



Black Leadership Advisory Council: Sharena Denard

Name: Sharena Denard

Title: HR Manager

Location: Tampa, Florida

Date of Hire: June 2015



Why did you choose to participate in BLAC?

I have worked for two alcohol distributors, and compared to other organizations, they seem to traditionally have a lower representation of Black professional associates. For a while, I attributed that to the industry's history of family ownership. I love the family atmosphere and quickly accepted it as an industry norm. While working at Johnson Brothers and interacting with Gallo, I appreciated the work that the supplier was doing to expand and strengthen the culture. I started digging into similar programs at our other distributors and was ecstatic to hear that RNDC would be creating their own committee. BLAC will allow me to continue to work in the Human Resources competencies I am passionate about like diversity, inclusion and development all to maintain our status as the distributor of choice.

What do you hope to accomplish as a member of BLAC?

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that many of us are not prepared to have a progressive conversation about race. As a member of BLAC, I would like to start a dialogue where executives, managers and individual contributors start to understand the shared experiences of their Black associates. Hopefully, gaining a better understanding will result in intentional initiatives to promote inclusion, improve hiring practices and enhance the coaching experience, which will build better working relationships across the organization.

What is your vision for current and future Black professionals?

In a perfect world, the most qualified person will always be the one that receives the job opportunity. My current vision for Black professionals is for them to be comfortable enough to bring their authentic selves to work. To feel comfortable enough to speak in their natural dialect, and if they choose to, wear their hair as it grows from their head and not feel like they are viewed as unprofessional. Lastly, it would be ideal for Black professionals to not alter their behavior because of the pressures of feeling like you are representing more than just you.

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My future vision for Black professionals is that employers intentionally make space not just for Black professionals but for other minority groups. My vision is for employers to obtain the right resources to reach across all underrepresented groups so that the top candidate is notified of the opportunity and given the chance to apply. Ultimately, I desire that when Black professionals are hired, no one will question their qualifications - even after seeing their skills, abilities, strengths and accomplishments.

Why does representation matter to you?

Many times, seeing people that look like you in positions of power sets a personal barometer as to how much you can realistically accomplish within an organization. It's easy to aspire to be the first and lead the way, but you question if there may be a bias preventing you from ever truly accomplishing that goal within an organization. Representation is also important because it breaks down stereotypes. Most people hang out with people that look like them and the only meaningful interaction they have with individuals outside of their race is at work. If you only have the opportunity to work closely with a few Black associates and those interactions aren't positive, you run the danger of formulating an unfair opinion about a large group of people who are all very different. As previously stated, I no longer want the pressure of feeling like my actions will negatively impact your opinion of another person. Lastly, in my entire career, I have never had the experience of walking into a large leadership meeting and be able to count on more than one hand the number of people that look like me. I speculate that would be a gratifying and welcoming experience.

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