. I will say that I don't think that things start and stop with the business case. I think that's important. And I think, like I said earlier, research has certainly pointed toward the benefits economically of companies focusing on these issues. But I shared earlier that our demographics as a nation are changing. I think companies are going to have to continue to grapple with the fact that if they're not prioritizing equity, their customers and workers, other stakeholders, investors certainly are, and that people have more choices now than ever before in terms of who they work for, where they spend their dollars. And I think investors even can vote with their wallets, right? So I think there's more choices ever than ever before for folks in who they can engage with, and companies that really lead on these issues do have an advantage for sure. I think at the end of the day, we also have faced, like we said earlier, the politicization, a lot of these issues. I think it's not surprising that we face this. You think about the long history within the United States of how blacks, women have pushed for society to really live up to the expectations that we want this company to live up to. It's been a long road, and whenever there's been progress, there's also been pushback. So I think A, that's not surprising in some sense, and there's always going to be pushback against progress. It's just sort of just the ebb and flow of how we move society forward. But I think this is a real opportunity for companies to really step up and realize their position in society. I think certainly, over the past several years, the American public has increasingly looked to corporations to be a trusted leader. I know Edelman has done a lot of work around the importance of trust and institutions and how folks have had fairly stable trust know corporations as institutions in the United States compared to other institutions. I think we're going to continue to see that. I think the private sector is so critically important in advancing equity. And so, yeah, not surprised that there's been pushback. I think we'll continue to see pushback whenever we see progress. But if anything, it leaves me with a bit of hope that we've made a lot of progress in recent years, that there's been some really important conversations that have been elevated on a national level, and I think we're going to continue to see that. I think we're also at the point where we've gone too far forward to take too many steps back. That, I think, at least is encouraging.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I share your hope, and I share your optimism. It doesn't make the work easier, but there's a goal ahead, and we can't lose sight of that goal. My final question for you is you do such important work at Just Capital. Can you tell our listeners what's going on at Just Capital right now and how they can follow and support your work over the long term?

Ashley Marchand Orme

Absolutely. Well, I would first just encourage folks to visit our website, JustCapital.com. We're a nonprofit organization that has done a significant amount of research over our short tenure as an organization and all, again, very data-driven metrics oriented. So we're constantly putting out research that I think would be useful to corporate leaders who want to make the case for doing this work and becoming a more just organization. We've got a ton of resources at our disposal to help companies make those positive changes. I would say I'd love for folks to just keep an eye on our Just Job scorecard. We released it privately so companies could take a look and understand their performance, and we're going to more publicly release that in the coming months for the American public to take a look at to understand how companies are doing on a variety of issues related to jobs and justness in that area. And then I mentioned, finally, our standards development work. We're thrilled that we are actually working on drafting the standards this year and are looking to release them next year. So, I would just tell folks to keep an eye on that. We are excited about that work and are excited we get to be part of this big effort to paint that picture of what equity looks like and point companies toward helpful targets and interim goals to get there.

Phil Wagner

And we are likewise excited to see all of this coming out. Look forward to continuing to support you and all of the important work at Just Capital. Ashley, thanks so much for taking time to chat with us today. Such a privilege and so much to continue to unpack here. I so appreciate this conversation.

Ashley Marchand Orme

Thanks, Phil. It's been great.

Phil Wagner

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