

Episode 118: How All Consultants Can Support Equity and Anti-Racism Work—with Dynasti Hunt

Deb Zahn: Hi. Want to welcome you to this week's episode of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. This episode, we're going to talk about something really important, and that is, if you're out and working with companies and organizations, you have probably seen that they have been hiring diversity, equity, and inclusion consultants. Presumably to help them become more equitable, just, and inclusive companies and organizations. But that work isn't always done well and it's not always leading to those specific outcomes.

And so I brought on an expert in this, Dynasti Hunt, who is a diversity, equity, inclusion consultant. She talks about how she works with companies and organizations and helps them figure out how to do this work deeply and for real. Then we also get into something that's really near and dear to my heart, which is, what can other consultants do? The consultants that are in these organizations or companies that aren't doing the diversity, equity, inclusion work. What can we do to help facilitate really meaningful work in this area and to provide support to the consultants who are doing that work?

This is one of those really deep episodes. I encourage everyone to listen and to think about, even if you're not the person doing that work, what role you can play to make things better for that organization and business and for the people who work in it. Let's get started.

Hi. Want to welcome our guest today, Dynasti Hunt. Dynasti, welcome to the show.

Dynasti Hunt: Thank you so much, Deb. I'm very excited to be here.

Deb Zahn: Well, let's start off. Tell my listeners what you do.

Dynasti Hunt: Oh gosh. That's such a loaded question.

Deb Zahn: It is, right? Especially when you have so many lives.

Dynasti Hunt: OK. I hope you all are ready. Grab a little sip of something or whatever you're drinking because it's going to be like a 20-minute podcast about what I do. In short, I am a racial equity coach and I make sure that workplaces are safe for all individuals. Particularly those who have been historically, and I like to say, currently marginalized because there is still marginalization that is still happening. That for folks who are like, "Ah, that's a fancy term," people of color, individuals who historically in the workplace have experienced more inequities than those who are non people of color.

But it's a loaded question because while I work for an organization, which I love dearly, I also run my own coaching practice. I am also a fitness instructor and do racial equity coaching and consulting in the fitness industry as well. So on any given day, you could find me teaching a class, and that could be a fitness class, or it could be a class on how we think about closing inequities in a workplace. That's a little bit about what I do.

Deb Zahn: I love it. I love the range of that. Somehow it all goes together. That's perfect.

Dynasti Hunt: Somehow.

Deb Zahn: Today we are going to talk about the work that you do to create equitable anti-racist organizations, but also touch upon all of the other consultants who work within those and have their own businesses and how they can support both the work itself, as well as the people who are doing that work.

Dynasti Hunt: Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: Let's start off with the good vision. If there was an organization or company that was truly equitable anti-racist organization, what would it look like? How would we know that?

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah, I think it's such a great question that you're starting here because I think it's one where people think, "OK, well, if the team is more diverse, then we're good." And I'm like, "That's a smokescreen." You can have a diverse team. You could have a majority BIPOC team and that team may not be an equitable, safe place for people to work. And so, what I like to talk about are three different layers here. I think the first layer is do you have representation of so many different groups?

When I really think about this, I think about representation from what is an assumed visible identity standpoint. I say assumed because I think people assume my race. They assume my gender, but they don't know. These are assumptions that people make about my visible identity, but then also my invisible identity. The things that you don't know. My religious stance. My sexual orientation. How I choose to think and to plan and to project manage and to do things at work. All of those pieces make up what I think really makes up diversity. That's the first surface layer.

Then you get into the second layer, which is power dynamics. Decision-making power. Who is actually making decisions for the organization? What is their background? Are they actually working actively every day to be anti racist? Because it is a choice that you make day in and day out. You don't just turn on a light switch and you're like, "All right, dad. Today Dynasti is anti-racist, ta-da. It just happened." It's every day you're choosing to sit down and do that work. So who are the decision-makers and are they choosing to be anti-racist in their work?

The third layer is data. You look at the core data because the data tells you results. As much as I am, I love a lot of qualitative data. I love sitting and talking to people. I'm like, "Look, I can get some information from qualitative data, but the reality is the quantitative data shows me who you're promoting when. How are you paying people? How are people experiencing the organization? What does retention look like? What does turnover look like? Those numbers tell a story."

Most individuals are like, "Let me just tell you the story about my recruitment practices," but I need individuals and organizations to tell us the full story because the full story is where we actually get to. Are you truly an equitable organization?

Deb Zahn: That's great. I know that particularly after the murder of George Floyd, a lot of companies and organizations started doing what we'll categorize stuff.

Dynasti Hunt: They were doing stuff.

Deb Zahn: That's just stuff.

Dynasti Hunt: They were doing stuff.

Deb Zahn: Some of it was real. Some of it wasn't, and just performative and everything in between. When you're looking to work with an organization, what are the signs that you see if there is real commitment here to get to what you just described?

Dynasti Hunt: Two things. One, leadership is in the room for that first conversation. It is disappointing to see the amount of organizations that I have come across, that I've spoken with, that I have seen even from afar where it is not the leadership team, including the CEO, that are involved in making the commitment to being anti-racist. There are individuals who are within the organization. A lot of times they are individuals who have the lowest-ranking positions within the organizations who are saying, "Let's do something different. Let's change things."

The reality is that I can do only so much as a member of the team. But if I don't sit in a position of power or decision-making authority, I cannot shift the entire organization without those leaders at the table. So one is leadership to be in the room. They have to be in room for those conversations, and it can't be, "We're stepping back so that we can allow the teams to really lead the process." No because at some point they're going to need you to make a decision about how we're spending the dollars, the choices that we're making. And when you're not in the room, that's a problem.

Deb Zahn: Yep.

Dynasti Hunt: That's one. I think the second piece of this that comes up is, do organizations flinch when I say things like white supremacy culture, or race in general. I kid you not, Deb, the amount of organizations when I'm like, "white supremacy culture," and it's just like, "whew-whew."

Deb Zahn: Yeah, like-

Dynasti Hunt: Hope you all are watching the video because you just see my hand just like paper throwing everywhere. People are just like, "That is not true." I'm like, "OK. All right. Here we go." But if you're not comfortable facing your own stuff, facing the realities that are in every single organization...I mean, it's just a part of the makeup and composition of organizations in our country, in the United States. If you don't want to talk about it, then you're not going to get very far. You're going to be in the place of DEI is going to sit on a shelf, or you're going to be the organization that's like, "We donate a lot of money." But we don't talk about any of the real stuff within our organization. So we're not changing.

Deb Zahn: That's right. Oh yes. Sadly, I've seen that. What's interesting, when I hear you talk about it, and you were describing the right way to do it, that's exactly how you would do it for anything else that's mission critical for the organization. You would not have people who have no decision-making authority making major financial decisions for an organization. You would not be afraid to say things about financial issues in that organization. If this is truly mission critical, you're going to approach it the way you approach anything that's mission critical.

Dynasti Hunt: Oh, that's exactly right. You're hitting the nail on the head Deb because I find so many organizations...When I talk about this work with organizations, I try to put it in layman's terms. I'm like, "You wouldn't do that. You would not have a junior member of the staff making a decision about how we're going to spend the budget. You wouldn't have a junior member of the staff saying, "Oh no, we're

going to change our mission. We're going to change the corporate structure of what we do." You might ask them for input, but the board, the CEO is going to make that decision.

So to then pretend like all of that strategy, all of those approaches go out of the window when we're talking about becoming an anti-racist organization and people are just like, "There are so many more emotions involved. It's so much more complicated." Money is emotional and complicated. Changing your mission is emotional and complicated. Making decisions about people's performance review and their promotion is emotional and complicated. Anti-racism is no different than that.

Deb Zahn: Yeah.

Dynasti Hunt: But it requires you to do the work in a different way. I think that's the real struggle, is that for some folks, they're like, "Yeah, but I can do all of that and not change my behaviors. Do not change my mindset," and not have to look at my own self and go, "Wow, there are some pieces of you that aren't that great." But I'm like, "But you do that anyways. People do that every day in life coaching and therapy. So why wouldn't you do that same thing when it comes to addressing how you become anti-racists, in order for your organization to become anti-racists?"

Deb Zahn: Yeah. I think about that imposter syndrome as something that so many people experience. Well, why not experience it a little bit with this? Like, "Wait a minute. Maybe I'm not who I think I am, and maybe I am faking elements of this and I need to really look critically at." If you were ever going to pick that up as a tool, this might be a good time to do that.

Dynasti Hunt: Well, yeah. And it's all of us. It's all of us looking at ourselves critically, and I say this all the time. I've seen organizations who are like, "I really want to do this work. I really want to become an anti-racist, inclusive organization. I want to be equitable." And I'm like, "Great, cool." They'll run out and they'll change a policy, or practice, or a system, and then they'll come back and they'll say, "Dynasti, we changed it. It's equitable on paper, but it's not working."

I'm like, "Oh cool. Who's leading that?" They're like, "Such, and such, and such, and such." I was like, "Oh, the two people that were in that training that I did five months ago, who were yelling at me because they were like, 'Oh, white supremacy culture doesn't exist,' those are the two people that are now in charge of implementing the equitable system, and you're telling me that it's not working? Let's think about this. It's not one or the other. You have to do both."

You have to change the mindsets and behaviors of the people within the organization. You have to change the actual infrastructure, the systems in the organization in order for it to work. I also see a lot of people doing the opposite, which is like, "Well, I'm going to spend all my time listening and learning and thinking. I'm going to buy 17 journals. I've got 27 books. I've got 10 movies, Dynasti. I've got to read these three podcasts. So I'm going to go back to school. I'm going to get this 10-year degree *that doesn't exist* on anti-racism. And then, I will make my first step, to step up when I see a microaggression happen at work and to say something."

What? What? You need that many books and frameworks, which also goes back to white supremacy culture, but a story for another day-

Deb Zahn: But important.

Dynasti Hunt: When you read all those frameworks and tools to get words. But that's the other half of this, is so many folks are stuck in this paralysis of like, "I can't do anything. I can't try it." But I'm just like, "It's just like learning to ride a bike." The first time, you're going to fall off. You're going to scrape your knee. You might hurt yourself. But your tools are your helmet, the book that you're reading, the podcast. But what do you do? You get on the bike with your helmet and your knee pads and maybe your elbow pads if you're like me.

I'm struggling to ride a bike as an adult. So I've got all the gear on. You have all these tools on, but you get on the bike, and you start to ride. As you do it a little bit more, you can let go of the knee pads. But guess what? A lot of us wear the helmet to this day. There are professionals that are bike riders, but they wear the helmet to this day. It doesn't stop them from riding the bike. It just says that you need to start somewhere in doing the work.

So it requires individuals within workplaces to actually start and keep riding, noting that there's always going to be a helmet. You're going to replace the helmet with something new. It's going to be a new book, a new tool, a new thing that you're learning. But guess what? You're still pedaling. Why don't you do that in this work?

Deb Zahn: That's right. And you're going to be clumsy, and you're going to fall. You're going to run into the tree, and you're going to do all those things, and that's OK.

Dynasti Hunt: Oh my gosh, all the time. I mean, I think about my fitness classes. I've been teaching now for over six years. Those who are listening, I am in a little bit of a pseudo retirement. I haven't taught during the pandemic. So at some point I will come out of retirement. Folks have been asking, like, "Are you coming out of retirement?" I'm like, "At some point I will." But in six years, when I first started teaching, I really struggled, and then got better as I practiced and did more.

But there were times, in these six years, right before I said I'm going to stop teaching for a while, where I would have tough days in classes. And I had been teaching. I was teaching other instructors. I was coaching other people in the same way that I teach other people about doing this work. I was having those moments in my classes where I was like, "Wow, that was an off class for me!" Does that mean that I should not come back the next day and not teach that next class? No.

So even when you become the "expert," you're not the expert. I don't ever position myself as an expert. I position myself as a life-time learner, a life-time sponge, if you will. I'm always trying to take in something new because I know that there's more to learn and there's more to evolve because as people evolve, this work is going to evolve. And so, I never want to position myself as the expert or that I have the answer. I have a set of answers that might meet you where you are in a certain place in your journey.

Then there's probably going to be another educator who's going to have a different set of answers, a different helmet, a different tool for you to meet you as you continue to grow in your journey. That's how I like to describe people doing this work within a workplace, along the way, different pieces in the journey, along the way in an organization, you're going to be in different spots in your journey. It's not a, "Let's just set these goals and we're done," because I'm like, "No, that's just phase one."

You literally haven't even scratched the surface. You have not done any of the messy, oh my gosh, hard work and hard decisions that you have to make.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. You have to be willing to recognize that the long horizon and the discomfort that goes with it and the ahas you'll have throughout it, but that it's never one and done. Never one and done.

Dynasti Hunt: It's never one and done. But the beauty of it is that the grass is greener. You hear that. People say like, "Oh, but the grass is not greener in other side." This work, to me, is an example where the grass is greener, and it gets greener every single time that you do it. Sometimes I feel like we described this work and we're like, "This work is so hard. It's so emotional. It's so labor-intensive. It's going to scare me. It's going to push me. It's going to make me uncomfortable."

It's going to do all of those things. But what's on the other side of that is beautiful, and it's greener, and it's equitable. It says that everyone gets an equitable place in your organization. Why would you not want to fight for that and work towards that? But so many times people get stuck in the mentality of, "It's so hard. It's so uncomfortable." And I'm like, "I hear you, but I want you to also think about your peer who is sitting right next to you, where this is uncomfortable for them since birth."

As a black woman, for myself, this is uncomfortable for me because I'm having to experience it and then try to get you to understand, to get from your peace place of uncomfortableness and come to the other side so that I can get to the place where the grass is greener and we can have green grass together. There's this myth out there that I think people have in their minds. It's like, "Oh, well, in order for it to be equal, in order for it to be an equitable place to work, I have to give up something." You do.

There are some people that need to give up something, but it's not to re-shift the balance, if you will. So it's not like a slide where it's like, "Well, you give me all your stuff and then I'll be at the top of the slide and you'll be at your bottom." It's like, "No, give me some of your stuff. Give me some of that power, that decision making, that privilege that you've got, share it, let's get equal, and then we can just chill in the same place together."

Deb Zahn: It's not a see-saw.

Dynasti Hunt: I think that's such a myth where people are like, "Well, I have to give this up." And I'm like, "Yeah, but you are giving it up for what? Bigger picture, what are you giving it up for?" The reality is most people, even when they give up a little bit, they still have so much more power and privilege that they don't understand they have. So I'm like, "That little tenth of power or privilege that you just gave up was nothing but is really significant to another individual that has zero."

Deb Zahn: I love that. And you gain so much more because you get to live in that lush, beautiful green grass, and you're contributing to heading there. That's a huge, huge gain.

Dynasti Hunt: Absolutely.

Deb Zahn: We talked about earlier, a lot of organizations and companies started to do stuff. And so, when you're approaching an organization, often they will have done something. They did their Black Lives Matter thing on their website, or they did a training unattached to anything else, or they did

listening sessions or whatever that version is. How do you figure out what you're going to do with that organization, given that everyone might be in a bit of a different spot?

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah, that's a great question. I am going to be blunt here for a second. My first step with organizations that I'm working with is I want to talk to individuals who identify as people of color, plain blank, period. I want to talk to them. I want to know what they're experiencing. I want to know what's really going on. We can fancy the term up. On my website, we call it equity dialogue spaces, and they're wonderful things. But the reality is, the whole point of it is I want to talk to the people who have been historically and currently marginalized and oppressed.

I want to find out what's really going on so that I can come back to the organization's leaders and say, "OK, cool. I hear that you did the training. I hear that you did the statement. This is what you really need to be working on and what I am here to do with you." But I see organizations, a lot of organizations will say like, "We did this survey already. We did this thing. You don't need to talk to us." And I'm like, "Oh no, I need to talk to your folks," because you're going to come in and you're either going to have one view that feels prettier than what it is and you may not be telling the real truth, or the reality is you may not know."

My work has spanned over the years, DEI, racial equity work, but also I've done a lot of HR and talent work. So I love talking to organizations because they're like, "Oh, she knows the back end of the talent systems." And so, I know things like, oh, you all do an annual survey each year where you ask people...I mean, you say it's anonymous, but then you go through and you weed through to try to read the comments, to see who said what. I've seen organizations do that.

Deb Zahn: And you can always tell.

Dynasti Hunt: I've seen organizations do stuff like that, or cutting the data in certain ways, or sending emails that say things like, "Yeah, we want you to take the survey and be honest with us, but being mindful this could impact your performance review." Now that's not an organization that I worked directly for. It's an organization that I consulted with and immediately pulled out because I asked those questions. Because of my work in HR and talent, I know to ask those questions.

So when people say to me, "I have the survey already, you don't need to talk to my team, I'm like, "I don't trust that survey with a ten-foot pole because I don't know the conditions that you create it that might make it hard for individuals who identify as people of color to not be able to say it in an anonymous survey what they're really experiencing. So I want to talk to the people first, before we do a lot of these training sessions, before we get into the work."

I will say to you, Deb, that I have made the mistake. I will own this. I've made the mistake where organizations have really challenged me on this, and this is early on in my career, and said like, "No, no, no. Really, no, we've got it. We've got the data. I'm telling you, we don't need to survey them again. We just surveyed them like two weeks ago," and I'll say, "OK, cool. What do you think we should do?" And then we'll talk through it. We'll build a whole plan. Every single time, between three to six months in, it's like it just blows up. And they're like, "Oh, we've got this going on, and this person's over here." I'm like, "I didn't talk to the team."

If I would have talked to the team, I would have caught some of this. I would know because, ultimately, if my job, my goal, my mission is that I want it to be an equitable and safe place for all individuals, I've got to talk to those individuals. But sometimes organizations will be like, "Oh no, no, no. We already know. Here's what we really need to do. We've already done this training. We're good." Every single time you learn and you're like, "Oh." Now I'm getting the real story six months in, and you've got organizations like, "But we've been paying you." I'm like, "Yeah, you've been paying me and you should have paid me to actually talk to your folks, to have a real conversation."

Deb Zahn: That's what you learn as a consultant or coach is what never to do again because you know because you've seen it. Yeah. I hear you.

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Deb Zahn: I know some of what can happen, as I've seen it and I've heard from other folks I know that do this type of work, that if you see the willingness for the commitment at the beginning, but that at some point, like when the words "white supremacy" start to get used as a normal way of talking about things, or racism, or something comes up that starts to be at their doorstep, at the leader's doorstep, there becomes this resistance and desire to backtrack. How do you help them get over that hump and stay the course that they started on?

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah. That I think really boils down to some individual coaching conversations or true come-to-Jesus moments where it's like, "What's gotten you so uncomfortable? Tell me more," and get them to explore the uncomfortable gap that they're in. I don't think you can do that with a group. I think it is figuring out who those individuals are, what position do they have in the organization? Can they stop the organization moving forward?

Because if you have someone on your team who really doesn't want to do the work and is being really resistant, but they have no power, no real voice, they're not going to impact others. Then I'm having a conversation with leaders to say, "Where are you, and where is the organization? What are your expectations for the team? Where do people need to be in their journey across the organization, and are you willing to maintain, to hold on to someone on the team who could potentially impact other people across the organization in a certain way, and cause them to leave? Are you willing to let this one person impact so many others?"

I see this time and time again where even though they don't have a lot of power on paper, one person impacts the experience of so many others where those people are leaving, and it's like, "Well, we need to give them a coach, and we need to do this." I hear all of that, Deb, and I'm just like, "At some point..." "What did I hear once? Fire fast, hire slow. I'm like, "You've got a gap. What are you going to do?" Organizations are going to be like, "Wow, Dynasti just told me to fire some people."

You know what? Fire them with grace. But some people need to go. At some point in an organization, you are going to get to a place in the journey as an organization, I do believe and I've seen it, where you're going to have to have some real conversations about, are you in or are you out? Because if you're not in on this journey, cool, but this is not going to be the place for you. So going back to, if you do have power and you can change a lot of things in the organization and you are stickler point, then I do think it is one-to-one coaching to unpack: "Why are you sticking? Why are you stuck? Why is holding you back?"

I think it's important to turn it back to the person because if I am trying to do all these things, like, "Let me give you a bunch of resources. Read these articles. Do these things," ultimately, I don't want to work with an organization for the next 20 years. I don't want to be your DEI person for the next 15 to 20 years. I want to teach you enough where you are able to figure it out for yourself, within good reason, figure it out for yourself and lead. And when you get stuck, you know how to get unstuck.

And so, to me, coaching helps someone figure out, when I get stuck again, let me go back to some of those questions that were asked. Let me go back and reflect so that I can get myself unstuck. Because if I can work myself out of working with you and feel like you all are good as an organization to unstick yourselves on your own, then you're going to be good when new people are hired. You're going to be good when you're thinking about the next policy, or the next practice. But otherwise, you're going to continue to get stuck and then the emotional burden or labor is going to go on an individual like myself, or internally if you have a DEI team, on those teams. And I think that's a crash.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Well, I'd love what you bring up about the sustainability part of it because fundamentally, their DNA must change. I'm thinking of, in the National Health Service, they define sustainability as when new ways of working become the norm. It seems to be a good example of what you're talking about, is they should know how to get unstuck. They should know how to have conversations that were once difficult. Things should be normalized, that used to be really hard and now they're not because this is the culture we've developed. How do you help them recognize that that's what ultimately the goal is and help them own their part of making this sustain?

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah. There's a great process that just helps people dig into the root cause analysis of things. It asks questions. I teach this process where you ask them the question. You say, "Well, why is it this way?" And they say, "Well, I think it's because of this." And I say, "Well, ask why again." They ask why again, and they ask why again. We go through that five times in simple root cause analysis. But at the core of it, they can actually see the impact it's having typically on their business, on their people, on long-term longevity for sales.

Then it's like, "Is that what you want? Is that connected to your mission? What's your mission? What are your strategic goals? What is really happening here?" When they go back and connect, they're like, "No, no, no. That is going to take us further away from where we're going. That's going to take us further away from my performance and being the organization that we want to be." And it's like, "OK, great." Then we can circle back and tie those things together.

But I think so much of this is getting people to understand their own roots and the causes of what's happening, so that when they look at things, they're not going to the surface because on the surface, if I'm like, "Well, why is your employee handbook policy," there's a policy employee handbook, "Well, why is it that way?" "Well, it's because it's this." Most organizations stop there. They say, "Oh, it's because it's this." And then they go solve for that. Then they're like, "Why are we in the same position or doing the same stuff but we haven't solved anything?"

It's because you haven't gotten to the root, and therefore, you haven't gotten to the things that actually bring you pause, keep you up at night as a business leader or a business owner. Get to the core of those things. I mean, you're like, "Whoa, if we don't fix this, we will lose all 20% of our BIPOC team because we only had 20% of the first place and that's an issue. You're telling me they're going to walk out the door." And that these are the individuals that are actually instrumental in creating, let's say, engineering.

They're creating a database for us that helps us to increase our revenue three times over the next 10 years. That's a very different conversation than, "Oh, we just need to adjust this word in the policy. We just need to get them off of our backs."

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. Because this is really about consequences for individuals and the overall organization and the mission. It sounds like what you do is you take them on that journey of discovery, which they have to discover and embrace themselves, if you're fundamentally going to get change.

Dynasti Hunt: Exactly. It can't be me because I know it. I can see it from the outside once I start talking with you as an organization. You have to embody it and embrace it and understand it and understand your roots around it and then figure out where it goes from there. It's so interesting. So many folks too, people that teach corporate DEI structures, will talk about the business case. What does this do on revenue? We can get to a whole different podcast about the connection to capitalism and businesses because I have a lot of concern around that and money. I try so hard. People are like, "Well, what is this to our bottom line?" I'm like, "What is this to people being able to show up and feel like they have a safe space to work, and how do you tie that to money and dollars?" But different questions or different categories for another day. But when you're doing this, I think so many organizations aren't stopping to realize things like, "Oh, I've got to dig into these roots because if I dig into my own roots, I'm going to be able to do that every single time."

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: It's a practice. So then, before you make a big decision, before you make a big change, you're digging into the roots. The other thing is organizations are like, "Here are the changes that we're going to make." But the reality is you think about historical context. You don't change something without looking back. You look back to move forward because you're like, "Oh, we've done this before. We've been here before. We don't want to do that again." Or, "We need to understand our actual roots and where this originates from."

Give you a quick example. Organization, I said, "What's a policy? Let's just pick a policy, something simple that we can start with." So they said, "Our maternity leave policy." Maternity leave policy, we only get two weeks." I was like, "Huh, that's interesting. So why is that? Why is that your maternity leave policy?" They were like, "Oh, well it was just created and that's the policy." I was like, "Yeah, that's your quick answer. Why?" We go why, we go why again, we go why again, go back to the actual roots.

The roots were, the organization was started by two white men who had never had kids. They hired more men than they hired a few women. Those women had never had children. Those men, some of them had kids, but had a mentality that a leave was just for women. And so they had held this policy for all these years and nobody had adjusted it. When they started to go through the roots, they had not reflected on this at all. And they knew this information. But they hadn't stepped back to go, "Oh my gosh, it was written by these two guys who have no idea what...Who are even no longer here. Why have we not changed this?"

I was like, "Because you're so busy, just like, 'Let's just do the next thing. That's how we solve DEI. That's how we become anti-racists and get equitable. We do this work. You didn't take the step to think back and go, 'Oh, historically, this is what our roots are.'" We need to address our own roots in order to be

able to move forward, so that we, one, know how to move forward and what to, so that we don't repeat history over and over again, which we're doing in the United States more broadly in general.

Deb Zahn: So, so very true. But I love that because this is the way we've always done things. That's not just 30, 50-year-old organizations. That's two-year-old organizations. That's five-year-old organizations.

Dynasti Hunt: It is two-year old organizations. Those are organizations who are just now starting off. I'm working on something because I really want to start working with not just organizations that already exist, but brand new...You're a solopreneur, if you will. You're starting your own online service-based business. It's just you. You're hanging out there by yourself. I want to work with those folks too, and because what they don't realize because they haven't done their own roots as a leader or as a new business owner, is that they are taking their practices from organizations they've worked with and people they've worked with, and if those people haven't looked at their own roots and examine those, those are just a through-line for more white dominant practices, more white supremacy, culture work and more through-line of just like, "We're just carrying this historical context forward and nobody's interrogating it." And nobody questions it, where they learned it from.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. Oh, I love that. I actually want to ask two questions related to what we just talked about. One is, lots of organizations and companies have other consultants like myself floating around doing other things. Working on the finances. Working on the overall strategy for where they're headed. Many particularly white consultants have influence with the leaders. But when we look at the DEI work, we're like, "Well, that's what they're doing."

But the reality is there's so much that we can be doing even outside of what we think of our narrow scope, to both support that work, support the people who care about that work, and support the people who are doing that work. What would you like to see? If I was a consultant in one of those organizations and you know I had the ear of the CEO, the CFO, and the other sort of C-suite folks, what could I do to be supportive of the work going in the right direction?

Dynasti Hunt: I would love to see more consultants reach over and just say, "Hey Dynasti, can we have a conversation?" A conversation that's separate. The organization doesn't need to be there, but we have a conversation so that I can say, "Here's what's going on and here's what I need you to do. Here's what I need you to be thinking about. Here's what I need to make sure that you are positioning in a certain way," because if so, then we can align. If you have the ear of the organization in a way that I don't, or I'm newer, we're just figuring out how we're working together, then there are certain things that you can recommend or do that will help push the work forward.

But I think so many times organizations have different consultants, and the different consultants are doing different things. But it's like the right hand not talking to the left hand and we need to be coming together more. I also encourage white consultants, I'm like, "Hey..." If the organization doesn't introduce you, you should just ask in general, "Hey, are you all working with anybody on your DEI journey? I'd love to just introduce myself to them. Can I get their information? Just love to have just an introductory chat."

Or if they just give you a name, go on LinkedIn, reach out, connect with them and just say, "Hey, it's me. We should talk. We should have a conversation so I could tell you what I'm working on. I'd love to get your thoughts and vice versa so that we can make sure things are aligned." It seems so simple, but it just

isn't happening. I think if more of that happened, there would be a lot more alignment and there could be multiple voices really reaching leadership to say, "This is consistent with what we're trying to do." Because so many folks think about DEI as a separate priority or separate work, and they don't think about it as, no, it's the work.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: In the same way the other work is. It is the core of the work. It's like the foundation of your work. They're like, "Oh, well, over here is DEI." And I'm like, "No, no, no. DEI should be the thing that is upholding everything else."

Deb Zahn: A perfect example of that is if an organization is working on performance, whatever it is that they determine constitutes good performance, all of those underlying root causes of which you spoke are going to be bubbling up in terms of how they think about...Define it, hold people accountable, don't hold people accountable. All of that is going to be present there. If I'm over off on the side and I'm like, "Oh yeah. That's cool what you're doing, I'm working on performance," and those worlds don't come together, then first of all, they can be working cross purposes.

I could be over here setting up things with them that actually make it a worse environment with worse outcomes. But it also doesn't leverage the opportunity to put them together to create something better, bigger, and bolder.

Dynasti Hunt: I totally agree with you. I'm going to say something that's controversial, but I would say, my fellow HR and talent leaders, I love you all. I've been in this work for a long time with you all, but I want to be really clear that HR and talent consultants and leaders are not automatically anti-racist experts at doing this work. That is a big issue, I believe, in the work because then you have folks who are making decisions from an HR or talent standpoint, like, yeah, creating performance structure, a new performance structure and not taking into account anything that is going on that could actually cause more inequity, cause more bias, cause more harm because they haven't been trained that way.

But we have somehow created this myth that DEI should sit under HR because like, "Of course, it sits in HR because it's a people thing."

Deb Zahn: It's recruiting.

Dynasti Hunt: I'm like, "No, it's a business thing. It's a business thing-

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: ...at this point. For you to put it there, there are so many things that could happen because, again, I love my HR folks, but a lot of HR work is compliance. Protecting the organization. You're not necessarily there and your main job is not to protect the people and make sure that the people were having an equitable experience. You want to make sure they're having an experience. But in terms of the equity pieces, it doesn't work.

For example, I've seen organizations who've come out, and I've done the equity dialogue conversations with them, and they said, "OK, well, we're having trouble. People are saying that they're not being

heard." I was like, "OK, I'm going to go talk to the voters." We go talk to people and they say, "Hey, listen, I'm reporting things to HR that I experienced a microaggression." A microaggression? I like to call them aggressions in general. But like, "I'm experiencing this."

They came back to me and said they investigated it, and it doesn't rise to a level of discrimination or harassment. They're right, Deb because on paper, that definition doesn't rise to that.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: But it does arise to the level of, "I am experiencing an exclusionary practice in this organization. But because I'm an HR professional, I'm not necessarily and automatically trained to understand how to deal with that in the middle." So it's all these things where I just encourage folks. I'm like, "We've got to talk to each other." White consultants, you should be reaching out and finding out immediately like, "Hey, I need to be having a conversation and finding out if anybody is on that team that's doing DEI work so that I can sit with them and learn what I need to do to align."

Deb Zahn: That's right because I have had this experience. I know that other white consultants have, particularly with, if the leaders are white, they'll have conversations with us because they feel more comfortable because we're white. And so I've been on the receiving end of the conversations of, "Oh my gosh, the words white supremacy are being used. The word racism is being used and it's making me uncomfortable." And they're looking for an ally in saying, "Oh, why are they saying that? One, go have those conversations, 100%. Two, know thy stuff, so that..."

Dynasti Hunt: You've got to do your own learning.

Deb Zahn: You've got to do your own learning so you know how to show up and be present in those conversations in a good way. But it can be a powerful moment. I've had conversations with leaders where I've said, "Why does the term white supremacy bother you?" They were shocked that I was like, "Well, of course, the word white supremacy is going to come up." I get to use myself as an example to show that it is a good thing, and that I think it's a good thing. And that, yes, it's hard for me too. Yes, oh my gosh, I've hit so many trees. It's not even funny.

It can create an opening, but that isn't something you should be doing in isolation too, particularly if there's a DEI consultant in play. You should be doing it in concert with them so that ultimately everything's headed in the right direction at the right pace.

Dynasti Hunt: Absolutely. Yeah. I think that it is the responsibility of white consultants to be in the know and to also do their own learning as well because they also need to be examining what they are teaching. How have they been taught from consultancy or framework practices because in consultancy land, we love a good framework. But I'm like, "Is your framework embedded with actual themes and tools that will end up causing harm? What are you creating? What are you putting out there?"

I hear people say things like, "I created this framework. It's my five-step framework for doing this." I'm like, "Yeah, but how much harm does it cause? Have you asked yourself that?" Can you actually examine your own framework and tools? Let's pull them out. Let's look at them, and then let's ask some folks who've experienced them who are non-white, how they're experiencing your framework in the

organization. I can guarantee you, that for a good portion of them, they are experiencing even more harm, that you were feeling so good about, that you put into an organization.

Deb Zahn: That's right. And just because the graphics are pretty doesn't mean it's good to go...My default position is, if I haven't looked at it through that lens, I can guess what it's doing. I can guess it's doing harm because I know enough about myself to know the assumptions that I carry with me from a white centering position.

The other thing you mentioned, which I'm so delighted to hear you say that this is something you're going to do more work in, so consultants are businesses too. Whether we're at a firm or that we're solo, we are actual businesses. We often don't think of ourselves in that way. We're just out doing stuff. Aside from when you're out doing your stuff, make sure it's good stuff and make sure you know and you understand white supremacy and racism and all of the ways that that emerges and how you could and couldn't be contributing to it, but we don't get off the hook as businesses.

Dynasti Hunt: Exactly. You're still a business.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: Exactly.

Deb Zahn: What are some of those things that we should be paying attention to as business owners to make sure that we're also creating equitable anti-racist businesses?

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah. I think there's something about inclusive language. In all of your documents on your website, how do you put things out there to the world? Are you using a certain language that's exclusive to individuals? What does your language look like? How are you using that? I think your pricing structure. I have seen some crazy pricing structures out there, which, again, could be its own podcast, about how you're pricing out individuals who are non-white and not realizing it because you're not actually checking the data to figure out what they need.

It's an assumption because we also can't assume that because I'm a black woman, that I can't afford what you're putting out there. I've seen some issues with pricing structures. I've seen some issues with individuals not taking into account who they choose as their vendors.

Deb Zahn: That's right.

Dynasti Hunt: I'm a solo business owner. I've just got to think about the consultancy practice. So I just need this project management system. It's the best project management system. I kid you not. I looked at project management systems about six months ago and I would not disclose names because I do not want to call anybody out on the podcast. I'll do that on my own time. But I researched and there was one particular system that I was like, "Yes, going to go with that. It fits my business."

Then I was like, "Wait, Dynasti. Do your own structural analysis and dig a little further." Dug in further, there's lots of racist things happening in the organization. So I was like, "OK, won't choose it." But so, many times, as an individual or as a consultant, you're like, "Oh, well this is what I need for my

business," or "This is what my business coach, I just paid them tens of thousand dollars to do this. So what should I do?" I'll just go with that and not examine.

The last thing I'll say on this is, speaking of business coaches, stop asking DEI consultants, anti-racist leaders and educators to educate you for free, when you will spend tens of thousands of...I've seen the numbers, you all. Tens of thousands of dollars on a business coach because you want to increase sales. But then you are price gouging an individual who can help you actually change your business, bring in a more diverse clientele, and long term, help you be a more inclusive, equitable business that is successful equally or even more so successful because we're going to say like, "Hey, that's who you should work with because they get it."

But the amount of money that I see go to business coaches and the lack of money that I, in respect, that I see go to individuals who can educate you on how to do this work is a huge issue.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. If the term, "Can I pick your brain?" comes out of your mouth, I'm going to say it like this, when you're talking to someone who does anti-racism work, does DEI work, know that that's a problem and get your checkbook out.

Dynasti Hunt: Get your checkbook out, in the same way like you wouldn't blink an eye. I see it all the time. I see folks who are like, "I invested all this money in a coach." I've had people reach out to me, consultants reach out to me and say, "You know what? I was wondering, do you have a free tour or some free articles?" And I've said things like, "Oh, I'm working on something and you can pay for the incubator that's coming. You can pay for that and then you can have access to me. But no."

Deb Zahn: Yeah, yeah. And-

Dynasti Hunt: That's not how this works.

Deb Zahn: Yeah. We've got to say that out loud or really often. I know you do because I follow you on Instagram, which is how I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have to have you on my show." Which by the way, if you have a podcast and you have an expert who does this work, pay them.

Dynasti Hunt: Yes, yes. Pay them.

Deb Zahn: 100% pay them. Yeah. It's unbelievable how undervalued this work is, even by folks who say it's important to them. That's part of what I think we're carrying around with us, particularly white business owners and consultants. That's one of the first things that needs to be undone. I very much appreciate you saying that.

Dynasti Hunt: Oh yeah. No, I appreciate you sharing that too, just in terms of the undervalueness because I don't think people realize you're paying for the work, the consultancy, the coaching that you get. But you also have to understand that we...Or I see myself sometimes where I'm stepping in the gap and I'm OK to do that. I will say sometimes to folks or to a consultant, like, "You have to realize there is an amount of emotional labor that I also take on, that you don't have to take on. But I have to take that on when you are screaming or melting down because you don't like the word white supremacy culture and you're like, 'That feels like you're calling me racist,' and you're having your full meltdown. You didn't realize that I have to take that."

There may be like on the news where there's been another unjustified murder that's happening that I'm processing, but yet I'm on a call with you letting you melt down about this. That is emotional labor that people need to pay for because that is a lot to have to carry on a daily basis. I choose to because I want to see things change. But for others, they may not. Sometimes I see consultants, or business owners, or leaders doing things like going to the people within their organization who are people of color and saying, "Hey, I'm going to just dump this emotional labor on you."

Whoa, don't do that. Pay them. But you have to pay me. You can pay them as well. So when we talk about value in the work, you've also got to value who you choose to ask or place the emotional labor burden on. Compensate that.

Deb Zahn: That's right. That's right. Also think about where you're spending your money in your business otherwise.

Dynasti Hunt: Exactly.

Deb Zahn: This is great. Well, we could go on and about this-

Dynasti Hunt: I know.

Deb Zahn: ...because I love this. I am hoping you will come back on because I think this is such a critical topic because the only way things change is if we jump in and change it. All consultants, but certainly white consultants, have a huge role to play in that and we need to step up and do it. I appreciate it. But let me ask you, where can folks find you? If they want to dig into this more, where can they find you and pay you?

Dynasti Hunt: Yes. I'm actually super easy. All of my handles, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, just Dynasti Hunt. It's Dynasti with an I, so D-Y-N-A-S-T-I and then Hunt. My website is dynastihunt.com, so you can pay me. You're going to be able to find new accelerator programs starting in July that you can jump into. But yeah, everything is through dynastihunt.com or on my Instagram. I'm pretty active there. I've heard I need to get on TikTok, but that's a...

Deb Zahn: Argh.

Dynasti Hunt: I know. I get exhausted just thinking about that because I feel like that's more free content. If you would really want to find me, you should find me on Instagram or come pay for a course.

Deb Zahn: I will tell you, as a follower of you on Instagram, you will get a ton out of it.

Dynasti Hunt: Thank you.

Deb Zahn: That's how you'll know you're the right person to work with. Tell us when your accelerator program is launching.

Dynasti Hunt: Yeah. This will launch mid July, so stay tuned. That's coming in just a few weeks.

Deb Zahn: That's fantastic. We will put a link to that in the show notes so that you can easily find it. Let me ask you this. One last question. You do all of this amazing work. How do you find balance for yourself?

Dynasti Hunt: That's such a good question. For me, Deb, it really is thinking about, when do I do the work, and setting boundaries for myself. I'm really clear with clients about boundaries and when work is done, work is done. I also have just found this place, and I learned this a few years ago. I was teaching on the weekends, teaching fitness classes, and doing this work during the week. And I just didn't have a day off. So I've moved everything to Monday through Friday.

There's a couple of days a week where I might work later, but Saturday and Sunday are mine. If I want to read a book, if I want to write a blog post, I can. But I rarely take calls. Actually don't take any one-to-one calls. I rarely do any interviews or trainings...anything like that because I'm like, "If it's going to happen, it's going to happen truly during the workweek," so that Saturday and Sunday are mine to spend doing nothing if I want, watching Netflix all day. And so, I do that.

Deb Zahn: Nice. I love that. Well, Dynasti, thank you so much for being on the show. I can't tell you how much I appreciate you sharing your wonderful process and wisdom with us and giving us such great information about what we should be doing.

Dynasti Hunt: Thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

Deb Zahn: Thanks so much for listening to this episode of the Craft of Consulting Podcast. I want to ask you to do actually three things. If you enjoyed this episode or if you've enjoyed any of my other ones, hit subscribe. I got a lot of other great guests that are coming up and a lot of other great content and I don't want you to miss anything. But the other two things that I'm going to ask you to do is, one is, if you have any comments, so if you have any suggestions or any kind of feedback that will help make this podcast more helpful to more listeners, please include those.

And then the last thing is, again, if you've gotten something out of this, share it, share it with somebody you know who's a consultant or thinking about being a consultant, and make sure that they also have access to all this great content and all the other great content that's going to be coming up.

So as always, you can go and get more wonderful information and tools at craftofconsulting.com. Thanks so much. I will talk to you on the next episode. Bye-bye.