



Season 2, Episode 3, Finding Strategy in Crisis, February 22, 2022

Joyce Trimuel: The world around us is changing; the demographics are changing at a very rapid pace. I mean, if you don't have top talent, if you don't have diverse talent, you're going to suffer from a business standpoint. So whether or not you ... you can have your point of view about, you name the social injustice or you name the current event, the topic, you can do that all day. But if it will impact your business one way or another.

Kurt Greenbaum: From Olin Business School at Washington University in St. Louis, I'm Kurt Greenbaum, and this is *On Principle*. Thank you for joining us for our third episode of the season. Before we jump in, you should know that in today's episode, we'll be mentioning a crime, a crime that gripped the world in 2020, a crime that viscerally drove issues of racial justice and equity to center stage. And on that stage, in the days following that crime, business issues emerged.

We'll talk about those issues with an understanding of the human toll involved on that day and in the months that followed. These are issues that can be emotionally fraught for business leaders and team members alike. They're issues about return on investment and profitability, as well as issues about equity and fairness. And for today's *On Principle* guest, they're also issues about what prepared her to help her clients create strategic change in the wake of a shocking event.

Joyce Trimuel: I'm Joyce Trimuel, and I'm a leadership development consultant and speaker. And so really what that means is that I've been working with leaders from an executive coaching standpoint, as well as really utilizing my 20-plus years of experience in corporate America to help organizations and leaders transform as relates to diversity, equity and inclusion. So it's been [...] a wild journey the last couple of years, but it's so rewarding, so fulfilling. And I know that I'm having an impact on not just organizations, but also the leaders that are a part of those groups.

Kurt Greenbaum: If it's not already obvious, Joyce and I talked about her work as a DEI consultant, but that's not where she started her career. With a finance degree from the University of Illinois, she started as a trainee in the insurance industry, working for Chubb in Chicago and quickly rising through the ranks. In fact, by 2007, she was asked to move to Washington, DC, to become Chubb's regional marketing manager there—the first woman of color to hold that title for the company. A few years later, she moved to Kansas City to be the firm's branch manager there. And again, it was the first time a woman of color held that role in the company. As she explained it, her trajectory was so steep and the opportunities initially so rich, she barely realized nearly 17 years had flown by. At the same time, she was getting the

itch to tweak her trajectory a little bit and dig more deeply into the work of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Joyce Trimuel: I tell people prior to 2016, I was always doing this work on the side of my desk. So in whatever role that I was in, whether it was leading an employee resource group or, you know, leveraging this diversity, equity, inclusion as a way to help me drive results in whatever the job function I was in, I was always doing the work anyway. And so I'm like, why not explore this on a more committed, more full-time basis versus this just being something that I enjoy doing but not really focused on? And it was at that point I began to network with other chief diversity officers in different industries, because again, it's kind of like, you believe you know what the role is from the outside looking in, but I really wanted to understand what was it like, you know, a day in the life of the CDO?

One thing that I was very clear about was that I just didn't want to be the face of the work in terms of a lot of activities but not a lot of outcomes. So I was able to connect, utilizing my Olin connections, connect with a lot of CDOs in a lot of different industries. And it validated for me that this was definitely the career path that I wanted to pursue next.

Kurt Greenbaum: So let's catch up on the chain of events here. It's 2016: Joyce is working for Chubb. Has a good career. Good reviews. Then Chubb gets acquired. Jobs get merged. Employees get shuffled. At that point, while she's working on her MBA at WashU Olin Business School, Joyce decides to "opt out of the organization." That's the phrase she used. It was time to reevaluate her career path, and that's when she started to do the networking she just described with other DE&I practitioners. Eventually, a former Chubb colleague ends up becoming CEO at another insurance company, CNA. And through that connection, Joyce draws up a case to become the firm's first chief diversity officer. She takes on the role in early 2017, and now she's no longer doing DEI work, as she put it, from the side of her desk. She's in the system, she's part of the system, and she's seeing firsthand just how hard it is to create sustainable change.

Joyce Trimuel: I understand and I'm fully aware that this work is a journey, and I always use the analogy of, you know, like fitness, right? You don't go to the gym and eat clean for a week and then think that, "Oh, I'm in the optimal shape." You have to continue to do it. And so what I would say as a missed opportunity, what's really the willingness to do the hard stuff, the willingness to hold ourselves accountable as leaders, when you're making hiring decisions. And you can justify your way out of why, you know, you have another one of the same types of individuals that look like the rest of the team, but it's like, are you intentional about the cultural adds to your team? Are you going the extra distance?

And I think there's ownership on the side of both talent acquisition and recruiting, and this is for any organization. So there's ownership on that side. But then there's also a responsibility with the hiring manager that if you are constantly getting the

same type of pool of folks, you have to respectfully push back and say, “Hey, I need more. I need different.” But you have to be intentional. If you say that you want to do the work and you say that you want difference within your organization, be intentional about it. And then also just the employee experience. What I often have seen is that it's great when employee engagement surveys ... I think they give you a peek into the box, but they never give you the full story. So what you see on paper—is that really representative of how people are experiencing the organization and their leaders? And I think oftentimes there's a disconnect there.

Kurt Greenbaum: Yeah, yeah, I understand. And you know, it's really interesting, because it brings to mind something that we talked about before when we were planning to have this conversation.

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah.

Kurt Greenbaum: Even on a micro level with this podcast, you know, I ... I am a middle-aged white man ...

Joyce Trimuel: Mm hmm.

Kurt Greenbaum: ... and I have a network, and part of my job is to be deliberate about trying to expand that network so that the guests we have on this podcast represent the full range of people that that have stories to tell. And it is absolutely something that I think about and I have not succeeded on as well as I would like to.

Joyce Trimuel: Sure. But what you just said, Kurt, I mean, you have to be deliberate. So it's about even if [...] your network today is reflective of who you self-identify as, OK, how do you then expand your network? And I think, you know, it's all about being intentional about that and being willing to be uncomfortable and put yourself out there, because at the end of the day, the world around us is changing. The demographics are changing at a very rapid pace.

You just look at 2020 census data. So, you know, if Hispanic Americans are the fastest-growing demographic in the US, and if you think about the race for talent and how competitive it is to get top talent, if you're continuing to do the same-old, same-old, it's going to catch up to your business, because again, the ideation, the innovation is going to be stagnant. So it's in the best interests of the business to really think more holistically about how do we attract? But then, equally important, how do we retain? So are we creating inclusive cultures where people feel that they have a sense of belonging, that they can be their authentic selves?

Kurt Greenbaum: So Joyce takes on the role of chief diversity officer at CNA, a role that began with no team, no budget, and she began to create systems and make measurable change in the organization. For example, she told me she was proud to show an uptick in the firm's employee engagement scores during her tenure. At the same time, she encountered inevitable challenges, including issues around

workplace flexibility, for example, which is a little ironic now in retrospect, right? Anyway, three years into her role, she's not seeing the kind of commitment she'd hoped for, and she's ready for another move. She's ready to work with companies that are really committed to investing in diversity, equity and inclusion in their workforces.

Joyce Trimuel: I will never forget, I was having a conversation with an individual who had been [...] a client of the year, so they were actually, in terms of CNA, [...] a client of this organization that does a lot of great diversity work globally. It [...] had developed a great relationship with the CEO. And so, you know, he and I were just talking from a mentorship/friendship standpoint, and he just began to say, he was like, "Well, have you considered doing the work as an executive consultant kind of on your own?" I had never been an entrepreneur before. I had always been in the system. And so, the more he and I talked about it and the fact that I knew I would be supported by someone who had been doing the work for 35-plus years, I knew that that was the path for me.

Kurt Greenbaum: And when exactly do you think Joyce chose to strike out on her own to become an entrepreneur and market herself as a DEI consultant? You guessed it. Right at the start of March in 2020, Joyce started posting videos to show off her experience and her perspective on LinkedIn and other social media sites. She was talking up her new opportunity, starting to generate a little bit of buzz about the next chapter. Then, boom. The pandemic shuts down the world. But the truth is, Joyce was kind of OK with that.

Joyce Trimuel: So again, in hindsight, it was a blessing in disguise that it would happen, because it did allow a little bit of ... it took some of the pressure off in terms of having to do this big, big something and do it quickly. It gave me a great opportunity to really be thoughtful about how I built my consulting practice.

Kurt Greenbaum: So there we are in mid-/late March. You're just hung out your shingle. The world shuts down. A few weeks go by, and then sort of the world turned on its axis again. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah. So you're referring to the George Floyd murder. And so out of nowhere—and again, it's not about maximizing the misfortune of anyone. So I want to be very clear about that, but it's about being ready to serve. And so you think about the fact that I had been doing a lot. I had been doing this work, at this point full time, four, almost five years. The fact that I had been very active on social media from March up until [...] May, early June, folks knew that I was available and literally organizations out of the woodwork begin to connect with folks like myself in terms of what do we do? How do we respond? You know, "We have not done this work before. Can you help us?"

And we're not talking about, you know, just smaller organizations. We're talking about all the way from nonprofits to global Fortune 50 organizations. I mean, the

phones were just ringing off the hook. And even to this day, there's still a lot of interest because of the fact that it's not just about putting out a statement on LinkedIn or some type of platitude where you are, you know, declaring what you believe by way of inclusion and equity. It's about what are you doing about it within the four walls of your organization? And that takes a lot of work.

Kurt Greenbaum: There must have been something about the way you had to compartmentalize all of this from a personal perspective and a professional perspective. Am I right about that?

Joyce Trimuel: Oh, 100% ...

Kurt Greenbaum: Can you talk about that?

Joyce Trimuel: A hundred percent. Because I have in my life people that it could have been. They could have been George Floyd, or they could have been, you name the person, Breonna. Breonna Taylor. So the fact [is] that you're managing your own emotions around things that are personal for you, but then you're also having to show up and help support individuals who may not necessarily get it. They're experiencing it in a very different way, just because they may not be as connected to the challenges and to some of the things that individuals like a George Floyd or, you name the name, experience on a day-to-day basis. So there is a lot of being able to compartmentalize in terms of your raw emotions that you may be feeling and how you believe everyone should just get it. But they may not. But it's also about supporting people in their own journey.

Kurt Greenbaum: So this ... this murder happened on Memorial Day in 2020. Do you remember when you got your first phone call from a potential client?

Joyce Trimuel: Oh, it was. Certainly it was, you know, it was that weekend, right? Because in terms of it was all about, how do we ... [people] were like, "What do we say?", you know, because you have employees who are ... I mean, they are experiencing this, you know, you're seeing the rioting that's happening. So it was really, the first calls were around, "How do we show up internally to our teams and to our staff?" It's a lot of [...] that and is varied, right? There's never, like, a one-size-fits-all approach, because I do think some organizations run the risk of, if you never connect with your staff, if you never are engaging, and then all of a sudden you think people are going to want to come and sit with you and tell you how they feel about something, it's not very [...] genuine, and people can kind of see through that.

So it was really about meeting the organization and leaders with "How are you are typically showing up for your staff outside of this or that? And so how do we then design and leverage what you already have done and let this be a moment of time where you're connecting in a different way on a different topic?" So that was one ... one thing that we were considering with clients. For leaders who were incredibly hesitant or—let's just say, fearful, right?—in terms of saying the wrong thing, doing

the wrong things, oftentimes, we would do facilitated sessions where they will perhaps, you know, have opening remarks and then we would take the conversation from there, because again, you just have to be realistic about the types of leaders that you're working with. And everyone's not capable of really having an authentic conversation around, let's just say, challenging topics that they may not be well-versed in, or even not being well-versed in but just incredibly uncomfortable with having.

Kurt Greenbaum: So were you being called on in that ... in those first few days and weeks to sort of do triage with some ... with a variety of companies to help them navigate their communication and the way they engaged, and then did those companies sort of winnow themselves out over time so that you could get into more deeply focused work with some of them?

Joyce Trimuel: So, Kurt, a lot of what happened was that, you know, you take care of what's, like, what's on fire in the moment. So you kind of have to respond to the immediate need. Because let's just be honest, George Floyd, that's one scenario that was a national tragedy that we saw. But there are things that are happening in local communities day in and day out that a lot of leaders may be immune to in terms of, you know, it doesn't happen to my staff or doesn't happen to my team. But I definitely think that there were ... it was an eye-opening conversation for a lot of leaders just in terms of ... of some experiences that these staff members were having outside of work. But then, how does that then show up in terms of treatment at work? You know, are there things that perhaps organizations are doing intentionally, unintentionally that's creating not an inclusive environment?

So really, a lot of those listening sessions, it's ... it's shone the light on deficiencies within organizations in terms of one of the prevailing themes was that the employee experience is very inconsistent and a lot of times is inconsistent for ethnically diverse people. And what does that mean as it relates to, you know, why individuals may be leaving an organization or if you really take a look at engagement scores? Oftentimes what we've seen is that the engagement of ethnically diverse people is lower than your majority population. Why is that?

So to have the data and to really hear from employees, for a lot of organizations, it triggered them to, like, "OK, we have to do something," because there's no way in my mind that you could hear all this information and then just say, "It's business as usual. And OK, thanks for sharing, but we're not going to do anything." So that was really the next phase of the work—was really about helping them develop their DEI strategies for more of a longer-term commitment

Kurt Greenbaum: In the midst of a crisis, how do you do the work? How do you [...] plan strategically when the world is kind of on fire and there's protests in the street and employees are really troubled in their hearts?

Joyce Trimuel: And I think it's how you would solve any business challenge. I think sometimes we can put diversity, equity and inclusion in its own separate category. So how do you think about, if I sell widgets and I know that I need to sell more widgets to this particular community or to this particular distributor? I am going to put together a plan. I'm going to have a core team. I'm going to have people that are accountable for helping me sell the widgets. Why is DE&I any different? If it's a business challenge, you put together the resources to solve for it. Now is it an optimal time. It's never an optimal time for, you know, a problem or solutions to come up.

But I truly believe that when it becomes important to organizations, they figure it out. They find the money to do it. They put the teams in place to help drive it, and they get it done. It's just ... it's about ... it's the long game, though. It's not, you know, a three-, six-month, OK, we do a couple of things. And I do believe in incremental success. I do believe in having milestones along the way. But you think about organizations that do this work well, they're committed for the long haul. And I think a lot of leaders just have to be willing to commit for the long haul, even when it becomes difficult. And so, for me, that really separates organizations that are truly committed versus this being the flavor of the month for, you know, some organizations who are like, "OK, we're going to do a couple of things and then we're done." That never works.

Kurt Greenbaum: You talked about this before. There are reasons to do this because it's just the right thing to do, and then there are reasons to do it because there's something in it for the firm. Do you think the firm needs to be able to measure the ROI on its investment in this ...

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah.

Kurt Greenbaum: ... and if so, how?

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah, yeah. So you know, my finance degree and my executive MBA degree. Yes. What gets measured gets done. I firmly believe that, and there is a way to measure this work. Now, I'm not going to say you're going to be able to measure everything they want, but you think about leading indicators of success, you know, long term. So some things that ... in my mind, a lot of organizations are measuring engagement, right? So then when you're looking at engagement, oftentimes there's going to be an inclusion index built within your engagement assessment. What does that number look like?

Kurt Greenbaum: What does that mean, when you say "engagement"?

Joyce Trimuel: So employee engagement. So in terms of does my company value difference? Do I feel as if I'm included in decisions? Is there a sense of belonging? So really, it's all about the employee sentiment as to their experience at an organization. And oftentimes, if you have a sample size, you know, that [is]

statistically sound, you can really get to parts of the business. You know, are there parts of the business or particular leaders who are doing better or there's an opportunity for improvement? So that really gets at the day to day of do I like coming to my job? Am I supported by my leader? That's really what engagement gets at.

Kurt Greenbaum: So in June 2020, your phone was ringing off the hook, and I guess I wonder, were there some firms that you said thanks, but no thanks to ...

Joyce Trimuel: Oh, 100%.

Kurt Greenbaum: ... because you ... because you weren't getting a good vibe from them?

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah, 100%. And you know, vibe is a good word. And also, when you start asking, like, those second/third questions in terms of what is your long-term plan for this and what is your budget for it? I mean, you just have to be practical about [what] you want. It's kind of like you want champagne, but it's beer prices. Like you have to be really open with people about just, like, you make the investment in anything else, you have to make the investment in this work. It's not necessarily about, you know, fattening the pockets of [...] a DE&I practitioner.

But you have to put the resources behind it. And then also, you know, I've seen with a couple of organizations where, you know, you, you do the assessments, [and] the data doesn't lie in terms of, you know, employee sentiment, engagement, current state assessment in terms of profile of your ... your leadership team. But then they're making excuses for why the results are what they are. So if you get a lot of pushback or a lot of excuses, that's, oh, you know, "We tried to recruit, but it didn't work out." I mean, going to one college is not, you know, in my mind, a hearty try. So I think those are some indicators that an organization is not necessarily committed or a good fit.

Kurt Greenbaum: A few well-placed questions during the ... the conversation would help you decide whether or not this was a client you wanted to work with.

Joyce Trimuel: Oh, 100%. And then also just in terms of, like, when you start asking the questions about, like, their personal level of commitment. Because it's not just about, "Oh, I'm going to give this to, you know, Janie in HR or whomever." It's like, "Leader, what are you committed to doing differently?" And because everyone has a role to play. Whether or not you are a board of directors all the way down to someone in the call center, everyone has a role to play in this work.

Kurt Greenbaum: As I understand this work, [...] there are some schools of thought that say it doesn't really matter what it is that brings you to this as long as you're doing it. And then there are others that might say, "Where you been? Like, this [...] work needed to be done before George Floyd was murdered. Where you been?" Yeah, I was just wondering what your thoughts are about that.

Joyce Trimuel: I mean, I can see both sentiments, right? But I also am keenly aware that the life experiences of some individuals, they may be immune to what other experience ... other individuals will experience on a day to day. So I do think some of it, I think with what we've seen over the last 18, 24 months has been very eye-opening for people, because perhaps the communities and you know, the way life is, they were kind of, you know, kind of the blinders were on because it's not their reality. It's not what they experience, it's not what folks within their networks experience. And so I would say it was both.

But I'm always supportive of individuals who, whether you're coming to the game late—I just need you in the game. So you meet people where they're at, and you work with them from there. Now there is an expectation that now that you know, you have to do. We can't continue to sit in this place of being naïve and, “Oh my god ... I feel bad.” I need for you to take that emotion and turn it into action. It's not just about the feeling and the emotion, but it's actually about the doing.

Gisele Marcus: I don't believe it matters the why they're getting involved. I think the important piece is more the how they're getting involved, how meaning are they doing it coming from a place where they feel that it's necessary to ensure that from a social justice perspective, you know, people are treated in a way that you would want to be treated?

Kurt Greenbaum: That's Gisele Marcus, one of my colleagues at WashU Olin Business School. She recently joined the faculty as a professor of practice and diversity, equity and inclusion. In fact, she's about to launch a new DEI course that'll be required for all MBA students at the school. She brings years of experience in the field from her corporate and nonprofit work, and I wanted to talk to her a little bit about her corporate perspective.

Gisele Marcus: Why should companies get excited about it? Well, because there's a great deal of research and evidence around companies that actually have good diversity, equity and inclusion techniques within their company that [shows] their companies perform better financially. And in the end, this is what organizations are looking for. They're looking for great performance. And just like any other functional area within your organization or your business, such as, like, marketing or operations or customer relationship management, diversity, equity and inclusion, you know, should also be on that same playing field in terms of level of importance to ensure that your business is growing in a manner that you and your stakeholders desire.

Kurt Greenbaum: As I said, Gisele comes to the work from the perspective of a corporate insider. Now, with the added perspective of a university instructor, I wanted to know how she'd coach students who are interested in whether a potential employee would be a good fit, and specifically whether the firm truly values diversity in their workforce.

Gisele Marcus: You can begin with just the easy part, right? Which are the metrics, you know, in terms of diversity of people, what ... what is it? You know, in terms of different races, ethnicities, male, female, those with, you know, disabilities, LGBTQIA+, you know, where is the company as far as that is just a ground-floor question. Then from there, it's all about the equity component. You know, are employees of those different groups being treated in an equitable manner? Are they able to articulate that? Have you actually talked to individuals that work in that company? Because the senior leadership may tell you one thing, you know, but what do the ... the individuals that are actually doing more of the hands-on work—what do they say?

So getting an understanding for, I would say, pay, promotion, profile, the three P's, where are they? You know, in terms of you look at all of those groups, you know, are they trending the same for all groups? If they're not [...] it doesn't mean this is not a place where you go work, but it's at least an awareness to say, "I recognize there's work to be done in this area." And if there's work to be done, then the question is, is the organization willing to do the work? So now that the organization has the information, what is it that they're going to do with it or about it?

So in the end, Kurt, I would say it's really about action. And the other component I would add [is] you also are hearing about DEIB—"B" for belonging. So the other question becomes, you know, as someone of any of those various dimensions that I mentioned, do they feel like they belong there? You know, so when they walk into the workplace, do they feel that their contributions matter? Do they feel that they're being heard? Are they being talked over in a meeting? When they make an, I mean, they have an idea in the meeting, is it being grasped initially, or does it take someone of another ethnicity or another gender to say it and then it takes flight? So the aspect of feeling that you belong in the workplace is also very important in terms of employee engagement and how you, as an employee, may feel working in that environment.

Kurt Greenbaum: I have all this information. Now that you've counseled me on that, I should be looking at. But how am I getting it? Am I just asking these questions of the company and trusting that they're forthcoming?

Gisele Marcus: So in terms of how do you follow up and get the information from the company, you can start with their website. More companies are beginning to be transparent in sharing what they're doing on their website. Whether you see it or you don't see it, you should feel free, you know, in terms of your interview process. These are questions. This is what interviews are for. It's actually a two-way dialogue. They're trying to figure out, would you be a good fit with them? and you want to figure out, would you be a good fit for them? So, as a result of that, really [take] the opportunity to dig deeper, ask [questions] in those interviews, but also utilize your resources, you know, go on social media. Who do you know that works at this company, or who do you know that went to Olin Business School that works at this

company? Surely they'd be more than happy to share? And if you don't know someone in a direct way, is there someone in your network that knows someone?

Don't be ashamed to ask, because once you make a decision to work in a place, ideally, you want to be happy there. So you want to do as much homework as you can before you get there. Now, the truth of the matter [is] often, oftentimes you go somewhere, and there'll be something that you learn, you see, that you didn't ask about. But before you make the leap to say yes, ask all of the necessary questions that would make you feel comfortable in that environment as it relates to the diversity, equity and inclusion space.

Kurt Greenbaum: That's how Gisele would counsel job seekers, but remember earlier, when Joyce talked about consulting with firms that really wanted to do the work? How do you know what distinguishes firms that are ready to invest in DEI work?

Gisele Marcus: So how do you know when an organization is ready? It actually starts at the top of the organization. I would say, you know, I want to say obvious reasons, right? Because for you to have a functional area exist, if your CEO is not on board for it, over time, it's ... it's just not going to be important to the organization, period, you know. So you're kind of pushing, you know, pushing up a hill, and you can never just kind of get to the top of it. So I would say it would start with that. But in having that, it just can't be the CEO, right? He or she has had to ensure that the organization understands that it's important—[...] not just the executive layer, not just the middle layer, but the people that are doing ... the employees that are doing the day-to-day work. Do they get it? So the CEO has the ability to make that kind of work happen. Again, it's not easy work, but he or she, you know, can cast that net to make that happen. So I think it starts [...] with him or her, because for it to have sustainability and to have legs, it has to have executive sponsorship.

Kurt Greenbaum: In my conversation with Joyce, we talked about thinking strategically in a crisis versus any other time. I also wanted Gisele's perspective on the subject.

Gisele Marcus: So typically when the hair is on fire, you will suddenly have resources that you didn't have before. So in a hair-on-fire situation, this becomes all hands on deck. This is now urgent. Red lights flashing versus when you're creating a strategic plan based on your normal course of business [and] you are typically relying on the resources you already have. So I would say that's one of the big differences in terms of developing a strategic plan, would be the resourcing that you have that's available to not only create it, but also to implement it.

Kurt Greenbaum: Well, another question on this subject I guess I'm also interested in knowing: Is strategic planning in the DEI area just like strategic planning in any other area of business, or are there reasons why this is ... are there sensitivities to

this, are there ... are there circumstances around DEI planning that make it unique in some way?

Gisele Marcus: So I would say that on the general surface, I would say strategic planning is strategic planning. However, there's a twist, because it is D&I, just as there would be a twist if it were marketing or if it were finance, you would want people working on that that had some type of knowledge and expertise in that area. Why? Because you want to make it the best plan [...] that it can be. And I would venture to say, no matter the functional area, you want someone or someones that have expertise in that space.

Kurt Greenbaum: So what gives you hope for the future going forward?

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah. You know, if I ... if I'm honest, my hope wavers sometimes. Just in terms of the pace for change, it seems as if, you know, often, like, you kind of take two steps forward and then three steps back. But I remain hopeful from the standpoint of the fact that we're having the conversations. The fact that there is a light shone on ... an opportunity for organizations and their leaders to do different and to do better. So I'm hopeful in that regard. I'm also hopeful because employees are starting to speak up a lot more, and they're starting to expect and to hold their leadership teams and their leaders accountable. And then even to that point, you start thinking about boards of directors. I'm having even more conversations with boards as of late in terms of "What should we be doing different and better?"

So again, I believe the tone from the top has to be established, and then it trickles down throughout the organization. So I'm hopeful that, you know, there will be a point in time that there will be no need for the work that I do. Do I see that happening in the immediate future? It's unfortunately no, just because of the pace for change and the fact that organizations are having to manage competing priorities. I mean, there's just a lot to manage at this point. And sometimes it's kind of like, if there's a list of 10 things to do, where does DE&I fall on your list of 10 things to do? So I think sometimes it fluctuates. Last year, it was definitely probably [in] the top three. I'm starting to see it be more in the middle pack right now. So I would say I'm hopeful because of the fact that more organizations are engaged in the work. But I'm also realistic that we're dealing with people, and people have to be willing to change and be intentional.

Kurt Greenbaum: I remembered at the very beginning of our conversation, you said, "I know I'm having an impact ..."

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah.

Kurt Greenbaum: ... and I just want to ask you about that. Can you talk about that? How? How do you know you're having an impact?

Joyce Trimuel: Yeah. You know, for me, it's kind of like, when I see a leader who perhaps 18 months ago was literally afraid to have any type of conversation that was not, you know, quote-unquote related to the business, but I see them engaging in a very genuine, authentic way. I see them leaning into discomfort, and I see them looking at themselves in the mirror or, you know, figuratively in terms of "We have to do better" and seeing them actually do the work. For me, that's major impact. I would also say just in terms of, you know, now that I am starting to be back more in-person with clients, which has been great, Zoom was great while we, you know, we were needing to use it.

But the fact that now even connecting with employees who, you know, will share stories like "It feels different around here." So to even hear some of those anecdotal, sometimes you can't equate it to, well, you know, what was the formula that worked to make it feel different? But the fact that leaders are showing up differently for their teams? To me, that's a win. So some of the things you can see on paper by way of keeping score. But I think for me to hear the stories and to ... to see leaders just engage differently for me, that's wins across the board.

Kurt Greenbaum: And that's our episode of *On Principle*. Thank you for listening, and I hope you got as much from Joyce's story as I did. Many thanks to her, and thank you to Gisele Marcus for sharing her perspective. As usual, I invite you to visit our website at *On Principle* podcast dot com for the show notes about this episode. And in those notes, I'll include links to some of Joyce's work, as well as a presentation about the importance of inclusion in the workplace that she gave at WashU Olin Business School toward the end of 2020. I'll also include a TEDx talk Gisele gave on strategies for networking. Our website includes all our previous episodes of *On Principle*, so please visit so you can catch up. Even better, search for *On Principle* in your favorite podcasting app so you can subscribe. Finally, if you have any comments, questions or episode ideas, send an email to Olin podcast at W-U-S-T-L dot E-D-U. That's olinpodcast@wustl.edu.

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