An Interview with Krista Pouncy-Dyson

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This summer, through the Lepage Center's Strategic Advisor Program, I had the privilege of working with two local New Orleans businesses as they navigate the pervasive uncertainty that is encompassed within COVID-19. One of the companies, Performance First Digital, is a digital marketing and web development agency that is hinged on innovative strategy and accessibility. Recently, I spoke with founder Krista Pouncy-Dyson to learn more about the origins of Performance First, her interest in the realm of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and the imperative nature of her platform, Diversity Employed. In addition to participating in the Strategic Adviser Program, Krista also participated in the New Orleans Business Alliance's InvestNOLA program, which features executive education courses taught by Freeman School and Xavier University faculty, plus a mentorship component facilitated by the Lepage Center.



Krista Pouncy-Dyson, Founder of Performance First Digital and Diversity Employed

After over two decades in the digital media space, what prompted you to start your own company?

“What I had seen was that so many companies needed a solid partner who could help them strategize across all of their media and marketing efforts — not just print and digital. Performance First Digital is all about helping these marketers decide how to make themselves more visible and then get the most out of what they’re spending. Additionally, there is a lack of equality and inclusion. Advertising as a whole has fallen short in embracing diversity, and I want to continue to break down those barriers.”

How has your interest in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion led you to the creation of Diversity Employed?

“There are viable opportunities here in New Orleans, but often minorities are not exposed to these openings. Recruiters have limited options to advertise directly to diverse audiences. We want to positively impact this shortfall with our newly developed platform. Whether they recognize it or not, companies gain a competitive edge by hiring, embracing, supporting, and empowering diverse employees.”

What sets Diversity Employed apart from other platforms like LinkedIn, Indeed, and Glassdoor?

“The site is diversity-centric first. One of the site's differentiators is that it programmatically cross-pollinates open positions onto other diverse oriented job sites like The Veteran's Network, Diversity Network, etc., to maximize exposure to the most ideal job seekers.”

How do you think the realms of digital media and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion complement each other?

“I think they are strongly aligned. People rely on digital media to understand what is going on around them and this impacts the decisions they make. For example, if someone researches a company where they might be interested in working, and

there is no diverse representation, they may assume that the company isn't interested in hiring minorities. Hence, a talented individual doesn't even apply. Social media also adds an interesting component. Recently, social media has forced companies to hire D&I consultants to try and help them climb out of years of internal inequities, and it is definitely playing out on social media platforms."

How has your time with InvestNOLA aided you in your pursuit of perpetuating the vitality of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce?

"InvestNOLA opened up doors for me to communicate my idea to other stakeholders who have been impactful in providing resources to help amplify the vision of diversityemployed.com."

What advice would you give to employees and employers who are interested in curating a workforce that is reflective of the world around us?

"It starts with the internal culture at the top. Leaders have to take ownership of the messaging they put forth internally and externally."

Written by Cammie Gordon, Lepage Strategic Adviser Summer '20