

HOW LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS COMPANIES

INCREASE DIVERSITY IN MANAGEMENT

A Study Analyzing Tegna's Diversity Initiative and if it is Fostering a
New Wave of Representation in Television News

A Project

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Abstract

This project is a study that aims to examine the strategies employed by local television news companies to enhance the diversity within their management ranks, focusing on Tegna's diversity initiative as a case study. The study investigates the effectiveness of Tegna's efforts in promoting a more diverse representation in television news leadership. Through a qualitative analysis of Tegna's diversity initiative, including interviews, this paper seeks to identify the key factors contributing to successful diversity initiatives in the media industry. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how local television news companies can cultivate and sustain diverse leadership, thereby fostering greater representation and inclusivity within the field.

The methodology encompasses a thorough analysis of Tegna's diversity initiatives through interviews with local news executives (General Managers, News Directors, Assistant News Directors, Executive Producers). Utilizing a comparative approach, assessing the demographic composition of Tegna-owned newsrooms against industry practices. The study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of Tegna's diversity initiative model in cultivating an inclusive environment and promoting underrepresented voices in television news management. The answers I received are of those comparing industry experience to the role they serve now and whether or not the company is pushing intentional change versus meeting a quota target.

Key Words

Diversity

Management

Local television news

Representation

Inclusivity

Diversity initiative

Tegna

Television news industry

Leadership

Change

Equity

Organizational diversity

Workplace diversity

Diversity programs

Diversity in media

Media diversity

Cultural diversity

Diversity strategy

Inclusion efforts

Employee representation

Diversity management

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the field of television news, the pursuit of diversity and inclusion has been a journey marked by numerous challenges, particularly for individuals like me, a Black woman, who have dedicated themselves to this field. Throughout my career, I have frequently found myself in news stations where I stood as the solitary Black on-air talent, with scarce representation of people of color in managerial roles. These experiences have vividly highlighted a glaring disparity between my perspective and that of station management, as we grapple with the imperative of fostering diversity within the newsroom and effectively addressing the diverse concerns of the communities we serve. This disheartening realization has shed light on a more profound issue, one that prohibits the progress toward achieving genuine diversity and inclusivity within the broadcasting industry.

Local television news, as highlighted by the Pew Research Center (Rosenberg, 2019), continues to play a pivotal role in shaping public perception, influencing opinions, and serving as a crucial conduit for disseminating news and stories that deeply impact our communities. However, beyond the polished on-air presentations that captivate audiences, there exists a multilayered challenge that warrants our attention: the persistent underrepresentation of people of color in management positions within the realm of local television news broadcasting. As revealed in a report by the Radio Television Digital News Association, there has been a modest improvement in recent years, with people of color now comprising 27.7% of the local TV news workforce, reflecting a 1.1 percentage point increase from the previous year's record high (Papper, 2021). This report also underscores encouraging progress, noting that Hispanic/Latino and Asian American representation has risen by 1.3 and 0.8 percentage points, respectively (Papper, 2021). Nonetheless, the lingering question remains: What are the tangible consequences of this ongoing lack of representation? Drawing from subjective experiences, it is evident that

the absence of diverse voices in leadership roles has extensive implications. It not only affects the overall diversity of perspectives within our newsrooms but can also directly impact the visibility of minority journalists who are seen on air. Considering these concerns, this research seeks to delve deeply into this pressing issue, to uncover its underlying causes, exploring its consequences, and evaluating the diversity initiative model by Tegna to foster a new wave of representation in television news management.

Tegna came into existence on June 29, 2015, following the splitting up of the Gannett Company into two distinct publicly traded entities (Tegna, 2023a). In this division, Tegna took the reins of broadcast television and digital media divisions from the former Gannett, while Gannett's publishing interests formed a separate company that retained the Gannett name (Tegna, 2023a). With an extensive presence encompassing 64 local television stations spread across 51 markets, Tegna stands as the preeminent owner of Big Four affiliates in the top 25 markets within the independent station group category, effectively reaching an impressive 41.7 million television households nationwide (Tegna, 2023a). Tegna has embarked on an ambitious strategy to prioritize diversity and inclusion within its operations, notably focusing on newsrooms and management teams. The company says it is resolute in its endeavor to substantiate the effectiveness of its dedication to advancing a more inclusive environment, one that resonates with the broader societal shifts propelling equity and representation within the media industry. This unwavering commitment to diversity takes tangible form through Tegna's comprehensive "Diversity & Inclusion" program, an initiative that not only signifies the company's dedication but also aspires to serve as a compelling model for how organizations can proactively address unconscious bias and catalyze substantive, transformative change (Tegna, 2023b). As I explore Tegna's approach to diversity and examine the array of initiatives it has undertaken, the question

naturally arises about the company's quest to truly provide an effective standard to its diversity and inclusion model. Through this research, I aspire to gain a deeper understanding of how Tegna is spearheading a recovery of representation within the realm of television news.

The discourse surrounding diversity within local news broadcasting has ignited my passion to embark on this journey examining the notable absence of people of color in key upper management positions within the local television news broadcasting sector. As a Black woman in this field of television news broadcasting, I have personally encountered the repercussions of this underrepresentation, igniting a burning commitment to discover strategies that can facilitate a more inclusive industry. It is my goal to find viable solutions that can foster greater diversity within local television news management and expose the intricate barriers that impede the rise of people of color into leadership positions within newsrooms, while also presenting a new path for meaningful change and enhanced representation.

Research Problem

The lack of diversity within local television news broadcasting management represents a pressing and disappointing issue that fills the media industry. This disparity is emphasized when examining markets ranked 26-50, where minorities constitute 25% of the workforce but only account for 13% of news directors (Barthel, 2015). This underrepresentation raises a series of crucial inquiries: What are the root causes of representation? How does it impact the career trajectories and visibility of minority journalists on-air? And, most importantly, what proactive measures can be taken to rectify this issue and cultivate a more inclusive and representative media landscape?

To address these concerns, this project will examine the intricate problem of underrepresentation concerning people of color in management roles within the domain of local

television news broadcasting. I intend to study and dissect the structural, systemic, and cultural factors that contribute to this ongoing challenge, shedding light on the various dimensions of this issue and examining Tegna's diversity model to see if it's truly a transformative wave of representation in television news.

Purpose Statement

This research aims to examine the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news broadcasting management and its direct influence on the career advancement and visibility of on-air minority journalists. Through a comprehensive analysis of this issue, I aim to:

1. Identify the key factors and barriers by exploring the multifaceted factors and structural barriers contributing to the persistent underrepresentation of people of color in leadership roles within local television news broadcasting management.
2. Assess the impact of management diversity on career advancement opportunities and the visibility through observed interview analysis and qualitative assessments, I will evaluate the direct impact of management diversity, or the lack thereof, on career advancement opportunities, the visibility of on-air minority journalists and its impact on the news product. This assessment will provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by minority journalists and the systemic factors influencing their career trajectories.
3. Explore evidence-based recommendations and strategies building upon the insights gathered from interview analysis, generating the best recommendations and strategies aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within local news broadcasting.

Almost two-thirds of Black adults (63%) say news about Black people is often more negative than news about other racial and ethnic groups; 28% say it is about equal and 7% say it is often more positive (Atske, 2023). In *Diversity in the newsroom can build better media*, Jeanne Bourgault (2021) argues that more diverse and inclusive newsrooms and coverage can provide a better representation of societies, build audience trust, and even make news organizations more profitable. Within journalism, structural racism can manifest in hiring practices, promotion decisions, and newsroom culture, all of which contribute to the underrepresentation of people of color in management roles and subsequently impact the career trajectories of minority journalists.

In *Journalism, Race, and Gender*, Cristina Mislán (2018) explains how valuable diverse representation is in journalism and the role journalism plays in maintaining and reifying norms. This means that proper representation in newsrooms can bring attention and provide a voice to the voiceless in those communities that have been underrepresented for far too long. The article examines the production of news, content, and audiences' perceptions (Mislán, 2018). Representation matters, and to bridge the gap between journalism and audiences, some changes need to happen.

Gatekeeping refers to the process by which news is selected and presented to the public, and it is often influenced by the personal biases and experiences of those in positions of power (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Research has shown that the perspectives of news coverage can be shaped by the backgrounds and beliefs of decision-makers, potentially leading to limited coverage of stories related to minority groups. This underscores the significance of diverse leadership in news organizations to ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive representation of perspectives (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

The underrepresentation of people of color in local television news broadcasting management may have far-reaching consequences on the advancement of on-air minority representation. The lack of diversity in leadership can lead to limited coverage of critical issues affecting minority communities and hinder the career growth and development of on-air minority talent (Williams et al., 2021). In contrast, studies have demonstrated that diverse leadership can have a positive impact on the content and quality of news coverage, promoting fair and accurate representation of all voices and communities (Jackson & Garcia, 2020).

This research hopes to offer a comprehensive study of the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news management through Tegna, utilizing a multifaceted approach that incorporates empirical evidence, expert insights, and personal narratives. By doing so, it aims to provide valuable insights and actionable recommendations for addressing this pressing issue and fostering a media landscape that is truly inclusive and representative of all voices and communities.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

In today's diverse society, the representation of diverse cultures and races in media has emerged as a critical and pressing issue. One of the key questions this literature review aims to address is the results of the lack of diversity in newsroom management and the importance of increasing representation? To explore this question, I will delve into existing academic work that focuses on the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news broadcasting management, with a particular focus on how one prominent media company, Tegna, is addressing diversity and inclusion within its organizational structures.

Tegna, formerly known as Gannett Company, Inc., holds a significant position in the media industry, particularly within the broadcasting sector. The company was established in 2015 following the division of the Gannett Company into two distinct publicly traded entities (Tegna, 2023a). Tegna boasts a substantial presence in local television news across the United States. The company operates an extensive portfolio of television stations and digital media platforms, solidifying its status as a major player in the industry (Tegna, 2023a). With an expansive network encompassing 64 local television stations spread across 51 markets, Tegna stands as the preeminent owner of Big Four affiliates in the top 25 markets within the independent station group category, effectively reaching an impressive 41.7 million television households nationwide (Tegna, 2023a).

Tegna has undertaken a significant commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion within its newsrooms and management teams. The company has outlined a comprehensive five-year goal aimed at increasing the representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) within content teams, news leadership, and management roles (Tegna, 2023b). These efforts to foster a more inclusive environment are evident through a range of initiatives and programs within the company. The initiative through their "Diversity & Inclusion" program,

which seeks to address systemic biases and promote greater representation in the workplace (Tegna, 2023b). This program reflects Tegna's devotion to promoting diversity at all levels of its operations and creating a standard that transcends throughout the industry.

Diversity and representation in television news have emerged as crucial topics of discussion in recent years. Numerous studies consistently highlight the underrepresentation of minority groups, including people of color and women, both on and off-screen in the news industry (Napoli et al., 2015). This underrepresentation not only affects the diversity of voices in newsrooms but also has significant implications for the quality and accuracy of news reporting, as well as audience engagement and trust in the media (Dow & Wood, 2018).

Research has consistently shown that diverse newsrooms are more likely to cover a broader range of perspectives and issues (Schudson, 2018). Therefore, Tegna's initiatives hold the potential to usher in a new wave of representation in television news by ensuring that news teams better reflect the diverse communities they serve. Analyzing local television news management through Tegna's diversity model provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of diversity and representation within the media industry. As research increasingly underscores the importance of diversity and representation in media, Tegna's efforts may serve as a model for other organizations to possibly mirror and create a more inclusive and fair news environment. Inclusivity should be a standard that all companies strive to achieve and a conversation that should never be ignored.

The underrepresentation of people of color in newsroom management can be traced back to the historical exclusion of non-white individuals from journalism education and employment opportunities (Noguchi, 2017). This historical exclusion has resulted in a lack of diversity in news organizations, with white individuals predominantly occupying management positions

(Grier, 2019). The absence of diverse leadership can result in news organizations being out of touch with the communities they serve, leading to limited coverage of critical issues affecting minority groups (Cohen, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of representation of people of color in management positions can negatively impact the career growth and development of on-air minority talent. This dearth of representation and support can drive minority journalists to exit the industry altogether, further perpetuating the lack of diverse representation in newsrooms (Cohen, 2017).

Research also suggests that having diverse leadership can positively affect the content and quality of news coverage. A study conducted by the UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies found that news outlets with diverse leadership produced more coverage of stories related to racial and ethnic minorities, compared to outlets with less diverse leadership (Hunt et al., 2015). This research highlights the significance of diversity in newsroom leadership and its role in providing fair and accurate representation of all voices and communities.

For this research, the concept of gatekeeping plays a pivotal role in explaining the underrepresentation of people of color in newsroom management. Firsthand experience studies consistently show that the racial composition of newsroom leadership influences editorial decisions and content choices (Klinenberg, 2018; Glover et al., 2020). Gatekeeping refers to the process of selecting and presenting news to the public, often influenced by the personal biases and experiences of those in positions of authority within news organizations (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). This influence is particularly significant when it comes to reporting on race-related issues. The racial composition of newsroom leadership directly impacts editorial decisions and the selection of news stories, potentially leading to limited coverage of issues affecting minority

groups (Kuo, 2019). This emphasizes the critical need for diverse leadership to ensure a more inclusive and balanced selection of news stories that considers a broader range of perspectives and experiences in the news coverage selection process.

Omi and Winant's race formation theory (1994) further shed light on how race has contributed to the lack of representation in local television news broadcasting management. This theory underscores the dynamic nature of race and its evolution, emphasizing the role of journalism in constructing racial divides. Omi and Winant argue that journalism has historically contributed to the racialization of certain communities and the perpetuation of stereotypes through news media.

Understanding racism in the context of media representation is crucial. Schmid (1996) examines definitions of racism and its manifestations, including direct and passive-aggressive racism, contributing to behavioral, motivational, and cognitive features. Racism has deep historical roots in the United States, and Sniderman and Tetlock (2001) argue that understanding different forms of racism, such as symbolic racism, is essential. Symbolic racism is a form of subtle or implicit racial bias and prejudice that often manifests as negative attitudes or beliefs toward racial or ethnic minorities (Sniderman and Tetlock, 2001). It may not always be overtly discriminatory, but it involves the endorsement of racial stereotypes, cultural biases, or the denial of systemic racism, often cloaked in more socially acceptable language or attitudes. Symbolic racism research has the potential to explain the complexities of racial issues in media representation. Lawrence Bobo (1997) examines the relationship between race, public opinion, and the social sphere, using sociologist W.E.B. DuBois' work as a foundation. DuBois' assertion that the defining problem of the 20th century would be the color line still holds today. Bobo's research examines how race continues to influence public opinion and the broader social sphere.

In "*Improving the Race': The Discourse of Science and Eugenics in Local News Coverage*" by Rachel Grant and Cristina Mislán, the study contributes to the impact of local news media on racial divides. This research explores how local news media in the twentieth century contributed to racial divides and biases. By examining the social-cultural makeup of race and its interaction with media, the study sheds light on factors that contribute to the current lack of representation in newsroom management.

Recent studies have consistently highlighted the lack of diversity in local television news management. The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) conducts annual surveys that consistently reveal a significant disparity. For example, the RTDNA's 2020 survey found that people of color comprised only 17% of newsroom management positions, despite making up approximately 40% of the U.S. population (RTDNA, 2020). Numerous factors contribute to the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news management. Discriminatory hiring practices, a lack of mentorship and networking opportunities, and implicit biases have all been identified as barriers (Brooks & Henry, 2020). Additionally, research suggests that newsroom culture and a lack of diversity at the executive level perpetuate this issue, making it difficult for on-air minority journalists to advance into leadership roles (Noguchi, 2017). Without diverse leadership, these journalists may encounter obstacles in breaking through the proverbial "glass ceiling." This can lead to career stagnation and frustration due to limited prospects for growth (Smith & Turner, 2018).

Research also indicates that the lack of diversity in management has a profound impact on news content. Newsroom decisions about story selection, framing, and sourcing can be influenced by the perspectives and biases of those in leadership positions. This can result in a lack of diverse perspectives in news coverage, which may alienate or misrepresent minority

communities (Kuo, 2019). Such misrepresentation can wear away trust and perpetuate stereotypes.

The emotional and psychological impact of underrepresentation on minority journalists should not be underestimated. Experiencing discrimination or being overlooked for promotions due to race can lead to feelings of isolation, lower self-esteem, and increased stress (Stevens & Smith, 2020). Some local television news stations have implemented affirmative action policies and diversity programs to address underrepresentation. These initiatives aim to actively recruit, mentor, and promote people of color within the industry. While they have shown some progress, their effectiveness varies, and there is still much work to be done (Valenzuela, 2021).

Advocacy groups, such as the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ), play a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for change within the industry. They work to hold news organizations accountable for diversity in their leadership and newsrooms. Additionally, partnerships between industry executives, educational institutions, and media organizations can facilitate pipelines for diverse talent into news management roles (Pena, 2019). This literature review will also highlight the need for news organizations to prioritize diversity and inclusivity to create more representative newsrooms and better serve the communities they aim to inform.

In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, the issue of representation takes center stage, especially concerning the underrepresentation of People of Color (POC) in media management roles. This research embarks on a comprehensive journey to delve into the multifaceted barriers faced by POC in their quest for leadership positions within local television news management. Beyond the statistical disparities, this study aims to unravel the challenges

and systemic biases that hinder POC from fulfilling to newsroom leadership roles. As I delve into this critical issue, the goal of this research is to provide a comprehensive look into the hurdles faced by POC in local television news management and, ultimately, studying Tegna's diversity model as a possible solution for change in the industry.

Research Questions

1. Throughout your career, what challenges, (if any), have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?
2. How has representation (or lack thereof) in management influenced content decision?
3. How does Tegna define the success of its diversity model in local television news management?
4. What measurable outcomes and impacts have resulted from Tegna's diversity initiatives since its launch?
5. Using these metrics, what are the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations and the communities served by their stations?

Research Materials

Who: This research involved interviews with individuals in local television news management within Tegna, including News Directors, Assistant News Directors, and Executive Producers.

Where: Tegna operates 64 stations across the 51 TV market. To gain a thorough perspective on Tegna's diversity initiatives, interviewees were selected from various market sizes, ranging from major markets like Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas (Market 4) to smaller markets like Abilene, Texas (Market 165).

When: Data was recorded for two months, allowing valuable insights and perspectives.

How: Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and online platforms such as Zoom, accommodating the preferences and logistical considerations of the interviewees.

What: Primary data collected from interviews was completed by secondary data, including organizational charts and relevant documents. This approach provided an understanding of the current landscape and the necessary changes required to foster a more inclusive and representative local television news broadcasting industry, with a specific focus on evaluating the effectiveness of Tegna's diversity model.

Method

To gain a deeper understanding of the underrepresentation of people of color in management positions in local news broadcasting and its impact on on-air minority representation, this study used a qualitative research approach, specifically in-depth interviews. Qualitative methods were well-suited for exploring complex and subjective phenomena, such as the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders in the media industry (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews, allowed for a thorough exploration of the factors contributing to the lack of diversity in local news broadcasting management within Tegna. In-depth interviews were particularly effective in establishing rapport with participants, digging deeper into their experiences, and eliciting rich, detailed data that could be analyzed to identify patterns and themes (Fontana & Frey, 2018).

The study involved interviews with local News Directors, Assistant News Directors, and Executive Producers of color in Tegna, as well as individuals within the Diversity & Inclusion working group. These interviews provided valuable insights into the challenges and barriers faced by people of color in attaining management positions and how this affected the recruitment, retention, and advancement of minority representation on air within the

organization. Additionally, the interviews facilitated the identification of potential solutions and best practices for increasing diversity in local news broadcasting management and enhancing on-air representation.

In summary, the qualitative approach, specifically in-depth interviewing, was well-suited for this study as it explored key stakeholders' experiences and perspectives regarding the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news broadcasting management and its impact on on-air minority representation. This method helped identify the underlying factors contributing to the issue and offered practical insights for promoting diversity and inclusion within Tegna's local news broadcasting operations.

Research Design

To analyze local television news management through Tegna and assess how their diversity model is fostering a new wave of representation, a diverse group of managers of color from various markets within the Tegna network. The sample size consisted of 9 participants, which is considered appropriate to gather comprehensive data and demographics.

Sampling

The sampling for this study focused on local television news broadcasters within the United States, specifically targeting stations that are part of the Tegna network. This approach was motivated by the need to examine the impact of Tegna's diversity initiative model on representation within local television news management. The rationale for selecting this sample was based on Tegna's presence in the local television news broadcasting industry and its proactive approach to diversity and inclusion. Tegna's initiatives provided a unique context for studying how a media company's efforts can foster a new wave of representation. By concentrating on Tegna-affiliated stations, this research gained valuable insights into the effectiveness of diversity programs within

a specific organizational framework and assessed their influence on newsroom management diversity and on-air representation. This targeted approach aligned with the research objective of analyzing local television news management through Tegna and its diversity model.

Recruiting Tegna employees to participate required a strategic and sensitive approach, particularly given my affiliation as an employee with another competing company. To ensure a respectful and non-intrusive approach, it was my goal to establish transparency and sensitivity throughout the recruitment process. First, I leveraged my professional network, through LinkedIn and various media groups I am affiliated with within the broadcasting industry, to identify potential interviewees who served as News Directors, Assistant News Directors, or Executive Producers at Tegna. I reached out to them via email or LinkedIn, explaining the purpose and goals of my research, emphasizing that I only intended to explore diversity and representation in the industry, rather than conducting an internal investigation or interfering with their company's operations. I assured them of privacy and discretion, emphasizing that I planned to contribute positively to the discussion of diversity and inclusivity in news management. Additionally, if hesitancy was still present, I offered to share my findings with them to maintain transparency and demonstrate my commitment to the betterment of the industry. Building trust and emphasizing the shared goal of improving diversity and representation helped alleviate concerns about being perceived as probing and encouraged participation in the interviews.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study primarily consisted of interviews conducted with managers within Tegna's 64 local television news broadcasting stations. These interviews provided valuable insights into the impact of Tegna's diversity model on newsroom management and on-air representation. To accommodate interviewees' preferences and ensure a comprehensive

understanding of the subject matter, interviews were conducted using a flexible approach. Participants participated in virtual interviews via Zoom. The choice of interview format was based on the convenience and comfort of the participants. The interviews were semi-structured, employing open-ended questions to encourage participants to provide detailed responses. All interviews were recorded, transcribed through Otter, and analyzed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key findings relevant to the research questions. This approach facilitated the exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights related to diversity, representation, and management within the television news broadcasting industry. This comprehensive data collection method contributed to a thorough examination of the topic and its alignment with the research objectives.

I followed the following timeline to complete the research within a desirable timeframe.

January 16 – January 31: Project Preparation

- Finalize research questions and objectives
- Develop flexible interview protocols

February 1 – March 8: Participant Recruitment

- Identify and approach potential interviewees
- Schedule virtual interviews with Tegna station Managers
- Obtain informed consent from participants

March 11 – April 7: Data Collection

- Conduct virtual interviews via Zoom with Tegna managers/participants
- Record, transcribe, and organize interview data

April 8 – April 12: Drafting Research Findings

- Summarize key insights and findings

- Draft research paper

April 15 – April 25: Review, Revision and Final Preparation

- Collaborate with project advisors for feedback
- Revise the paper based on input
- Prepare presentation material for defense
- Rehearse the research defense

April 24 – April 25: Research Defense

- Present and defend the research findings
- Address questions and feedback from defense committee

This timeline ensured the appropriate time necessary to complete a thorough examination of Tegna’s diversity model, aligning with research objectives and allowing ample time for analysis and preparation to defend on or by April 27th. Adjustments and changes may be made as necessary.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical considerations in this study were informed consent, confidentiality, and the disclosure of potential conflicts of interest. It is important to note that I was not an employee of Tegna but am employed by The E.W. Scripps Company, a competitor of Tegna. All participants within Tegna-affiliated stations were fully informed about the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement. Participants had the right to provide or withhold consent, and they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. To uphold transparency and ethical standards, any potential conflicts of interest, such as my employment with The E.W. Scripps Company, a competitor to Tegna, were disclosed to participants. This disclosure allowed participants to make informed decisions about their

participation in the study. By adhering to these ethical considerations, this research will uphold the rights and well-being of all participants while ensuring the integrity and validity of the study's findings.

Coding Procedures

The data collected through interviews underwent thematic analysis, with a specific focus on understanding the underrepresentation of people of color in local television news broadcasting management and its impact on on-air minority representation. The coding procedures involved the systematic identification of recurring themes and patterns in the data related to various aspects, including barriers faced by people of color in management positions, opportunities for career advancement, and experiences of on-air minority representation. To facilitate a comprehensive analysis, the identified themes were categorized into specific domains, encompassing areas such as hiring practices, workplace culture, representation, diversity initiatives, and perceptions of diversity. By categorizing the themes, the analysis aimed to identify overarching patterns, interrelationships, and potential areas for improvement. It is important to note that participants were allowed to review and provide feedback on the analysis to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented, contributing to the research's credibility.

Limitations

Limitations should be acknowledged to provide a clear understanding of its scope and implications. First, it is important to recognize that this research primarily focused on local news broadcasters within the United States. With that in mind, the findings may not be readily generalizable to other countries or diverse media contexts with distinct cultural and structural factors impacting diversity in news management and representation.

Second, the study predominantly captured the perspectives of local newsroom management through one specific company, Tegna. While these individuals played pivotal roles in shaping diversity and representation in local television news, it is essential to acknowledge that other newsroom managers may have had unique experiences with their company's diversity initiatives and may possess insights and perceptions that were not explored in this study.

Lastly, as with any research involving human participants, there was the potential for social bias. Participants may have been inclined to provide responses that aligned with societal expectations or portrayed their organizations in a favorable light. This bias could have influenced the accuracy of their accounts. Nevertheless, this study offers valuable insights into the multifaceted issue of diversity and representation in local news broadcasting. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding diversity and representation in local television news, offering a foundation for the development of strategies and initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape.

Researchers Role

In the context of my role as a researcher, I found myself in a unique position to explore the profound impact of race on the local television news broadcasting industry, particularly through the lens of Tegna and its diversity model. Race remains an enduring and pivotal issue in American culture, with historical roots deeply embedded in our society. As a Black woman in the television news broadcasting industry, I have encountered and grappled with the multifaceted barriers that hinder diversity and inclusion within the field. The burden of being the default spokesperson on matters related to the Black community has been a weighty and unavoidable responsibility. This experience led me to recognize that despite some progress, the industry's racial challenges remain deeply entrenched. Notably, my recent employment at a station with a

Black female news director in 2021 did not resolve the ongoing racial issues that persist in newsrooms.

It was within this context that I chose the topic of the underrepresentation of people of color in management positions within local television news broadcasting and its direct impact on the advancement of on-air minority representation. My research aimed to shed light on the underlying barriers contributing to this issue and sought to identify strategies to enhance representation within the media industry. Ultimately, I aimed to contribute to the solutions that drive meaningful change and promote the advancement of people of color.

While many local news stations and parent companies have acknowledged the need for diversity and inclusion, my research aimed to go beyond surface-level efforts to address the core issues and make a substantial impact on the industry's future. I addressed the systemic challenges hindering diversity and inclusion in local television news broadcasting, with a focus on how Tegna's diversity model is attempting to change and foster new waves of representation. I desired to provide valuable insights and recommendations that could transform and promote fair opportunities for all individuals within the industry.

Concluding Summary

In conclusion, the literature review provides a critical context, unveiling various systemic factors contributing to the lack of diversity in media management. These involve deeply rooted elements such as systemic racism, implicit bias, and barriers to accessing opportunities and resources. Additionally, these conversations emphasize the pivotal role of leadership and accountability within media companies. These organizations should prioritize diversity and inclusion as aspirational goals and actionable and measurable components of their hiring and promotion practices.

This research project has contributed to a deeper understanding of the underrepresentation issue within local television news broadcasting, with Tegna serving as a significant case study in fostering diversity and representation. By combining academic insights with the firsthand experiences of industry professionals, this study endeavors to shed light on a complex problem and pave the way for meaningful solutions that can usher in a new wave of representation in television news management.

Chapter Three
Professional Analysis

Preamble

In recent years, the issue of diversity and representation within management ranks of local television news companies has gained increasing attention and significance. The call for equitable representation across race, ethnicity, gender, and other demographic factors has prompted organizations like Tegna to implement targeted diversity initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and representative leadership landscape.

This research paper delves into the strategies employed by local television news companies to enhance diversity in management, focusing specifically on Tegna's notable diversity initiative. Tegna, as a prominent player in the media industry, has undertaken deliberate efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within its organizational structure, particularly within television news operations. This study seeks to analyze the effectiveness of Tegna's diversity program in cultivating a new wave of representation in television news management. In 2020, Tegna made a huge push to do more to ensure the company is truly representing the diverse communities it serves. With that in mind, the company rolled out a five-year plan to increase the representation of people of color in content, leadership, and management roles.

Through a comprehensive examination of Tegna's diversity initiatives, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges, successes, and impact of such efforts. By evaluating Tegna's approach within the broader context of diversity management in the media industry, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on organizational diversity and its implications for fostering a more equitable and representative workplace environment.

The findings of this research will not only explain strategies employed by Tegna but also provide actionable recommendations for local television news companies seeking to enhance diversity and representation within their management teams. Ultimately, this study plans to

contribute to the advancement of diversity initiatives in the media industry, with the ultimate goal of promoting greater inclusivity and representation at all levels of organizational leadership.

The Trial

I spent nearly a month researching and compiling a list of managers of color. This part was very tedious because I wanted to get representation from all races to make this a fair and balanced research. I came up with a list of 20 employees, searched for means of contact through work email and LinkedIn. I crafted a letter that I had my committee to proof and then I sent it out two weeks before I wanted to start my interviews on March 11th.

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Amber Grigley, and I am a graduate student enrolled in the Journalism program focusing on Strategic Communication at the University of Missouri. Currently serving as an Anchor at the ABC affiliate in Indianapolis, IN, I am reaching out to request your valuable participation in my research project.

As I approach the completion of my master's degree in May, I am researching diversity in local television news management, with a particular focus on Tegna. My objective is to examine how Tegna's diversity model contributes to fostering a new approach to expanding representation in management in television news. The industry has long struggled with the lack of diversity and enhancing inclusiveness. Your insights, given your managerial role, are integral to shedding light on these issues.

I am eager to conduct a Zoom interview with you between March 11th and 22nd, during which I will pose ten questions, requiring approximately 30 minutes of your time. Your unique perspective will contribute significantly to the depth and understanding of my research.

If you could kindly respond with a date and time that aligns with your schedule, I would greatly appreciate it. Your participation is valuable, and I am confident that your insights will help advance knowledge in this critical area and encourage meaningful change.

Thank you for considering my request. I am excited about the prospect of connecting with you and anticipate a meaningful discussion.

Please be sure to **“reply all”** with your response!

I received two quick responses agreeing to be a part of the process. I did not hear back from seven of the participants I reached out to. Once I started interviews, at the end, employees started

asking me who all I have reached out to and referred me to other employees and even reached out to them on my behalf. That combined effort allowed me to successfully interview nine employees.

Employee Name	Station/Position/Location	Ethnicity
Art Holliday	KSDK – News Director St. Louis, MO	Black/African American
Bradley Gray	WTHR – Director of Innovation Indianapolis, IN	Black/African American
Brendan Nakamine	WHAS – Assistant News Director Louisville, KY	Asian
Kent Floyd	WANT/WLMT – Assistant News Director Memphis, TN	Black/African American
Lucia Suarez Sang	WTIC- Digital Director of Content Hartford, CT	Caribbean, Chinese, Dominican and Latina
Monique Brand	KAGS/KCEN – Assistant News Director Bryan, TX	Afro-Latina
Taylor Berry	KHOU – Executive Producer Houston, TX	Black/African-American
Thuy Lan Nguyen	WBIR – Assistant News Director Knoxville, TN	Asian
Valarie Guyton	KWES/KIDY/KXVA – General Manager Midland/Odessa, TX	Black/African American

The Results

RQ1: Throughout your career, what challenges, if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

This initial question set the tone for the interview, revealing a common thread among nine participants regarding challenges encountered while striving to advance into management roles. The identified theme centers around obstacles experienced by individuals from underrepresented groups, particularly people of color and women, within the news industry. The narratives shed light on pervasive challenges such as limited opportunities, biased perceptions, and the necessity to overcome stereotypes. Within these accounts, several sub-themes emerge, highlighting the significance of personal perseverance, mentorship, and the influence of organizational culture on career progression.

Access to information about management opportunities emerged as a recurring challenge mentioned by participants. Valarie Guyton noted that as one progresses in their career, opportunities become more exclusive, posing a barrier for those without insider knowledge. Guyton emphasized, "Well, I think it was just being afforded the opportunity, or first of all the opportunity, because a lot of times the higher you get, the more exclusive the club and the circles get." Similarly, Thuy Lan Nguyen expressed the need to actively pursue management roles rather than being approached for them, stating, "It's something I had to seek out myself. I don't think I would have ever been approached to be in management had I not expressed my interest to a lot of people."

Participants shared encounters with biased perceptions and stereotypes that hindered professional advancement. Lucia Suarez Sang recounted struggles related to her last name and immigrant background, leading to doubts about her language proficiency and skill set. Suarez

Sang recalled, "For a while, people didn't know if I spoke English properly, or, you know, that sort of thing." Bradley Gray discussed being perceived as disinterested in personal relationships due to his reserved demeanor, potentially impeding his progression into management roles. Gray explained, "Because you're not very, I'm a friendly person, but I'm not like that ke-keying in with you."

The narratives emphasized the importance of personal resilience and mentorship in overcoming systemic barriers. Monique Brand drew inspiration from her military background and her mother's achievements, highlighting the role of mentorship in guiding her leadership journey. Brand reflected, "I took kind of my mother's energy, and really applied it every single day." Taylor Berry spoke of her persistence as a young Black female navigating management roles, emphasizing the influence of minority women mentors in her career. Berry noted, "I think being a Black female who was starting out younger than most, especially getting into management, that was just a huge, huge hurdle."

Participants also discussed the impact of organizational culture and diversity initiatives on career advancement. Kent Floyd and Brenden Nakamine contrasted experiences between network and local news environments, with local news perceived as offering more equitable advancement opportunities based on talent. Floyd observed, "I came to the local level because I saw more opportunity for advancement in local news rather than at the network level." Nakamine acknowledged the privilege of working in progressive markets with diverse leadership, facilitating his career growth. Nakamine explained, "I worked in newsrooms that have been, as far as demographics go, fairly progressive markets."

These responses collectively illustrate the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals of color and women in advancing to management roles within the news industry. The themes of

limited opportunities, biased perceptions, personal perseverance, mentorship, and organizational culture emphasize the complexities of diversity and inclusion in professional settings, emphasizing the ongoing need for equitable pathways to leadership roles.

Themes	Description
Limited Opportunities	Participants expressed challenges in accessing information about management opportunities, with progression becoming more exclusive as one advances in their career.
Biased Perceptions	Biases and stereotypes hindered professional growth, with participants recounting experiences of being misunderstood or misjudged based on their ethnicity, background, or demeanor.
Personal Endeavors	Personal resilience was highlighted as critical in overcoming systemic barriers, with participants drawing inspiration from their backgrounds and demonstrating persistence.
Mentorship	Mentorship played a significant role in guiding participants' leadership journeys, providing support and inspiration, particularly for individuals from underrepresented groups.
Organizational Culture	The influence of organizational culture, including diversity initiatives and opportunities for advancement, was discussed in shaping participants' experiences and career growth.

RQ2: How has representation (or lack thereof) in management influenced content decisions?

Representation in management positions within news organizations plays a crucial role in shaping editorial decisions and content strategies. The perspectives of individuals from diverse backgrounds can enrich storytelling, ensure accurate representation of communities, and foster inclusivity. However, the absence of diverse voices in leadership positions may lead to oversight, biased coverage, and a disconnect from minority communities.

Participants highlighted how the composition of management teams influences editorial choices. For instance, Art Holliday emphasized how a predominantly white management team at KSDK prior to 2014 led to a focus on stories catering to a white audience, impacting coverage of events like the Ferguson protests. He noted, "A lot of the things that had been going on for

decades were suddenly exposed...When it was time for us to cover the story, we got called out by people who are on the street. Oh, now you want to talk to us? Because, you know, we weren't covering a lot of stories that we're covering now.”

Similarly, Kent Floyd described the challenges of advocating for diverse stories in a newsroom where he was the only black manager. He recalled, "I ran the daily editorial meeting. So of course, I would want to do stories about diverse topics, but it was like a fight to cover diverse stories in that market.”

Several participants noted a shift towards more inclusive coverage strategies driven by increased diversity in management. Monique Brand emphasized the importance of correct representation in news and discussed efforts to diversify sources and storytelling approaches. She mentioned, "When I managed seven newspapers, I started by doing a diversity audit on myself and the reporters I worked alongside.”

Similarly, Brenden Nakamine highlighted the emergence of conversations around coverage strategies post-George Floyd protests, leading to a more conscientious effort to include diverse perspectives.

Taylor Berry and Lucia Suarez Sang shared contrasting experiences based on the diversity of leadership teams. Berry described a disconnect in newsrooms lacking diversity and highlighted the positive impact of diverse leadership on coverage. Conversely, Suarez Sang emphasized the importance of being an unwavering voice for diversity in editorial meetings despite being in the minority. She mentioned, “I remember, clearly in a meeting with kind of the editorial staff and I, because I was the only one of three people have kind of color minority, however you want to put it. And I said, I just want to remind everyone, that being the only voice of many cultures, or many groups is exhausting. But I'm going to do it, because it's important.

But I and it was interesting, because I got a message then from a colleague who's white, straight, you know, the beneficiary of privilege. And he came up to me and said, thank you for saying that, because I didn't even think about that. Like, that's not even something that is in his kind of worldview, but that a lot, kind of I opened his eyes to that.”

Thuy Lan Nguyen discussed the burden placed on people of color in newsrooms lacking diverse management, leading to burnout and a sense of responsibility for covering certain stories. She explained, "That was what motivated me to make the jump and look for those opportunities to fill that gap. Because if no one steps in to be that representation in management and make those decisions...we're going to have talented people of color leaving the industry.”

Representation in management significantly influences content decisions in newsrooms. Diversity in leadership fosters inclusive coverage, ensures accurate representation of communities, and contributes to a richer storytelling experience. However, challenges such as burnout and responsibility persist in environments where diversity is lacking. Moving forward, prioritizing diversity in leadership positions is essential for fostering inclusive newsrooms and reflective storytelling.

I began the interviews with the first two questions in hopes of loosening up the participants and encouraging an open, honest dialogue. Acknowledging the existing issues in the industry and sharing challenges, it further emphasizes why this discussion is necessary. What I discovered is that starting with these questions about their overall treatment enabled the participants to compare and delve deeper into what their employers are aiming to achieve and whether it's paving the way for increased diversity in the industry.

Themes	Description
Impact of Diverse Management	The composition of management teams influences editorial choices, with diverse leadership fostering inclusive coverage and accurate representation of communities.
Challenges in Advocating for Diverse Content	Participants highlighted challenges in advocating for diverse stories and perspectives within newsrooms where they were in the minority, often facing resistance or a lack of support.
Shift Towards Inclusive Coverage	Participants noticed increased diversity in management has led to shifts towards more inclusive coverage strategies, including efforts to diversify sources and storytelling approaches.
Responsibility and Burnout	People of color in newsrooms lacking diverse management positions often experience heightened responsibilities and burnout due to the burden of ensuring representation.

RQ3: How does Tegna define the success of its diversity model in local television news management?

Tegna's approach to diversity in local television news management encompasses various strategies and measures aimed at fostering inclusivity and representation within its stations. This paper synthesizes insights from key participants within Tegna to identify and analyze themes surrounding how the company defines success in its diversity model.

Art Holliday emphasizes the importance of intentional support and training provided by Tegna to foster diversity. He mentions that Tegna offers a variety of training opportunities and mentorship programs for news managers of color, creating an environment conducive to inclusive journalism. Holliday also holds a seat with Tegna's Diversity & Inclusion Working Group. Furthermore, he underscores Tegna's focus on accountability and measurement of diversity efforts, highlighting how individual stations like KSDK track diverse story coverage and inclusivity metrics using integrated systems within their news production tools.

Monique Brand highlights how the successful execution of diversity initiatives can create new expectations within the newsroom. She describes how her team's achievements during Black

History Month set a precedent and led to heightened expectations for subsequent diversity-themed events.

Bradley Gray identifies challenges in ensuring the safety and support of black managers within Tegna and the broader media landscape. He emphasizes the need for infrastructure and training to protect diverse voices and prevent silencing or backlash. Gray points out broader societal challenges in understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion, suggesting the need for robust support structures within organizations.

Brenden Nakamine discusses Tegna's approach of achieving holistic representation without setting specific diversity quotas. He emphasizes the importance of ensuring accurate representation within the leadership team while focusing on hiring the best individuals regardless of ethnicity.

Taylor Berry reflects on Tegna's mindful approach to leadership and representation. She notes the absence of explicit quotas in her newsroom and highlights the emphasis on ensuring diverse voices are represented without focusing solely on numerical targets.

Valarie Guyton emphasizes the importance of merit-based accountability and transparency in Tegna's diversity model. She mentions the incorporation of diversity metrics into key performance indicators (KPIs) and the use of third-party audits to evaluate progress.

Lucia Suarez Sang discusses the impact of Tegna's initiatives on cultural awareness and storytelling. She highlights the creation of a diversity and inclusion calendar, emphasizing the importance of representing diverse communities in news content.

To sum up the findings with this question, Tegna's diversity model in local television news management encompasses intentional support, accountability, holistic representation, and

cultural awareness. Participants' insights underscore the multifaceted approach adopted by Tegna to redefine success in diversity within the media industry.

Themes	Description
Intentional Support and Training	Tegna provides intentional support through training and mentorship programs for news managers of color, fostering an environment conducive to inclusive journalism.
Accountability and Measurement	Tegna emphasizes accountability and measures diversity efforts, tracking diverse story coverage and inclusivity metrics using integrated systems within news production tools.
Setting News Expectations	Successful execution of diversity initiatives creates new expectations within the newsroom, setting a precedent for heightened diversity-themed events and achievements.
Cultural Awareness and Storytelling	Tegna's initiatives impact cultural awareness and storytelling, reflected in the creation of a diversity and inclusion calendar to represent diverse communities in news content.

RQ4: What measurable outcomes and impacts have resulted from Tegna's diversity initiatives since its launch?

Tegna's diversity initiatives have achieved significant progress in various facets of its operations, as emphasized by participants in interviews conducted. Notably, these initiatives have led to increased diversity in leadership roles, aligning more closely with the demographics of the communities served by Tegna stations. This shift towards diverse leadership is viewed as a positive advancement towards enhancing representation and inclusivity within the organization.

Furthermore, participants highlighted that Tegna's focus on diversity has resulted in more varied and inclusive content, which, in turn, has fostered enhanced community trust and engagement. By covering a broader range of stories that reflect the experiences and concerns of diverse communities, Tegna has deepened its connection with its audience and demonstrated a steadfast commitment to representing diverse perspectives.

A significant aspect of Tegna's approach is the establishment of an inclusive journalism group, serving as a platform for sharing resources and perspectives among stations. This

initiative has facilitated more comprehensive and sensitive coverage of issues, ensuring that diverse voices are not only heard but also authentically represented in the newsroom.

Despite these achievements, challenges persist in retaining diverse talent within Tegna. While recruitment efforts have successfully attracted new talent, concerns remain regarding providing adequate support and stability to retain these individuals in the long term. Participant Bradley Gray highlighted the need for enhanced infrastructure and support systems to prevent burnout and turnover among diverse employees, both on-air and behind the scenes. Gray emphasized the importance of developing new strategies to ensure the retention of new talent and maintain a supportive environment.

Taylor Berry emphasized the positive work environment at Tegna, noting its perception as a welcoming and inclusive workplace that fosters growth and longevity for employees, particularly minorities. This sentiment reflects a broader trend of satisfaction and commitment among employees, contributing to the overall success of Tegna's diversity initiatives. Berry's remarks underscore the organization's evolution and progress in creating an inclusive culture that supports professional development for all employees.

Tegna's diversity initiatives have yielded notable outcomes across various dimensions of its operations. The increased diversity in leadership, coupled with more inclusive content and community engagement, underscores Tegna's commitment to representing and serving diverse communities. However, ongoing efforts are essential to address retention challenges and ensure that the organization continues to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for all employees.

Themes	Description
Increased Diversity in Leadership	Tegna's initiatives have led to greater diversity in leadership roles, aligning with the demographics of the communities served and enhancing representation within the organization.
Inclusive Content	Tegna's focus on diversity has resulted in more inclusive and varied content, deepening community trust and engagement by reflecting diverse experiences and concerns.
Retention Rates	Some participants believe that challenges persist in retaining diverse talent within Tegna, highlighting the need for enhanced support systems and strategies to prevent future burnout and turnover among diverse employees.
Positive Work Environment	Most Tegna stations are perceived as a welcoming and inclusive workplace that fosters growth, particularly for minorities, contributing to overall employee satisfaction and commitment.

RQ5: Using these metrics, what are the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations and the communities served by their stations?

Tegna's diversity initiatives have brought about significant changes within newsroom operations and have positively impacted the communities they serve. By analyzing the responses of key participants within Tegna, several themes emerge regarding the effects of these initiatives on both internal newsroom dynamics and external community engagement.

Participants like Kent Floyd and Thuy Lan Nguyen highlight increased community trust due to diverse representation. Floyd emphasizes that community members feel heard and respected, leading to constructive interactions and tangible outcomes like improved social services. Thuy Lan Nguyen underscores the importance of representation in fostering deeper community connections and trust, enabling authentic storytelling and meaningful engagement.

Lucia Suarez Sang emphasizes the shift from stereotypical coverage to authentic representation of diverse communities. This expansion of coverage showcases diverse stories and experiences, challenging conventional narratives of crime-focused reporting in communities of color.

Art Holliday identifies challenges in recruiting diverse talent for non-glamorous positions within newsrooms. Monique Brand advocates for transparent recruitment based on merit rather than tokenism, promoting inclusivity across all roles. Bradley Gray highlights the importance of intentional diversity efforts to enhance recruitment and retention strategies.

Taylor Berry discusses how viewers appreciate and resonate with diverse newsroom teams, feeling seen and represented. Valarie Guyton mentions positive feedback from sales interactions, where diverse programming and community initiatives are recognized and celebrated.

Tegna's diversity initiatives have catalyzed transformative changes within newsroom operations and community interactions. These initiatives have led to enhanced community trust, expanded coverage perspectives, improved recruitment and retention practices, and positive audience perceptions. By continuing to prioritize diversity, Tegna can further strengthen its impact on both newsroom dynamics and community engagement.

Themes	Description
Increased Community Trust	Diverse representation in Tegna's newsrooms has led to increased community trust, with members feeling heard and respected, resulting in constructive interactions and tangible outcomes.
Shift in Coverage	Tegna's initiatives have shifted coverage from stereotypes to authentic representation, showcasing diverse stories and challenging usual crime-focused narratives.
Recruitment and Retention Challenges	Challenges in recruiting diverse talent for “non-glamorous” positions highlight the need for intentional efforts to promote inclusivity across all roles.
Viewer Appreciation and Representation	Viewers appreciate diverse newsroom teams, feeling seen and represented, leading to positive feedback and resonance with diverse programming initiatives.

Conclusion

The examination of Tegna's efforts to foster diverse representation in local television news management has provided significant insights into the challenges faced, the strategies employed, and the outcomes achieved. Through a comprehensive analysis of five research questions, this study offers a nuanced understanding of Tegna's approach to diversity and its impact on both internal operations and external community engagement.

Challenges and Opportunities:

The first research question delved into the challenges encountered by individuals of color and women in advancing to management roles within the news industry. Participants highlighted pervasive obstacles such as limited opportunities, biased perceptions, and the necessity to overcome stereotypes. However, amidst these challenges, themes of personal resilience, mentorship, and organizational culture emerged as crucial factors influencing career progression. These findings underscore the complexities of diversity and inclusion in professional settings and emphasize the ongoing need for equitable pathways to leadership roles.

Influence on Content Decisions:

The second research question explored how representation, or the lack thereof, in management positions influences content decisions within news organizations. Participants emphasized the pivotal role of diverse leadership teams in shaping editorial choices, with diverse perspectives enriching storytelling and ensuring accurate representation of communities. Conversely, the absence of diversity in management often led to biased coverage and disconnects from minority communities. The findings underscore the importance of prioritizing diversity in leadership positions to foster inclusive newsrooms and reflective storytelling.

Defining Success:

The third research question sought to understand how Tegna defines the success of its diversity model in local television news management. Insights from key participants highlighted Tegna's multifaceted approach, encompassing intentional support, accountability, holistic representation, and cultural awareness. The company's emphasis on training, mentorship, diversity audits, and merit-based accountability reflects a commitment to fostering inclusivity and representation within its stations.

Measurable Outcomes:

The fourth research question examined the measurable outcomes and impacts resulting from Tegna's diversity initiatives since their launch. Participants identified significant progress, including increased diversity in leadership roles and more inclusive content. However, challenges in retaining diverse talent persist, emphasizing the need for ongoing efforts to provide support and maintain a welcoming workplace environment. Despite these challenges, Tegna's initiatives have contributed to enhanced community trust, expanded coverage perspectives, and positive audience perceptions.

Effects on Newsroom Operations and Communities:

The fifth research question explored the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations and the communities served by their stations. Participants highlighted increased community trust, deeper community connections, and a shift towards more authentic representation of diverse communities in news coverage. Tegna's initiatives have catalyzed transformative changes within newsroom operations, fostering inclusivity, and promoting engagement with diverse audiences.

Tegna's efforts to foster diverse representation in local television news management are characterized by a multifaceted approach aimed at addressing systemic barriers, promoting inclusivity, and enhancing community engagement. While significant progress has been made, challenges persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to ensure a supportive and inclusive workplace environment. By prioritizing diversity and embracing diverse perspectives, Tegna can continue to lead the way in redefining success in diversity within the media industry, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and reflective news coverage for diverse communities.

As we reflect on the comprehensive insights gleaned from Tegna's initiatives and the experiences shared by participants, it's crucial to acknowledge the persistent challenges and the emotional toll that comes with advocating for diversity in newsrooms. The narratives reveal a profound sense of exhaustion among participants who continuously find themselves battling systemic barriers and advocating for people of color within their workplaces. This prompts the question: Where do we go from here to continue this conversation and make meaningful changes in the industry?

The participants' accounts underscore the need for concrete actions to move this conversation forward and address the fatigue associated with navigating predominantly homogeneous newsroom environments. Tegna's commitment to diversity must translate into sustained organizational support that prioritizes the well-being and professional development of employees from diverse backgrounds. This includes implementing comprehensive mentorship programs, providing resources for cultural competency training, and establishing clear pathways for career advancement. To combat exhaustion and burnout, diversity initiatives should be institutionalized within news organizations. This entails embedding diversity goals into strategic

plans, allocating dedicated resources, and holding leadership accountable for fostering inclusive environments.

Open and transparent communication channels are essential for addressing concerns and gathering feedback from employees of color. Tegna should actively seek input from diverse staff members and incorporate their perspectives into policy-making and organizational practices. Beyond individual efforts, Tegna must prioritize systemic changes to mitigate biases in recruitment, promotion, and story selection. This requires ongoing training for all staff, diversity audits of organizational practices, and actively dismantling systemic barriers that hinder career progression for underrepresented groups.

Collaboration with industry partners, media associations, and academic institutions can amplify efforts to advance diversity and inclusivity in local television news. By sharing best practices and resources, Tegna can contribute to broader industry-wide transformations. Building allies among colleagues and fostering a sense of solidarity across newsrooms can alleviate the burden on individuals advocating for diversity. Tegna can facilitate programs and create platforms for cross-functional collaboration to amplify diverse voices. As Nguyen noted, “there's not enough people of color in news management. We've made really good strides in putting people in color on air and in our newsrooms, but I think there needs to be more people of color and management because it makes a huge difference, especially for the employees that you're bringing on in the room to see themselves reflected in management and then not have to explain certain things if they're not represented,” (Nguyen, 2024).

Takeaway for Other Local Television Companies:

Other local television stations can learn valuable lessons from Tegna's diversity efforts by implementing intentional support, training, and mentorship programs for managers of color. By

prioritizing these initiatives, stations can nurture diverse talent pools, foster inclusive leadership, and provide avenues for career advancement within their organizations. Tegna's approach highlights the importance of investing in the professional development of underrepresented groups, which not only enhances diversity but also contributes to a more equitable workplace culture. Tegna's emphasis on accountability and measurement offers a strategic framework for local stations to track and assess the impact of diversity initiatives. By setting clear metrics, such as diverse story coverage and inclusivity measures, stations can monitor progress and ensure that diversity efforts yield tangible outcomes. This approach not only provides a roadmap for success but also highlights the importance of holding organizations accountable for fostering inclusive environments.

Also, promoting representation without relying solely on diversity quotas enables stations to prioritize merit-based hiring and ensure accurate representation within leadership teams. This strategy fosters an inclusive workplace culture where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued and empowered to contribute meaningfully to organizational success. Incorporating cultural awareness and diverse storytelling into news coverage, as demonstrated by Tegna, strengthens community connections, and ensures authentic representation of diverse perspectives, ultimately building trust and engagement among audiences. Addressing retention challenges by developing infrastructure and support systems to prevent burnout among diverse employees is crucial for creating a supportive workplace environment that values and retains diverse talent.

While Tegna's efforts have yielded significant progress, addressing exhaustion and advancing diversity needs continued commitment, systemic changes, and inclusive practices. By prioritizing the well-being of employees and institutionalizing diversity initiatives, Tegna can

continue leading the industry in redefining success and fostering more inclusive and reflective news coverage for diverse communities. This journey towards equity and inclusion demands collective action, empathy, and perseverance from all stakeholders within local television news management.

The study did identify several shortcomings that could be addressed through further research to enhance understanding and implementation of diversity initiatives within local television stations. The sample size and response rate of the study may have limited the extensiveness and depth of insights gathered. Future research should explore strategies to improve response rates and increase sample sizes to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of diversity initiatives across a wider range of local television stations. This could involve employing various methods such as incentives, targeted outreach efforts, or alternative survey designs to increase participation and capture diverse perspectives effectively.

Additionally, while the study provided valuable insights into the immediate outcomes of diversity initiatives, further research could focus on assessing their long-term impact. It would be insightful to see how Tegna's initiative measures up at the end of its 5-year plan and beyond, understanding whether employees will feel the same in five or more years from now. This includes evaluating their influence on organizational culture, employee retention, and community engagement within local television news stations over an extended period. Understanding the sustained effects of diversity initiatives can provide valuable insights into their effectiveness and inform strategies for continuous improvement. Additionally, conducting a comparative analysis with other media organizations that have implemented similar diversity initiatives can offer insights into best practices and key success factors for promoting diversity in local television news management. This comparative approach can help identify areas of strength and areas for

improvement within individual stations, fostering cross-learning and collaboration within the industry.

Finally, further research should delve deeper into how local television stations can institutionalize diversity goals and embed inclusive practices into organizational policies and practices. This involves addressing systemic barriers and biases through systemic changes that promote equity and inclusion at all levels of the organization. Exploring collaborative initiatives among industry partners, media associations, and academic institutions can amplify efforts to advance diversity and inclusivity within local television news, fostering a more inclusive and representative media landscape. By addressing these study shortcomings and embracing continuous improvement, local television stations can play a crucial role in fostering inclusive workplaces and promoting more reflective and representative news coverage for diverse communities.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Semi Structured Zoom Interview Flow

Introduction:

- **Welcome and Introduction**

Hello, [Interviewee's Name]! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. As I mentioned in the emails leading up to this Zoom call, I am conducting this interview to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of manager within Tegna regarding diversity, representation, and inclusion in management roles.

- **Purpose of Interview**

My focus is to understand how diversity initiatives and representation impact content decisions and career advancement within Tegna. As a research study to complete my master's degree at the University of Missouri.

Interview Questions:

1. Personal Experience with Career Advancement
 - Throughout your career, what challenges, if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?
2. Influence of Representation in Management
 - How has representation (or lack thereof) in management influenced content decisions at Tegna?
3. Perspective on Tegna's Diversity Plan
 - As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity plan in promoting inclusion and representation?
4. Resonance of Diversity Model at Your Station
 - How do you feel like Tegna's diversity model resonates well at your station?
5. Impact of Diversity Model on Decision-Making
 - How does Tegna's diversity model impact your decision-making roles within the organization?
6. Barriers to Promotional Opportunities
 - Can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?
7. Upper Management's Perception of Diversity Initiatives
 - How does Tegna's upper management perceive the impact of these diversity initiatives on on-air representation and content?
8. Definition of Success for Diversity Model
 - How does Tegna define the success of its diversity model in local television news management?
9. Measurable Outcomes of Diversity Initiatives
 - What measurable outcomes and impacts have resulted from Tegna's diversity initiatives since its launch?
10. Effects of Diversity Initiatives on Operations and Communities
 - Using these metrics, what are the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations and the communities served by their stations?

Closing:

- Final Thoughts and Thank You

Is there anything else you would like to share before we conclude? Thank you so much for your time and valuable insights today.

This flow should guide the interview effectively, allowing for focused discussions on the experiences and perceptions related to diversity and inclusion within Tegna. Adjustments can be made based on the interviewee's responses and additional insights uncovered during the conversation.

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Interview 1 – Art Holliday – March 11, 2024, at 9:30 am EST

Amber Grigley 00:03

If you could just please tell me your name, your position and what station you're at.

Art Holliday 00:11

Sure. My name is Art Holliday. I am the News Director at KSDK. TV, the NBC affiliate in St. Louis. We are owned by Tegna. And I've worked at KSDK for in July, it'll be 45 years in a variety of positions. Sportscaster, morning anchor, general assignment reporter, storytelling unit. And now News Director.

Amber Grigley 00:45

Perfect for the entire 45 years. Under Tegna, or different companies?

Art Holliday 00:52

No, this is probably the third company. Since I've been here when I first started. The KSDK and 1979. We were Pulitzer. And then Pulitzer sold to Multimedia, Multimedia sold to Gannett, Gannett spun off their broadcast into Tegna.

Amber Grigley 01:25

Got it. Thank you so much. All right, we'll move right along to the questions: Throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Art Holliday 01:38

Well, um, that's a tricky question. Because I, the current role that I have, I didn't really seek I, my boss, recruited me for four months, to convince me to turn the page on being in front of the camera and moving into management. So, it's, I suppose it's probably in a typical leadership path, because most people at some point, and I even I reached this point, years ago, I thought about being a news director. They were kind of this vague idea. And I got some management experience at KSDK. And then once I, I got to peek behind the curtain and see what was involved with being a news director. I thought to myself, well, why would I want to do that all they do is go to meetings. And I'm not a big fan of meetings. So, I really kind of changed my whole thinking about getting into management. And my former director of content, Carol Fowler, started this month-long pitch about the type of culture that she wanted to create in our newsroom. Her definition was a newsroom culture that attracts people, and makes it easier to hire, and makes it harder to leave. And there were multiple facets of that. But the more she talked about it, the more I realized, well, that's the newsroom that I always wanted to work in. And suddenly, I'm going to get a seat at the table, I'm going to have a major role in hiring, which is one of the most critical things about the success or lack of success of any newsroom. And I knew that I was going to be doing a lot of things that I probably wasn't going to enjoy. But I thought it was an opportunity to represent and maybe inspire, I thought it was an opportunity to serve our newsroom and an opportunity to serve our community to tap into the unusual journey that I had in my career going from sports, to anchoring general assignment reporter 30 years into my

career, which is the exact opposite of most people. Because I thought that would give me the ability to have higher level conversations with our sports department, and our MSJ's and our anchors because I've done all those jobs. I know exactly what's involved. And it allows me to call BS occasionally. Because I again, I know, right, and so that's kind of a long-winded answer, but that's how I landed in this role three years ago.

Amber Grigley 05:07

Thank you. How has representation, or lack thereof in management influenced content decisions?

Art Holliday 05:47

So before I attempt to answer your question, and you kind of give me I'm trying to make sure I understand exactly what you're asking.

Amber Grigley 06:01

Yes, absolutely. I'm asking how has the lack of people of color in management influenced your content decisions, as far as, let's say, covering a particular story, or covering a specific community, not having that extra voice of someone who understands the background and understands the importance of covering it this way?

Art Holliday 06:30

Well, probably the starkest example would be 2014, when there was a fatal police encounter in Ferguson. And it became an international story. At the time, our entire management team at KSDK was all white. And maybe a year or two, before Ferguson, became a headline KSDK had made a strategic decision that our target audience was a white soccer mom in St. Louis County. So obviously, your editorial decisions are going to be impacted by that sort of decision making and strategy. And now suddenly, there's a whole portion of our community that Michael Brown's death was, a story. But it became the match that lit the fuse in. In North St. Louis County, which is, many of the communities there are predominantly black. And a lot of the things that had been going on for decades, were suddenly exposed, you know, the scab had been ripped off. And so, when it was time for us to cover the story, we got called out by people who are on the street. Oh, now you want to talk to us. Because, you know, we weren't covering a lot of stories that we're covering now. You know, in 2024, you would never say in your newsroom that we are only going to cover stories that affect a fluent white people. He just wouldn't do it. First, we're, we're all struggling to get viewers. So, I think everybody's woken up to the fact that if you don't give people a reason to watch, they don't need us anymore. Because they've been getting news on their phone all day. You know, so you better give people a reason to watch. And part of that is seeing themselves on television, seeing their stories told. Well, now we do that routinely. And we talk about it, we have a list of I don't know 150 diverse experts that we can turn to at a moment's notice. Because we noticed during COVID that we started off by interviewing mostly white experts. When there were if you ask a few more questions, you could it wasn't difficult to find diverse experts, but it must be intentional. You know, it must be a thought process. It must be part of your newsroom storytelling culture that we are going to try to, you know, reflect our entire community, which was a 180 for what we had decided, you know, in the early 2000s. So that's, you know, and, you know, fast forward to 2024. You know, I'm the first black news director and the 77-year history of KSDK, which means that many, many people who look like

me, and you simply didn't get the opportunity. So, I think there's been a significant shift. But there was a price to be paid for previous decisions that we made as a news organization, we've righted the ship, and we're getting credit for it. Well, some of those decisions never should have been made in the first place. So that's, you know, I mean, I think that's about it, you know, graphic and example as you can have.

Amber Grigley 11:05

Wow, absolutely. I did not know that this was you're the first black news director at this station. That's amazing.

Art Holliday 11:13

Well first one in St. Louis, and St. Louis. So that means all those years. No one got the opportunity.

Amber Grigley 11:29

Well, you bring us to our next point, getting more in depth with Tegna and their plan, I noticed as a journalist around the COVID era, Tegna, made the big push with their diversity initiative. It was on their website, it was to the point where from the outside looking in, I felt like it was in your face. Every time I got on LinkedIn, every time I got on social media, every time I Googled companies, during that time because I was in search for a job, I would always see their diversity initiative as a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity plan in promoting inclusion and representation?

Art Holliday 12:14

Well, we're talking about 64 TV stations. So, I can speak with authority about what's taking place at KSDK. And to some degree, I can speak about it at the corporate level, because I was on the initial corporate DEI team, which was featured employees from all over the company. So, in general, some stations had more work to do than others. And you know that logically, that would probably be the case, because again, you're talking about over 60 TV stations, and not all of them were practicing inclusive journalism. Here at KSDK, we were doing well. But there was still work to do for a variety of reasons. When my boss Carol Fowler came in four years ago, that was really the early stages of the instructions that we were getting from the corporate level. So here in our newsroom, we talked a lot about in the stories where you have discretion about who you talk to, and where you go to gather the material. Let's get out of our comfort zone. Let's drive a little farther. Let's try to have our stories represent as many facets of our community as we can. We had an initially, we had an inclusive journalism Committee, which I had it up and we talked about, first, you've got to define diversity, because it means different things to different people. Usually, the first thing that comes to mind is, is raised in a race, ethnicity, and skin color. And certainly, that's a key element of diversity. But it also means ability and disability. Because there are many stories that should be told about people living with disabilities. Age frequently, we don't talk to young people, and we don't talk to really old people. and they all have viewpoints depending on the story. You know, so there's that. Certainly, sexual orientation is a key characteristic of a diverse community. And there are many stories to be told they're certainly now with, you know, some of the state legislatures really tried to roll back, you know, laws and rights that have been gained. So, you know, so we, we look at many facets of what makes our community diverse. And, then trying too intentionally. And part of it was geography. You and I

both know, it's easier to drive 20 minutes to cover a story than it is to drive 45 minutes or an hour to cover a story. Right. You know, deadlines come into play, there's the drive time. But if you're not covering communities that don't typically get covered, you may miss the story. I remain convinced that one of the reasons we underestimated Donald Trump was that many news organizations weren't driving far enough to talk to people and hear what mattered to them. And we were caught off guard. And I think that can happen with any sort of story. If you don't, if you don't drive far enough, and pay attention to that geographic component of your news coverage. I mean, it's, it's a bad business decision, at a time when the audience for local TV news is ageing, and in many cases dying. And we aren't really doing a very good job of replacing it with younger viewers, because they've grown up not being dependent on the 4pm, or the 6pm, or the 10pm, or the 11pm. You know, and so the storytelling must change. The people who appear on screen, and whose voices are heard must change. And so, we paid attention to all those things. And the reward is that our ratings started going up, we've, you know, we're in a dogfight at 10. We're usually either number one or number two, we've been dominating the 6pm. time slot for several years now. And, you know, so we're getting credit for some of the things that we're doing. And, you know, certainly when I was when I moved into this role, it was, you know, it was a, it was a media story for about five minutes. But, you know, it caught people's attention to the fact that, you know, we hired someone a person of color to be in a decision-making capacity, and that's mattered to people.

Amber Grigley 18:35

You kind of answered my next question. I was going to ask them, how do you feel like Tegna's diversity model resonate well, with your station, and you explain, just changing that mentality is seeing the improvement with ratings. So, I'm going to move on to the next question after that. How does Tegna's this diversity model impact your decision-making roles at your station?

Art Holliday 19:05

Well, you know, when you grow up as a black person in America, you experience a lot of things that other people don't. You may see facets of society in a way that other people don't. You understand that? While many people will say that, you know, America is not a racist country. The history of this country is as racism and taking advantage of people of color, whether it's Native Americans, whether it's slaves who eventually became African Americans. And that's just one example of why a diverse management team is important. And a diverse newsroom. You, we all have our individual experiences, but we can't know everything. And so, if you have someone in your newsroom, who is Vietnamese, and if you have someone in your newsroom that has relatives who are living in the Middle East, and are being impacted by the ongoing war, in Gaza. If you have someone in your newsroom, who uses a wheelchair, now you can tap into all these different experiences. If you have someone in your newsroom, who is gay, all those things matter. Because our society is a melting pot of different experiences, and different backgrounds, and different backstories. And the more of those that you can incorporate into your newsroom, the better your coverage is going to be. There will be stories suggested that you might not have thought of on your own. There will be people who can hold you accountable when you screw up the story, in one way or another. So, I think all those things, have the potential to make your newsroom much more effective and impactful in your community.

Amber Grigley 22:13

How does Tegna's upper management precede the impact of their diversity initiatives? And how does it look for on air representation? As well as content since they rolled out the plan? I think it was around 2020.

Art Holliday 22:29

Yes. Well, from my standpoint, as someone who hires not only for KSDK, but I'm also on the corporate committee that tries to recruit people in just into our company in general. It's easier to find people who want to be in front of the camera, you know that that's never gone away. Right? You know, I wanted to be in front of the camera, you wanted to be in front of the camera, what's harder, is recruiting people for all of the other positions that you have in your newsroom that don't have a camera pointed at, you know, we need we need diversity on our assignment desks. We need diversity in our producing core. We need diversity in our marketing departments. You know, so we need diversity on our digital teams. Those are those are harder because they're less glamorous. Most, you know, very few people go to the University of Missouri, saying I want to be a show producer. Now, I've talked to many students who got exposed to it and fell in love with it. And luckily, we've been able to hire some in the last couple of years. You know, but so it's I think it's easier to have representation in front of the camera because those are the most desirable high profile and, in most cases, better paying jobs. It's harder to find candidates of color and diversity for less glamorous, lower paying jobs in comparison to you know, being an anchor or reporter. I've noticed in the three years I've been doing interviews with job candidates, that it's meaningful for many of them to talk to a news director of color, because it's still, I don't know that I'm a unicorn, but it's not an everyday occurrence for people who are applying for jobs. And does it matter? It's mattered to some of the people that eventually said yes. And, you know, and part of part of my decision to move into this role was to pay it forward. A lot of people helped me along the way. And now I get to return the favor. I, I often tell people look whether we hire you or not, just consider me part of your network. If I can help you, in whatever way, let me know. Many people don't take me up on it, and that's fine. But some people do. You know, I've, with the benefit of hindsight, I see the impact that mentors can have on young people. I wish I had had that insight, as a young person to seek mentors, no one ever talked about that in journalism school, you know, and I could have easily speeded up my own learning curve, if I had had if I had been intentional about looking for mentors. So, I make myself available for that. Being grateful for the people who helped me and encouraged me at a time when it was harder to envision yourself doing some of these roles. You know, I My, my, the head of the broadcasting department, when I was at Mizzou, was a guy named Lee Wilson as I recall, he was working on in may have been working on a PhD while he was at Mizzou, but he was running the broadcasting department. And he played a significant role in my raising my level of confidence. I don't know what it was like for you in in school, I still had kind of a hard time thinking that I was going to be anything special. But, you know, after my first year, I made an appointment to meet with Lee and talk about my summer options. Should I get an internship? What should I do? You know, and so, you know, he was saying, well, you know, there's nothing wrong with an internship. But you're mostly you're going to be doing grunt work. And they're not going to let you do a whole lot. Why don't you enroll in summer school? I'll make you a TA so you can make some money. And you can anchor sports five nights a week at 6pm. And I thought, well, that sounds good. You know. And then while I had his attention, I said, Have I made the right career choice? Because his opinion really mattered to me. He had worked, he had worked at all three

major networks. He had come up through the ranks with Tom Brokaw, he had, you know, done some of the biggest news stories, he had produced documentaries. I mean, he was he was legit. And he could have crushed me, or he could have lifted me out. And luckily lifted me up. No, you know, of course, you've made the right choice. That's why I'm giving you these opportunities. You're very talented, blah, blah, blah. And I'm, you know, so I left that meeting thinking, you know, I went in being very insecure and unsure. And I left them meeting thinking, well, if Lee Wilson thinks I'm pretty good, why on earth would I disagree with it? Because he, he's worked with the best of the best. You know, so, having the opportunity to play that role for someone younger, is meaningful to me at this stage of my career. You know, I'm, I'm approaching the ninth inning of my career, I'm not going to be this much longer. And, you know, so I would like, part of my legacy to be the people that I've helped. And maybe it's just a kind word or, or, you know, something encouraging or, you know, you Don't do this because I was stupid when I was young type advice. You know, those sorts of things that, that maybe you don't appreciate at the time, but then years down the line when you're looking in the rearview mirror it Oh, wow. Okay, that did make a difference.

Amber Grigley 30:18

Perfect. We're almost about to wrap it up. But how does Tegna define the success of its diversity initiative and local television news management?

Art Holliday 30:29

Well, we have more news managers of color. The company is being very intentional about supporting the people like me, who are recent to the party. They do a fantastic job of creating a variety of training opportunities, and in some cases, connecting mentors and mentees. So that's part of it. They have the company has multiple ways of measuring success. individual stations have been encouraged to hold themselves accountable. So, for instance, here at KSDK, our Managing Editor created a system that that's connected to us use ENPS here to, you know, create our newscast rundowns. And so, he, he created a way to track the number of diverse stories that we do, the people, the diverse voices, that we include the geographic location of the stories, and so every quarter, he will go in and collect data. And it so now we've created a system of holding ourselves accountable, and making it the intentionality of inclusive journalism, part of our daily conversation, because that's, that's how you create new habits. You got to do it and get some muscle memory in a newsroom. That means that, you know, it's a frequent topic in one-on-one meetings with news managers. It's a frequent topic at editorial meeting, when we're talking about, okay, what are some potential ways to tell this story? So, I think there's a variety of ways that, that Tegna as a company, and its 60 Plus TV stations, are trying to hold themselves accountable and measure their own success. So really, it's a combination of support from the company, as well as what we do in our individual markets.

Amber Grigley 33:44

I think that sums it up. You are excellent at this. I think we probably skipped maybe three questions, because you answered them with one of the questions. The other the other two questions I had left. I'm talking about the measurable outcomes of the initiative and using the metrics about the news operations and how the community is responding. And you answer that they're responding well, your station, you're seeing an increase in ratings, which is amazing. Congratulations. And you're seeing a shift in the recruitment process, getting more people of

color on air and behind the scenes because they feel more comfortable to work. Finally, in some cases, be able to work with someone who looks like them. And that's amazing. Is there anything else you think that I've missed or you want to bring across as we talk about just advancing the management role in our industry and hopefully, companies looking at Tegna initiatives or other initiatives to do the same across the board, so we won't be the ones you know from the outside looking in saying man, I wish I had that representation on, you know where I'm at right now?

Art Holliday 35:06

I'm, you know, I know for a fact that Tegna is not the only media company that has a presence at the major journalism conferences, whether it's NABJ, or AAJA, or RTDNA. You know, I mean, that's, that's part of what we do, we recruited at all the top journalism schools to try to get taken his message, and, you know, the opportunities in front of people. So that doesn't really set us apart, we try to do it well. And, you know, it's, it's a challenge, because there is other there are other strong media companies. And, you know, it's, it's a competition for, you know, for the one percent coming out of journalism schools every year, we'd like to think that we get our share. Because we have a, we have a strong sales pitch, in terms of opportunity within the company, the ability to apply for a job at another station in Tegna, even though you're under contract at your current station, you know, our goal is to recruit great people at all levels, from the smallest market to the top 10 markets. And then those younger people coming in and the smaller markets, nurture them, grow them, treat them well enough that they don't want to leave the company, you've got to give people a reason to stay. And I think we're, I think we're doing a better job of that. It's something that we really try to focus on a lot here in St. Louis at KSDK. Because St. Louis is like Indianapolis, some people come to there and stay, you know, now I'm, I'm the outlier, most people don't stay 45 years, it just got to work out that way. But it's also a launching pad for people to go to, you know, bigger markets. You know, we've got alumni at the network, and, you know, in top 10 markets, inside and outside of Tegna, so, you know, a lot of people come to St. Louis and Indianapolis, already talented, and they get even better, and they're able to take advantage of that. So, you know, you've got to treat people well, you've got to give them some idea that there is a future that there are people in the company who are interested in looking out for you, and helping you grow your career, that you're not on your own. You don't have to figure it all out by yourself. You know, so I think we, we have a strong message. And you know, we just try to we try to fine tune it year after year. You know, I've really enjoyed recruiting at some of the conferences, and I'm, you know, I've got, I think I'm going to four conferences later this year, which is the most that I've ever gone to, you know, so we're, we're trying to we're trying to give people a reason to give tech no second look. And I think in many cases we have, but you know, the competition isn't going to sleep either.

Amber Grigley 39:08

I love that. I love that. As always, it was a pleasure. Spending some time with you this morning.

Art Holliday 40:26 Amber, have a great day.

Amber Grigley 40:27 You too. Bye.

Interview 2 – Kent Floyd – March 11, 2024, at 2:00 pm EST

Amber Grigley 01:31

Can you say your name, station, and position?

Kent Floyd 03:25

My name is Kent Floyd up the assistant news director of ABC 24, CW 30 WATN/WLMT. I've been with Tegna for, I would say, two and a half years now. I've been in this specific role for six months.

Amber Grigley 03:48

Perfect. All right. So that brings us to our first question throughout your career. What challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Kent Floyd 04:00

Honestly, I've faced many challenges. My path is a little bit unique from everybody else. Because I didn't come into local TV. Until maybe two years ago I've been working at to network with NBC News. fresh out of college, I graduated in 2009 from Langston University. And I started working at NBC in August of 2011. Now sorry, February, February, February 2011. And I spent most of, the majority of my career at the network level. I came to the local level. I will say after hitting the glass ceiling I was hitting the glass ceiling so many times I bumped your head up against the glass ceiling so many times actually, you think you're going to break through but on that level, corporate is a little bit different. So, I left to come to the local level because I saw more opportunity for advancement in local news rather than at the network level. So I have faced many challenges at the network. That could be a whole nother thesis, you can write on that. But yeah, I came down to the local level, because I was I had many opportunities, I saw many opportunities in management, I was being offered many jobs in a local news as a manager, but to move up in the network is I don't know, it's all about who you know, and who can vouch for you not about your skill level. And that's just in my, from what I've seen. You get in where somebody could vouch for you to get in the company, it was, it was hard, you had to you had to be vouched for. And that's typically what I've seen a lot. Whereas in local news, it helps. But it's mostly all your talent excess, at my experience. I don't know if that's the question.

Amber Grigley 06:11

So that brings us to our next question, how has representation or the lack thereof and management influenced content decisions?

Kent Floyd 06:48

Well, I think representation in management does influence content decisions. At my previous station, you know, basically, being in Minneapolis, it was it was kind of there wasn't a lot of us in management, I was the only I was the only black manager in the whole station. I was the managing editor. And you know, I ran the daily editorial meeting. So of course, I would want to do stories that about, you know, diverse stories, I just say, we'll be there discussing stories of the day. And it was like a fight to cover diverse stories in that market. I can't speak for everybody else's market. But Minneapolis, St. Paul, if it wasn't a if it wasn't a I cannot put this. If it wasn't like a large crime story or anything, basically, it was so bad, they had to put in a special segment

to ensure that diverse stories were covered. I'll just put it that way. I had to, basically, it was so bad. I had to game the system. I started pre assigning stories. And they got him to that. And then it got changed. And somebody brought forth the idea of, hey, let's do this. Let's do this. Let's do this, these stories and put them onto this banner. And we could brand it this way. And that's how, you know, we did stories that were uplifting people and people of color by us by our community. But it was sad to have to do that, rather than just covering as regular news.

Amber Grigley 09:01

Wow. Wow, interesting perspective. As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan and promoting inclusion and representation?

Kent Floyd 09:15

I think I think they do have a great plan. They do promote technically does promote diversity. And they're serious about inclusion and representation. I have seen it. I'm a part of it. You know, me being in my positions just speaks. There's not a, if you look around newsrooms around the country, there's not a lot of black managers. You may have one or two here. But I can really say the station that I'm at now WATN, they are really we really prioritize basically how Tegna DEI program says, By the end of 2025, they want to have they wanted to increase BIPOC representation. That's like extinction level content teams to reflect, you know, the diversity and the communities they serve. And me being here in Memphis, I can truly say that our station represents the diversity in the city of Athens. My newest directors black on black, directly, the title technology is, is black. The director of marketing is black. Yeah, we have like, our one of our league salespeople is black. You don't really see that around the country.

Amber Grigley 10:47

How do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model resonate well, in at your station?

Kent Floyd 10:55

Yeah, yes, it's, it's working. It's not about just having, per say black people in positions. We have highly skilled, black people in positions. My, my news director, she didn't just say, some people say, we just go out and hire black people. But we really do hire, we really do hire the best person for the position. It just so happens. A lot of the best people are black. I don't know. I don't know why. Around the country. I guess, you know, if they really go by the diversity of your city, then maybe it makes sense if you look at it that way. But here where I am in Memphis, we really represent the city of Memphis.

Amber Grigley 11:49

How does Tegna's diversity model impact your decision-making roles? Now that you're in this position is a little bit different than when you were in Minneapolis, St. Paul, now you're in a community where you serve a black population, you've just mentioned, you have a lot of diversity in management. So how does that impact the decision-making process and your role under Tegna's diversity initiative?

Kent Floyd 12:18

Their diversity models? Honestly, if I was in a different city, I would say, I can look at it that way. As far as like having to use this model to hire because the overwhelming population is probably not black. But we get a lot of people that apply for jobs here. Black, white, Asian, Hispanic, so I don't really because they have to use a diversity model. We just picked the best people. I know. When I go through resumes, I'm not like here, we have to hire so many black people this quarter, or anything like that I really could just look at.

Amber Grigley 13:14

Can you describe any barriers you faced or probably not at all in seeking the promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?

Kent Floyd 13:49

I haven't had any or seen any barriers. To be honest with you. I was hired as a managing editor, I would say for desperate for a news producer, and film producer for NBC News, for like nine years. And I applied at Tegna. At Tegna's station in Minneapolis, and I call it the out of all nine years. And I applied at Tegna. At Tegna's station in Minneapolis, and I call it the out of all of the people they hired there. They chose to hire me I don't think I was a diversity hire per say. I felt like I was hired based off my talent. And then I was promoted two years later to Assistant News Director. So, I don't think there were any barriers from the per say. I think it was just all of my talent. I didn't feel like I was offered jobs and different. I was offered jobs around the country, but I didn't feel like I was at diversity hired. It was all off merit.

Amber Grigley 15:01

So is it safe to say that you feel as if once Tegna kind of got you in the door? They kind of made that clear path for you to grow and reach new heights? Within? Okay.

Kent Floyd 15:16

Yes. Okay. Sounds good. All right got all the training that I needed that I didn't leadership training that I didn't get before at the other company. They basically removed all the barriers that I was facing that night, yes. So, I would say Tegna does a great job with that, where, if you, I will say, regardless of your color, but especially if you're black, if you're in Tegna, and you do your job, there's no roadblocks or hurdles, you have to jump over to become a manager or anything like that. I think it's basically all of your merit off of your skills, or experience. In my experience. Now, somebody else have a totally different story in a different DMA, but I can only speak to me.

Amber Grigley 16:35

How does Tegna upper management perceive the impact of these diversity initiatives that they rolled out on-air representation and content?

Kent Floyd 16:48

Here at Tegna Memphis like I said, the diversity initiatives and all they represent I mean, we try to hire the best people. Regardless of regardless of ethnicity, I mean, we have we have a black, we have our morning team is our two black, black male and a black female. We'll have Reuben is kind of half Hispanic, half black. Are 6pm and 9pm. Anchors are black, and then we have white,

main accurate and our we have a black Chief, chief meteorologist. I don't know the impact that they're all I'm sorry that I'm struggling.

Amber Grigley 17:55

I'll kind of help you with a follow up question to that. Would you say that that is the move that Tegna is making as far as diversifying their management system? Do you think that that's a great recruiting effort to get more people of color to join the company as far as on air? When you talk with a candidate? Are they you know, more comfortable?

Kent Floyd 18:24

I definitely have seen that. Especially when we're interviewing producers for roles. When we, when I interview a producer, they talked to my nightside executive producer that he refers them to me and they're like, oh, wow, I didn't know you. You were black, a black assistant news director, and then they talk to my news director. And they're like, oh, you got the black assistant news director and news director like, I guess that's rare. Maybe it's rare in what I've seen around the country. So, I think I think the impact is great. There definitely is an impact and I think Tegna's doing the right things to put the right people in place to I guess, I don't think about it as an initiative. That's just how we are. So, in, I guess some other places they are trying to force it like it's just, it's just natural ear. That's just our ethos.

Amber Grigley 19:47

How does tend to define the success of its diversity model and local television news management?

Kent Floyd 19:53

I'm not sure how to answer that. Speaking. Like, what? I think that would be a better question for like, people in Tegna's DEI, because I can't really, I mean, I know. I just alluded to it earlier. Like, I think their diversity model was by 2025, they want to increase. They want to have basically all the newsrooms reflect the communities that they serve extinction level content, they wanted to increase leadership roles by like 50%. And then across all management within the company 50%. Also, now, I don't know if they have hit those marks, or I'm not privy to that information. So, I can't really answer that I can just speak to here. We have a very diverse nation here. And they have allowed us to then put any mandates on us about who to hire or anything in regard to their diversity models. So, I can't really speak for the rest of the tech as far as where they at with that.

Amber Grigley 21:34

What measurable outcomes and impacts have resulted from taking this diversity initiatives since it launched in your newsroom.

Kent Floyd 21:46

That was prior to my arrival, but just looking at our newsroom, you can tell that it is working. This station used to be owned by Nexstar before Tegna came in. And I think it was here in Memphis before Tegna came in it was mostly not black in management, or leadership roles. So, I think now that Tegna, but we've been at the station turned over to Tegna and Tegna bought it.

We've I mean, like I just said we have mostly it reflects the community of Memphis our news station with all the major, all the major management roles are people of color.

Amber Grigley 22:41

Alright, and the last question, using the metrics that you know, right now as far as their plan, how they're moving to make the company reflect the communities they serve. What are the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations? And how is the community responding to those changes?

Kent Floyd 23:07

The community responds, well, our brand is solution seeking journalism. So, we're always out in the community, they always see us we have community let's talk sessions, where there's no cameras involved, we just go into community and talk to them about their problems. And we've seen a lot of we do stories, highlighting. So, for example, two months ago, we did a story of a lady who had not received her SNAP benefits in months. And when she's getting a runaround from the city, we have the story and the next day. Somebody from that the organizer SNAP benefits here in the city reached out and help her fix the problem. Every time we point to every time, we do a story highlighting something holding the city accountable, they immediately fix the problem the next day. So, I think having people in charge that understand the community come from the community it helps our newsrooms operations a lot because we know that we can go into a community they're not going to feel weird about us being there, they talk to us they feel like we're part of it. And we don't try to ambulance chaser put anybody in a negative light. We don't put up mug shots unless we're done. Follow the story until completion. I think the community recognizes that and I think that that also I think the effects of having a diverse management leadership team who understands the community, but a lot of us come from those same neighborhoods I think it is for the better and it does help the community that we serve.

Amber Grigley 31:27

Okay, that's that will complete everything. Do you think we left anything out or something you are not sure about that you want to clear up?

Interview 3 – Monique Brand – March 14, 2024, at 4:00 pm EST

Amber Grigley 07:23

Okay, I'll go ahead and jump right in so you can get back to work. If I could have you to say your name and your position and title with your current station. And how long have you been with Tegna?

Monique Brand 07:47

Hi, my name is Monique Brown. I'm the assistant news director for KAGS-KCEN-TV. Out of Bryan and out of Tempe, Brian in temple respectfully. I've been with Tegna for about a year, while a while it'll be almost two years now. My second-year anniversary well actually will be in November of this year. But I'm not new to news. I have been in this industry for 15 years. I started in radio because I obviously have a face for it. Went into broadcasting where I was an NBC Sports correspondent for three Olympics. And then went into hard news probably about 2015 Where it covered crime and politics in the Central Texas area. And then after that I manage seven newspapers for a couple of years, and then I miss broadcasting so much I ended up back led into a managerial role. So yeah.

Amber Grigley 08:47

Perfect. Throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color, just in general, this is not dealing with Tegna right now, just in terms of trying to move up that managerial ladder.

Monique Brand 09:15

You know, the one thing particularly being a woman of color, and going into management, it's not nothing being a management is nothing new to me. Um, I served my country in the United States Navy in the Marine Corps. And during that period in time, I had to basically, I was prepared to go through those obstacles of being a woman of color be minority woman, excuse me, when I went up to the ranks in the military, it was really about being in the "boys club." And I'm not that kind of person. I'm not a brown noser. I work hard. And I was inspired by my mother who is Latina, who is one of the few women in the United States Army who can say they are brigadier general. So, learning from her seeing her adversities, build me into wanting to be that better leader. But the obstacles that I faced, I took kind of my mother's energy, and really apply to every single day because it's hard as a woman, being a woman, a minority, it's you already are going into the field, are you going into work with stereotypes in mind? Right? Um, because, you know, as a black woman, or you know, as a Latino woman, one of the things that we get stereotype so much is that we're aggressive. Well, I can't be stern in my walk, I can't stand up for myself and know my worth. So having that stereotype already, when you walk into the room, I had grace. When I walk into the room, that's how I overcome those obstacles, learning from applying of what I've learned in the military, applying what I've learned from my mother, in this news industry, is how I overcome those obstacles. And also, when I am in conversations, particularly those crucial conversations, I put myself into the recipient, then the one who's taught and having those crucial conversations to where I know my worth, what I've applied to, and also what knowing how to communicate. That was how overcome many obstacles and also adding grace that's at the end of the day.

Amber Grigley 11:37

how has representation or lack thereof and management influence content decisions in your various newsrooms? Again, we're not talking about Tegna, yet, just your background, look,

Monique Brand 11:50

So, my managerial style is I look at the overall approach. Particularly in my role that I'm in now I handle special projects, I oversee a lot of that, like Black History Month, Women's History Month, and so forth, where I have communications with sales, content, and marketing. And representation is very important when it comes to news. And you know, what I mean, and correct representation, not stereotypical representation is very important in news. What I did in most of my when I managed to seven newspapers, when I started getting into management, actually, what I did was do a what's called a diversity audit on myself. And on the reporters that that I worked alongside with, right, and what I did is, is that, yeah, we have some really good sources in the backburner that are easy to, you know, phone call away, or what have you. But also building relationships within the community, to where that representation matters, you know, what I mean? And being in this unique role, and my current position, gives the opportunity is the one celebrating the employees and celebrating the communities around by bringing in stories, that one is not just feature-esque, but having those crucial conversations as well. And representation is very important to news because we've seen it go viral with some news stories that it was, it could be funny, but it's offensive I say to me, because that's just not who I feel like that ethnicity or race. So having one that crucial. One, having crucial conversations through your newscasts, is very important to have representation, and building that community to know that we're not a gotcha. Or, you know, I'm not a gotcha leader. I'm not the one of sensationalism, I can't rock with stuff like that. And having a diverse representation is very, very important. A correct representation is very important to me.

Amber Grigley 14:02

As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan, and promoting inclusion and representation?

Monique Brand 14:14

It's kind of funny that you said that Tegna companywide does DEI program. And here at KAGS and KCEN. We just created our DEI team. And what's wonderful about the DEI team is that our two co leads are a white male and a black woman. And one of the other things that's cool companywide about Tegna is that we do what's called roundtables. They select people, companywide and I was very fortunate to lead, and moderate Women's History Month roundtable and it was a beautiful conversation that ended up with we scheduled vacations. I'm going to meet like half of them in the next Three months. I think that when they created the DEI, Team company wide, it's really wanting to have those crucial conversations and having that comfortable workplace. Because you don't know who you're working alongside with. I'm just giving perspective here. Downstairs, we're moving about, we're getting ready for our five, six and 10. Right. But up here is the sales team, you know, and then you have the GM, and you have the technology. We, I mean, it's rare for seeing someone in sales go downstairs will be like, What? What are you doing here? This is the newsroom. And I'm pretty sure you know, besides myself and one of our anchors. Rarely anybody news come upstairs. But with the DNI team, we started having these meetings, we're starting to learn that there is an affluent African American

employee, there is a very robust Hispanic community. We do have Asian Americans here. We have typically, you know, I'll just say up here on the sales side, I see more men on the sales side than I do women, which is stereotypically you see more women in sales. Seeing that through the DNI team really helps out. And it also brings us together, you don't I mean, there's times where, downstairs we're dealing with severe weather. And sometimes we'll have somebody from technology or sales be like, what can we do to help and with DNI think that what help us out starting the conversations and friendships among each other. We laugh we joke here; we fist bump and I think that's what DNI is about on the workplace side, but also opens our eyes to how we cover our newscasts. My first project was Black History Month. And Amber, when I tell you the stories that I assigned, and that they brainstormed with was beautiful. Um, we have a Women's History Month initiative that we're doing. And it's really celebrating the women here, we had what's called that we had a women's lunch that was led by the DNI team that falls under Special Projects me and even though it was a big, huge spread. It was our first one so there was a lot of like hiccups here and there, but something that we're looking forward to so I think that's what taking this initiative is by having these DNI teams about companywide and for me I feel more comfortable that I know my team because there's like almost, I think there's about maybe 70 of us you know so we're not a huge you know, station but it's a comfortability that I fill and really started out what the DNI team.

Amber Grigley 18:05

How do you feel like Tegna's diversity model resonates well, with your station or at your station rather, you already mentioned some projects that you have started but actually being able to walk antagonist diversity initiative. How is that coming across to your newsroom? Your specific newsroom

Monique Brand 18:28

Reputation. I'll give you kind of a rundown. So, what was it five, six. Our GM Rob said something, and it comes all the way down to the newscast. But apparently, like five years ago, the owner of Tegna apparently went to a GM meeting and mostly jeans or white men, right. And he barely walked into the room and said, I want half you guys gone. I need to see more. And they were like, like we didn't fire he was like No, we there's just too many. Clearly this is what he said. And maybe I'm paraphrasing it and it started to change, you know the hiring, just for instance, just the hierarchy here case here at KAGS. Okay, so our GM is a white man, news director, white man, Senior Assistant news director white man, me as a news director, black woman, our digital director, Asian woman, our former marketing director, black woman, or head of technology, Asia. That's our executive leadership. It's starting to change. You know, the latest GM hire was a black woman, you know, Miss Valerie, you know, you start getting to see the change. into representation. And I feel like there's a comfortability there. I can say on the news side, oh, our director of sales, Latino, they're starting to see that shift and change, we're starting to be like, that can see me. In my workplace, I'm starting to see representation in my workplace, the start is starting to happen. And I feel like with opportunities, like what's going on and working for a company like Tegna really makes me one, comfortable as an employee and two, as manager, because I'm starting to even see how my news director is looking into, you know, just the news team alone. But I think I was telling you, you know, in our previous conversation, but we are D9 heavy were so denied heavy was just like, Jim, are you on? Are you on something? You know, it's just, it's that change. But I think with, you know, going down to the reporters

being solely D9 majority, excuse me, to now they have one in our news managers, seeing them, you know, representation seeing them in management. It's starting to be a comfortability thing. And we're coming like really mixing family. So, to circle back to your question, it's a comfortability, that we're starting to see our very own even closer up to the company wide. And here locally.

Amber Grigley 21:42

How does Tegna's diversity model impact your decision-making roles? Before we just talked about how the lack of people of color influence content decision, but now that you've transitioned to Tegna and their model, how is that impacting your decision-making roles?

Monique Brand 22:09

Having first off when I, when I first started management, what I do is one on ones. I'm getting somewhere. I start one on ones with my teammates, and it's a safe space, like my, my office in KAGS. People call it the school counselor room. Because I have like Lo Fi playing and there's like stuffed animals and you see my UT stuff and Harvard degrees all over the place. And it's very colorful. And the one on ones is not to talk about just news and content. It's really a How are you this week? How are you? You know, and once I started doing that, there will be times where there'll be breaking news or something happening. And it's not really a diversity thing is a human being thing when it comes to my decision making. Um from those one on ones, I get to know what their interests are, where I can place them in certain newscast. So, when I do my decision making, okay, we're doing like for instance, we're over a KAGS we were creating a lifestyle show and in that I didn't want like your stereotypical like I'm a Wendy Williams fan, huge when the wheels here. But my thing is I had to look at one, the audience and two who I have in the room. Right? So, I don't know how you don't want because that would be me. But I we thought about a young because over in Bryan College Station is where Texas A&M is. So, I addressed that room. So, I want to a young recent A&M grad who just happens to be our first bilingual recorder. So having that you know, but when I would have my one on ones with her, I found her interest, you know, and then we started doing things more so knowing the human being that happens to be one of our reporters who just happens to be of a different ethnicity than me. That's where my decision making it's not necessarily looking at okay, you know, this person is doing X, Y & Z Because of color skin. It's really the initiative with everything.

Amber Grigley 25:11

Can you describe any barriers you've faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?

Monique Brand 25:35

I have not. But I have been in previous jobs. Um, I'll give an example. This is what really motivated me to be a really good manager. So, it's still seasoning to this day. But I was a senior reporter for a newspaper. And there was a, a Features Editor position. And that was my shit, you know, I won several AP awards on features, like I was a shoo in for this. And this reporter comes in newly hired, a white woman, we actually became friends, this is what makes it so stinky. And I've expressed wanting this job. It was given to her, and I trained her. That fueled me to the point where I said, you know what, maybe it wasn't my time. Maybe it wasn't God wanted me in that space. Because I was like a three-year contract. And it fueled me to really think about when I am

in a position to promote someone to see the work, rather than because of the leadership. And at that time, when I was at that paper was all white. And I was the only black woman there. So it made me say, You know what, when I when God blessed me to be in a position to make decisions like this, I'm going to go back to work. And not by what is viewed as kind or normality. But here at Tegna, no. But if I if it happens while I'm here, that just be another motivating factor of okay, God, this is not where you want me to be. But when you get me there, oh, boy, what it's going to be?

Amber Grigley 27:48

And to piggyback on that question, because it's very, it's a question where I know a lot of the people that I've interviewed, they're like, no, I haven't gotten to that point yet. However, I do feel like Tegna. They mentioned like, they have steps in place to where, if you're trying to move up or get that promotion, they have like some type of maybe I'm saying it wrong, so you can correct me but like some type of training group or like, class or tetanus School of trainees for promotional like, if you're trying to move to news director, or a companywide initiative to kind of help people stay within the company and move throughout the company? Is that correct? Or?

Monique Brand 28:36

Yes, so, um, one of the things that is really great about Tegna, and really great about even with the GM is that we all how can I say it without smiling so hard? They're the type of leaders that you're not afraid to walk up to the door. Does that make sense? Because it's just like, my GM and my news director know what my ambitions are. And it really starts with because I do one on ones with them, you know, um a every week and when during my annual review, actually, this was the first time I ever dealt with this. Were the GM, he basically was like, I want to see every single person's review in the entire company. All department heads, all your department heads. All you managers, I want to see them first. I'm going to give you, my notes. And then I'm going to shoot it back to you. And then you're going to redo the notes. Shoot it back to me. It's the first time I've ever seen a GM do something like that. And then he'll be like, I need they need to tell you the goals. They need to tell you the expectations. They need to be true. clear this, this is not a clear, because you're you know, as a, as an employee, you're scared to tell your supervisor like what exactly that you want because you don't want to cause a problem. But having a leader like that. And the other thing we like about them too, is he, he moves around. He's not in your normal GM where you've never seen them, the doors always closed, he even goes down in newsroom. So, Rob's a breath of fresh air. Gill was to he was a previous team here. But what I'm getting at is that having those leaders that are like, no, we want to know what your goals is, we'd like to know as expected. So that way, we put our expectations on you, and you put them on yourself. And I really think across the board, from what I was told, was a Tegna thing. I mean, I've worked for Scripps, and I can tell you, I know you work for Scripps, but I can tell you, I never felt that comfortable. I never felt this comfortable. I'm telling them what I want. I will tell you this story. So, part of my role is I actually lead the KAGS team as their in-hormone news director. And then I assist here to tell you how comfortable I am, of one in my walk and one how I'm comfortable with my leadership team. So, we had a guy who did a breach of security, he wanted a story removed. And he went up to my station and Brian to try to find me. And the threatened me to remove it. And he didn't go went to our sister station, an hour and a half south to Houston to find the digital director, the regional digital director. So, the legal team and Tegna was like no, don't take it down, blah, blah. And I was like, let's take it down. So, during a very huge department

head meeting, I wore a shirt that said journalists lives matter. And I just stuck there. I didn't say nothing. I gave him the Wendy Williams eyes. I know I look like a dark skinned one. Dark skinned Wendy. Oh, I do. I also look like Ava from Abbott Elementary. I know I do. I get it all the time, all the time. But I just sat there just, you know. And my GM, the previous one was like, okay, um, I think we got it. We got it take it down. I didn't have to say anything. And that's because one when you're I think we didn't last in the question. But one, being able to be comfortable in your walk with grace is so important. And to being having a boss that's a leader, and not a boss is very comfortable to where you can, you know, have those conversations with wanting to move up and promote, but more so for having, you know, a GM that's like, having that leader that's like, I want to know your goals? Because then it will be a question of where, where does Monique want to go next? Or the other thing Tegna is really, really good about that. At first, I was a little uncomfortable with when I first started having this. But what Tegna does is that let's say you were one of my reporters, right? And you wanted to apply to another tech news station, that news director has to inform you that you apply. So that way, it's just so transparent here it makes it's so incredible. But I know a lot of companies would never do that. I think the reason being is like, like if we know what's the expectations of what you want from the review from being interviewed, all the way down to, oh, they're being transferred that's a good opportunity for them. And I think that's where the comfortability of moving up, or having that conversation starts.

Amber Grigley 34:23

How does Tegna upper management perceives the impact of these diversity initiatives that they rolled out on air representation and content?

Monique Brand 34:59

It's gone to the point where it's just an it's like a no, it's, it's gotten to be like a no brainer for instance. So, when during the Black History Month, when I tell you girl, girl, I went ham, I came up to the sales team, like, every day like before the holidays, after the holidays. Valentine's Day, like I was like, we went ham, we had a very executed very just 30 seconds, 15 seconds sponsorship sales and made revenue. Our marketing team, we did a jelled topicals It was great. So, I say from one to three month, can we just take a break? We'll just take a break. Let's just have a brunch, celebrate our employees. They don't worry about content. I news director like March 1, he looks at me like I feel like maybe I scowl too much. But he was like, you know, yesterday, you know, when I you know, thank you guys for this and this and that for Black History Month. But for women's history month I went down. So, my GM was like, you know what? I think it's because we went so hard and executed so well, that it's an expectation that you're having on the news team now. So that's how my leadership is responding to this stuff. Because it's like, I, you know, I went in and did it. So, it's now it's an expectation. So that's how they are responding to it.

Amber Grigley 36:47

What measurable outcomes and impacts have resulted from Tegna's diversity initiatives since its launch?

Monique Brand 37:23

Okay, the outcomes and impacts completely amazing. Um, my first year, you know, so concentrated on KAGS and KAGS' you know, was in the Bryan College Station area, you know, Texas A&M is literally in our backyard. And when I came walking in, I said, you know what, fine, seems very conservative. Right? But then I had my first diversity audit that Tegna has, and I was like, oh, that's what I used to do. Anyway. What I'm getting at is that we did stories that was I've never knew as a leader that I was able to inspire out of them. Does that make sense? We did stories as hardcore as like going in A&M when they did the whole firing thing down to a drag show that was trying to be shut out by the city. That's how diverse our stuff was. And the community really enjoyed it. Whenever I wear like any of my para or anything like that, I'm when I'm about Bryan, I'll say something like I love your station. I love it. You guys are great. Because we had such diversity, not just in our content, but in our newscast. Before we merged into a merger, we're now simulcasting together. But when we were standing alone, we had a very diverse even anchors, our 6pm anchor was a white male. Our 10 o'clock was a dual African American anchor. Then we have our bilingual reporter. And then we have we had a producer whose Latina, you know, and you have your news directors, Afro Latina. So the outcome really was very diverse content and very a sense of community trust, because it wasn't like our competitors who would do these that were just really white. I mean, just putting it out there. We had a very diverse team. We do now care and as we merged because you know we have our you know, Texas today, morning show. Majority is yeah, like I was telling you, our anchors are black or EPS Black our producers are Latinos our lifestyle reporter is likely no. So we do have a lot of diversity and drought going on with the case inside. It's just what I'm seeing overall is that community trust, and that's really the outcome there. You know, it's, you can always tell, you probably know this as a reporter, you can always tell that the community trust you, when you go into a very urban area, and they're willing to talk to you. That's how you know, for a fact that you are being trusted. You know, there was one time there was a shooting, and we sent a white reporter over there. And he was willing to talk, they were willing to talk, they were like, Oh, you will channel six? Yeah, what Jasmine? Alright, cool, I'm going to tell you what happened. Literally, the case is having that community trust, because they know, we're not going to put a stereotype, we're going to do very balanced, unbiased reporting. And that's really at the end of the day.

Amber Grigley 41:10

I love that. And that, like that was going to be my next question how the community is perceiving the station with a diversity initiative changes? And you wrapped it into that question, that answer? So I really love that. That's awesome that you all are seeing that community impact from the changes that you all have made? From the that diversity aspect? Um, is there anything that you think that we missed or did not cover that you want to put out there as far as management and just trying to find that new pathway to get more people of color and more diversity in management in our industry?

Monique Brand 41:51

I think it's time we need to, as even up to executive, be transparent. Be honest, you know what I mean, for the fact for the president of the company telling a bunch of white dudes, I want half of you guys gone to you know, but the reason is the why. Here's why I say that. Just because I'm Afro Latina, doesn't mean that I'm a good leader. It should be. And I believe it is because of my

three Emmys. It's because of my 17 AP awards. It's because of the fact as a manager, that every single newspaper that I managed, all except for one reporter under my watch, is can say that they're award winning, that I'm still able to not look at my title, but look at my journey. That's why I should be hired. Because there's a lot of companies. And I'm not saying it's Tegna. But that's how I think like that. Why did you hire me, I better not be a diversity hire. Because I'm not going to waste my talent, my time, when really it's look at me. And I don't think Tegna like that. Because they're really, really they're really, really very diving deep in this DNI, you know, initiative. I'm wanting almost every single station to have one. Um having roundtables of like the one which I can share with you. It's internal. But the one that I moderated, we had not just leaders, you know, will all of us were leaders, but one of them was a reporter. And she kept saying, I know I'm the only staffer in the room. I know. I'm the only staffer we were like No, be quiet. There's a reason why a company's biggest Tegna asked you to be part of this roundtable. Because you are a leader, you're doing something that is, you know, because at the end of the day, you never know who's watching you, you are being watched, regardless. And that's how I think Tegna's looking into things like hey, we see you and we see a rising star, we want to celebrate you. And I think that's really I think that's really what it's all about with Tegna. And the other thing is too is not only their diversity, but it's also their mental health. That Tegna is really into and that's really part of diversity and inclusion because for me to be in a space in my life where some will report when a reporter is comfortable enough to say money can I please talk to you for money? Can I please have a mental health day and then tell me why they need the Mental Health Day. Look, when I was a reporter, I'll be like, Hey, call it out. I don't like seeing my reporter I'd like my teammate to be like moaning, I need a mental health day and tell me their mental health. It's fine. Tegna across the board gives out free therapy sessions 12 free sessions for you and your family all year long. So it's not just diversity, that they're really diving deep to its equity and inclusion. And for me to be part of this at a time when we're rolling out at a time where you're seeing hires that look like yourself. It's a comfortable feeling. We're going through a lot of changes as far as television, a lot of stations like ourselves is merging. But having that transparency there, we need to continue, but also having that transparency of why they hired me. You know, why? Why did you notice see me like why? You know, it felt comfortable from the time I got my first interview. My news director was like, I saw your resume. I love the comfortability, rather than, Oh, look who we hired, you know, you don't feel like a trophy, you actually feel like a family member here, as you can, as you witnessed with a GM telling you the end, that he must put her to work in the sales. there's a quote that says here in this office, and every time I see it, it gives me motivation to be better. I think it's four, it should be enforced nationwide. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an act but a habit. Bear strong. I think when you go into an industry like the media, it does not matter what you're doing. It matters of what's the outcome of it. And I think was newsroom management. There's still for a news room to be excellent. What we are what we repeatedly do, if we really are looking at it just so happens that this new hire in management happens to be Latino, you know, who happens to be African American still happens to be white? Um, yeah. It's the value of we are it just so happens, but what I would like to see, personally, I would like to see more middle eastern in newsroom management. I would like to see more Asians in management. I do it because it's not just being African American. And being that I mean, we got enough going on as blacks. But at the end of the day, it's it needs more work in newsrooms, you know in my 15 years in newsrooms, I'm so happy to see more Latinos in the newsroom. You know, I'm really happy to see more African Americans but work needs to be done. It's not over yet. So until they recognize

that that's great. And I personally also like to see more of the LGBTQA+ in leadership and to not be afraid of being open about it. You don't I mean; I have a friend now. Who I dearly love, and she is newsroom director, I'm not going to say her name. She happens to be queer. She doesn't express it. There's not even a flag in our office. And I asked her why. And she says, why should? I think that question there should be the answer to why is there not more diversity in user management? That's all I have to say.

Interview 4 – Bradley Gray – March 20, 2024, at 11:00 am EST

Amber Grigley 00:10

Can I first have you to say your first and last name, your position and our title? What station? And how long have you been with Tegna?

Bradley Gray 00:19

For sure. All right. My name is Bradley Gray. I am the Director of Innovation at WTHR here in Indianapolis. That's the NBC affiliate. I have been here in this position for 20 months, 20 months, almost two years.

Amber Grigley 00:41

Nice, have you been with Tegna for 20 months or so?

Bradley Gray 00:51

I was with Tegna for four and a half years before so approaches six and a half years, I think is where I'm at. So four and a half in Atlanta. And then yeah, that close to close to two years here.

Amber Grigley 01:08

Perfect. Okay, so first question, throughout your career? What challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Bradley Gray 01:19

I think the biggest challenge that you sense, specifically in that beginning stage, right? When you've shown the capability, or the maybe the attitude of being worth being looked at, for management position, right? If you are a producer, and you're thinking okay, maybe they can be an EP. I think there's a part of the conversation of the communication where, because you're not very, I'm a friendly person, but I'm not like that ke-ke-ing in with you. I'm not we're not hanging out, you know, I mean, I've got my set friends, and you know, I do my thing, I think it's because sometimes it's viewed as that you don't desire to have that type of a personal relationship that people think you're not interested in growing in that type of way. That makes sense. I would say that, you know, especially when I was in Atlanta, as an MPP, I think there was that there were opportunities where I thought I was showcasing the leadership, the big picture thinking to be a part of leadership. And, you know, I won't say I was passed over, I would just say that there were some moments where I was overlooked, to maybe even go somewhere else to like, grow and then come back, or to, you know, hey, maybe we should look at putting you through this program or this, you know, this initiative, maybe we should send you to some leadership training or something like that, I think that's probably been the biggest thing, I would say a secondary part of that is, you know, being in those editorial meetings, where you are discussing your views, and you start to find out that people really do look at black folk as a monolith, right, they look at us to all kind of have the exact same ideas about things or to be on the same political spectrum, the same. You know, not ideas, but to, you know, even have, like, you know, this connection to the black community that is that others may have, right, so like, for me, specifically hearing and excuse me, like, that's my thing, right from here. Born and raised here at Methodist, the west side is my life, I'm always going to pitch stories and have to mix and do things that represent the areas that I never saw news cameras come to in the first place unless it was something negative.

Right. So that's one way that it is but like, when I was in Atlanta, it was kind of different, where you had people who were from Atlanta who had a different view of things than what I do and you know, coming from the Midwest, I might be looked at as a little bit more conservative, right? Or I don't I don't have or I'm not used to a certain things. So they kind of expect you to tap in with certain aspects. And it's like that, well, I don't really see it that way. And then, you know, kind of puts it's a little off putting itself.

Amber Grigley 04:32

Nice. I like how you summed it up, given both perspectives. That's honestly a first that I've heard so far since I've been doing this, these interviews. Second question, how has representation or lack thereof and management influenced content decisions in various newsrooms that you've been a part of?

Bradley Gray 04:52

Sure, absolutely. I'll use the again the two examples that I had with Atlanta in Indianapolis. I think obviously Atlanta, you is a much more progressive newsroom in general, just based on the the makeup of the leadership, right? I had a woman, news director, we had a woman for our assistant news director, we had black woman for our nightside executive producer are in big, Special Projects slash investigative executive producer was a woman. So like you were surrounded by a lot of women are one of our digital directors with the black woman. So and now I know, they're digital directors of black woman, digital EPS, black woman, actually, you've got, you've got voices in this space, but it shouldn't be that way in Atlanta, because you know, close to 50% of the population is, you know, is black there. So you, you have to have that type of representation. And so you saw that in the content that we produced, we produce things that were based on culture and art and how it affects certain people, we told stories to affect the community in ways that I don't think every station gets, I think coming here to Indianapolis was a bit of a culture shock again, even though this is my hometown, to see it on the opposite end. Because there were a lot of decisions. I think the best example I can give is when we had like, a multitude of stabbings, there were there were four people that were stabbed five people were stabbed on like 42nd and Mitthoffer, 42nd post, is that a trouble apartment. I think they they've since torn that department down, but we needed to do some follow up to it. And that was, you know, part of that was like, hey, four people get stabbed. In one instance, I think that's definitely a story to look at. And I just remember hearing from a reporter say, well, I'm not trying to get sent out to Beirut, and I'm like, you would never speak about another community. That what, like people live here, there's a home right across the street from there where somebody lives, and you're just, you know, or even you can take any simple shooting, hey, this happened in Riverside, oh, that's not safe. It's like somebody who lives there. And you hear that from some, you know, from different reporters, you hear that from different talent, you hear that from different like that the mindset is just so different of how they look at the community. And so one of the things that I really wanted to shift the perspective of is, can we at least try to humanize the community that we live in, like, you know, you don't know, you know, I have family that live in that area that you talking about, like, we don't look at it as Beirut, we don't look at this as known as a as a dangerous place. But this is a very, this is a very, you know, isolated incident. So, when it comes down to content, editorial content, you know, obviously, I don't want to be like, the black voice, like, I don't represent all black people. But I do want to be a voice that represents the progression for us in this city. Like, if there's no other voice in here, you know, we definitely need that. So that would

be like the big change that I saw, like, again, coming from a community where, or a newsroom where it was very much. So like, be yourself and be very, you know, be vocal and vibrant. And here, I'm not saying that I'm not vocal environment, or that you can't be vocal and vibrant, but there is a difference, because you can see a little bit of apprehension in people's faces when you speak your language, or you talk the way that you talk. And you're very unapologetic about that. So, you know, and that's, I think that's indicative of many newsrooms, though.

Amber Grigley 08:48

Definitely hit the nail on the head. As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan and promoting inclusion and representation?

Bradley Gray 09:03

Um, I think there are a lot of pros to it. Obviously, it's what gave me a lot of opportunities to come here and be the director of innovation, and to succeed in that role. And I think they do put certain placeholders in place to help you get to where you need to get. I think it's a little different for me, because the Director of Innovation has no like set, no set title. If you go to any other station that has this role, they do something different than what I do. Every station does something different, right. I think there were only 10 in the company anyway, so we all have different directors. So, for me like I am in charge of or manage our producers already EPs kind of the aesthetic of what we do right now EP in the morning show. So like, doing that plus doing my regular job is you know, it's exhausting, but I still do feel a Um, I feel the support, I think that when we look at Tegna as a whole, I think they do try to provide opportunities for people of color. I do think that there is a little bit of a quota type feel to it. I think sometimes I look around our newsrooms, like I look at some of the some of the leaders that we have, and I look at, you know, some of the people that I've met some of the different trainings and I'm like, Okay, well, you know, do we have black managers, you know, like, like, you know, we've got, I don't know, maybe an all-black management staff in Memphis, which is great, because Memphis is a black city, right? It's good. But why is Memphis the only newsroom that has that type of representation. DC should have that type of representation. Atlanta should absolutely have that representation. You know, we've Tegna identifies talent, and they move talent to where they want to go. That's what I loved about this opportunity. I said, I want to be back home in Indianapolis. They say cool, we got you. I interviewed here and in Cleveland, I love Cleveland is one I would have I would have moved leaving Indianapolis was not an option. But for the most part, I think what I've noticed with our initiative with our diversity initiative strategy, is that part of the follow through is missing right now. Part of the Okay, are we intentional with the choices that we've made of where people are going? Or are we just kind of sending people places where there's been talk of not having enough diversity? Right, are we picking people that fit a culture instead of trying to shoehorn someone in somewhere because we didn't have someone there beforehand? So though, you know, and then are we growing the Black and Brown employees that we have in that station already to prepare them for leadership? That's probably been the other thing that I've noticed here at WTHR is that like everybody who was a leader, you know, myself, Nicole Block, our news director, and then Lauren Morgan was our morning show EP before she went to Tampa, those are people that you brought in, those are people that you grew from being a producer and making them an EP, or being a reporter and making them a managing

editor or anything like that. So that homegrown talent, which is what I think you need to foster a true inclusive culture. We're not We're not there yet.

Amber Grigley 12:45

Wow. So, I want you to stay there, because you brought us to our next question. And specifically talking about your station. How do you feel like taking this diversity initiative model resonates well, with your station or at your station rather?

Bradley Gray 13:02

Again, it does, but it doesn't just, you know, I really hope it got me in trouble. I'd speak candidly I have spoken candidly to this right. And I think that, you know, I'll look at even some of our hiring practices, some of our most recent hiring practices of bringing in candidates and things like that, like, I don't see black and brown people being brought in for interviews for much of any type of any position. It's not on-air. We have an all-white photography crew, photog crew, we have all white editors, we have for the most part. All white production staff suffer too. But the funny thing, yeah, and one has been around for you know, 30 some odd years. Other one other guy fairly well. We have three I'm sorry, we have Nya. That's right. Nya. So, we have Hispanic woman, and then we have Dre and then we have Yeah. Right. So, we do have three. But with our new hiring, I'm not seeing the emphasis on hiring diverse voices that can provide diverse opinions and perspectives. So, I will say in our newsroom right now, it doesn't feel that way for me. I'm sure that others may look around and say yeah, you know, hey, we just we just hired we are arming noon producers black, hey, our new 4pm Producer life. Yeah, who hired him? You mean like, you know that that was it was intentional to find diverse voices, pass what we already have. And then I don't think I don't think we do a great job of being fair to our black talent and our black Um, our black employees because I don't see those opportunities as much for them to do the special projects for them do the extra stuff for them to, you know, get the opportunity to anchor the big show or to, you know, outside of the, you know, marketing ones, like, I just don't see it our marketing department. So, our Director of Marketing is an Asian woman. You know, diversity is not always a black and white thing. But I definitely think that the mindset is, hey, we're comfortable with the people that we have, I don't think we're looking for those real diverse perspectives, I think that's one of the things that kind of holds WTHR back from being you know, the number one powerhouse that they want to be is because there's an authenticity that's missing from our product that you only going to get if you start getting people in here who don't think like everybody else.

Amber Grigley 16:03

How does Tegna's diversity model impact your decision-making roles? Well, I know, that's probably like, multiple answers, because you told me that you now took over another position, but just if you could generalize how, it impacted your decision making?

Bradley Gray 16:22

Yeah, so Tegna's this kind of overarching mission statement, you know, and the objectives that we have really fit with my personal mission statements, as well as to you know, report the news with empathy with care. A community focused newscast is kind of, you know, the things that I care about, so we're aligned in our in the objective, or aligned in the goals, I think that the thing where I may disagree with a lot of things is that we're not necessarily aligned in how to get there.

Right. And I think that, you know, there's a lot of efforts now for better recruitment and retainment of certain types of people. But I don't think we do enough to emphasize promote, not the loudest person because the loudest person is the person that typically gets promoted. I don't want the loudest person; can we find the person that maybe is a different type of leader? Like? I think that's one of the other things is that if you look around Tegna that a lot of our leaders kind of feel a lot of them have similar, you know, a lot of similar backgrounds, or they do things very similarly, or they, you know, very vibrant and loud and all that and we don't, not everybody, not every newsroom needs that some newsrooms need something totally, totally different. So I hope I'm answering the question, right, and maybe I need to,

Amber Grigley 17:55

And I kind of got a sense if I can sum it up. The decision as it pertains to diverse community, diverse questions in the newsroom should not fall on the shoulders of the black and brown community. I don't know I don't want to put words in your mouth.

Bradley Gray 18:17

It's a lot of it. It's it's the fact that you know, we have we have diversity, we have diversity of location, we have diversity of thought we have diversity of skin color of gender, we sexuality like we are, we are a very diverse newsroom. By number, right, by statistic. Are we diverse in the way that we approach it? Do we have equity across the board that? Yeah, we understand the perspective if someone's a member of the LGBTQ community, we understand the perspective but is that being showcased in our coverage? Do they feel comfortable enough to provide that aspect in our coverage, or we just kind of gave them the same sanitized, sterilized news? You know, without context.

Amber Grigley 19:18

So, the first question, I was asking about barriers, specifically, as you know, in general, trying to climb the management ladder. Now, I want to take it a step further and say, can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?

Bradley Gray 19:35

Oh, oh, I don't think I've had any in Tegna, to be honest. Like, like, it's like a very specific barrier, right? Like we all deal with microaggressions we all deal with maybe like covert issues that are not seen by the eye but maybe filter or you know, whatever. Maybe I can't, like I said in Atlanta. You know, I was always willing to kind of take what was given to me. And they gave me so many opportunities to just grow my skills and do things, which is why I really have nothing negative to say about WXIA. I love everyone there. Even here, I mean, I wouldn't say I'll say it like this. And this is not about diversity or even me, it's more about the structure of our leadership. I don't know where I can go next. I don't see. I don't see a clear cut. Okay, I can go be a news director, I can be an assistant news director. I'm technically on the same level as the assistant news director. So why would I go take? What is a linear move? Just for title, right? If my if my title has merit that, if there's anything that goes back to the right, is the director of innovation? Is this just a title that you gave so that you had another black manager? Or did you actually have a plan of how you wanted this role? You know, what I mean? Like, did you have a desire or a roadmap for something for me? You know, I, if I can be very, very honest, you know,

everybody knows about what's happening in our industry, when it comes down to like pay cuts and budgets and stuff like that. One of my biggest fears, is that okay, they're going to look around. Now, granted, they can't get rid of me right now, because I'm doing 17 different things. But if it were simply just if they just looked at idles and headcount without looking at impact, and things like that, I would fear that I will be one of the first ones on the chopping block, because there's no way to quantify what I do when I go in for review. What KPI Am I asked to hit? What standard? What number? What do you what are you asking for me? How do I exceed expectations? If I don't have an expectation? You know, saying it, and that's probably the barrier that I have. I don't know if that's connected to diversity, but it definitely is a problem. And it's a Tegna problem.

Amber Grigley 22:31

How does Tegna's upper management perceive the impact of these diversity initiatives that they rolled out?

Bradley Gray 22:48

I think one of the things coming back to the segment, because I have a little bit of time left. So I'll go Tegna, Nexstar, Tegna. And so, coming back to Tegna might start seeing things in on channel one, which is kind of like a station wide like newsletter type thing where you emphasize some of the work that you've seen done. There's some great, there's some great, great work happening in Minnesota. There's some great, great work happening in St. Louis. There was some great and very intentional work, you know, things that I saw for Women's History Month, things that I saw for Hispanic Heritage Month, some of the types of content that we were producing, and the people that were producing the stories that we're telling in Texas, that we have, you know, both versions, we have a bilingual, you know that we have a version of Spanish and a version of English. And we start to share that around this around the company. I love that. I've noticed, you know, some of the trainings that I've been in, I've seen more leaders who look and sound and act like me, which is definitely very encouraging. The one thing that I wish we had I wish we had more women of color specifically, like in my cohort, I don't, I had maybe a couple of black women. I don't think I had any women of Hispanic descent. I don't remember any Asian women. I think that's maybe where I've missed seeing certain types of people in this diversity initiative. But we definitely have more than what I thought we would have. There are a lot of people who are in senior producer positions, EPS, managing editors, positions that actually make an impact in how our coverage is perceived. I think we were starting to get there and meet that mark, for all stations, where I used to think it was just for Atlanta, and DC, because you know, you get up it's very, very much so like a DC type show. It looks DC at least they tried to make it look DC. So, you know, I do appreciate that.

Amber Grigley 26:03

How do you think the company defined the success of that diversity initiative and local television management? Because it's one thing to see on air representation, we're starting to see blacker and browner and, you know, pieces on air. But how do you think that they defined that success as far as what we're seeing behind the scenes as far as managers of color?

Bradley Gray 26:41

I think we're starting to see more black managers, but what we're seeing is, is that there was not a plan in place to make those black managers feel safe in their positions. And I think that that's not something that is necessarily the fault of Tegna as much as it is. When you look at America and America's problem, when it comes down to any level of diversity, equity and inclusion. We, we struggle to understand what that actually means, which is why there's such a backlash to it. There's a backlash to the idea of a black woman being very strong and her personality and then sharing that strength in an editorial meeting, or a manager's meeting or whatever, because it comes off as hostile or it comes off as aggressive or it comes off as you know, too strong willed a tyrant, they're, they're disrespectful. And it's like, well, I don't know if it's disrespectful as much as it is. If this the way you talk the way you talk, what's the difference? Is the difference because I'm not palatable. You know, there's a difference between being likable, being palatable, like I can be strong, and you can understand where the strength is coming from. And if you're, if you're unlikable, if you're just not a nice person, you're a mean-spirited person, everything you're saying that's different like that. Totally, everybody calls it out. But I do think you there's not an infrastructure in place, enough training in places specifically for existing management, to understand the differences in personalities. If I am a soft-spoken person, I should be able to be a soft-spoken person still get my point across and be respected for that. I'm in leadership because of how you view my work, how you view my ability to see bigger picture, how you see my ability to lead how you see my ability to serve, like these are all you know, things that that should come out and should exude from our personality, right? If you're if you don't have the infrastructure in place to protect that, you then begin to silence those voices. Or you begin, you know, on the opposite end, the person that's strong willed and very assertive or aggressive to some people very loud, or you're strong, you then began to quell them, and then they start to become defensive. So, either way, whatever side of the spectrum you want to go to the idea is, is if you don't have a plan, or the infrastructure in place to protect those personalities as they come in, you're going to see that feeling, I don't know if Tegna has all of that prepared yet. I don't know. Now, I'm not saying we need sensitivity training. I'm saying that we need awareness, we need awareness of how we come across and how we, you know, how we view different viewpoints from us how we respond to different viewpoints. You know, how do we get a productive conversation if we've got two people that are on opposite ends? Do we have leadership in place to protect these new leaders? How do I prevent them from getting burnt out or emotional or feeling like they need to go to a therapist when they really are just trying to be themselves like everybody else? So that's what Tegna's missing right now on that executive leadership or missing and the infrastructure to understand how we communicate.

Amber Grigley 30:10

If you could sum up the measurable outcomes and impacts of taking this diversity initiative since it launched. How could you sum that up right now?

Bradley Gray 30:36

I would say, based on the overall program, and the initiative to bring in and recruit more diverse leadership over the last five years, Tegna has done a good job, not a great job, but a very good job of promoting the of being aggressive to recruit the top tier leadership, they have done a good job of creating opportunities for new leadership, where they missed the mark is creating the stability needed to retain those leaders. Lots of burnout, I think if you're looking at any type of

measurables, and you're looking at retainment, you have to look at how many positions, how many director positions and not only like turnover, and a sense of people getting promoted in the company and going to another place like going from Albuquerque to Boise, or Boise to Seattle, or whatever it may be. I mean, people who have legit just left without whatever, and I don't think that number is as high as what you would like it to be. There are some great opportunities for even emerging leaders like kids straight out of college, the producer and residence program is helping us get new producers in with new viewpoints to help us change the way that we perceive news in general, right like that. The groundwork is laid there, the foundations laid for a lot of things, but I think that in the in the interim in the very immediate future, Tegna's going to have to come up with a new way to make sure that they've got the infrastructure to retain all these new people that they're bringing in both on air and behind the camera, because if you talk to enough of them, you'll kind of come to the same consensus that okay, they don't really see they don't really feel like they're supportive.

Amber Grigley 32:52

The last question, just using the metrics that you just kind of summed up as far as the outcomes and impacts how, what effects of this diversity initiative are you seeing as far as the community how are they being acceptable to the changes that you well, the company is rolling out with diversity and inclusiveness?

Bradley Gray 33:21

Yeah, sure. Um, I would say that the response from our community has largely been unchanged. Unfortunately, I don't think we do a great job of highlighting that I think if you even look at our marketing strategy, same faces even with the diversity initiative, and this is just speaking from my station this could be very specific to my station. I tried to keep track of some of the other stations and you know, again, WXIA just because I got a lot of love down, I actually love what they've been able to do with people like Jennifer Bellamy and I forget the new anchor the guy from Houston, Jonathan Martin. I love and Faith as well. When I look at how they utilize Atlanta's faces, they utilize people that are the like that. The face of Atlanta they are Jennifer Bellamy wants to be the face of Gwinnett County that's where she's from, that's where she was raised right like you, you bring people in to the community or and you put them out in the community, put them out into these different spaces where they can really make their mark and I just I don't feel that that is inclusive at every Tegna station. Again, you know, speaking as a black man in America, if I was not working here, I wouldn't watch the station. There's not much that it has to offer. I think when we look at the outcomes and the impacts of this program, the goal is to be intentional with your diversity efforts. I don't know if we're being intentional enough to where it doesn't feel forced, it doesn't feel like it just fit a quota or, you know, hit a certain number or okay, we've, we've recruited these many people, but we haven't got the retention numbers are maybe a little bit lower than what we need. And I think that showcases to our viewers because our viewers can tell, you know, people aren't dumb. So, you can tell when somebody is hired just for the sense of being hired, because they weren't ready to be on your television, but you knew that you needed a black voice, because you didn't have one beforehand. Right? Or they knew that you didn't put out they know that you didn't put out, you know, the Why aren't you given this person this opportunity? Because I've seen you give all these other people these opportunities. I see the same people on this weekend show with same people anchoring this, but you haven't let such and such anchor, you know, hey, she's in the community,

but he's not. We're different things like that. And I just don't think we have enough the plan isn't fleshed out enough to where we're going to get that true return on investment, until we develop the infrastructure to make people want to stay. So I think that that's kind of where I'm at. And I really do hope again, I ramble a lot, so I'm hoping I'm answering these questions.

Interview 5 – Valarie Guyton – March 21, 2024, at 1:00 pm EST

Amber Grigley 00:10

Can I first have you to say your name, your position at your current station and how long you've been with Tegna?

Valarie Guyton 00:19

Okay, my name is Valerie Butler Guyton. I am currently the President and General Manager with KWES, KIDY and KXVA. So that's a combination of three stations. That's the Tegna station and the NBC affiliate in Midland, Odessa, West Texas, all of us West Texas. And then also a KIDY is the fox affiliate in San Angelo, Texas. We are again West Texas, and then KXVA is the Abilene Fox affiliate in, in Abilene. So, three stations.

Amber Grigley 00:57

Okay, so first question, throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Valarie Guyton 01:08

Well, I think it was just a being afforded the opportunity, or first of all the opportunity, because a lot of times the higher you get, the more exclusive the club and the circles get. And a lot of times you may not know, before it's posted, and everyone knows, it's good to know, before it's posted. Because typically, there are some people and some candidates in mind that they have for management, especially the higher you get, the pools cause narrows, and if you know about it earlier, the more the more likely you are to get the position. So, I think that the challenge was to really find out and get a heads up, so to speak, that there was going to be a position available or before it got posted or open before you knew everybody knew that it was open. So, I think that was a little challenging. And I think the after that after the knowing it's the interviewing, and it's actually gotten the interview. So, I think it's important that companies interview those that they don't know, and they may interview those they may feel uncomfortable with and because I am different. And because we don't look like them. No, I certainly don't like that. Right. But I think that it's important to work with companies that are okay with interviewing someone who's different, interviewing someone that they don't know their friends, or they don't know somebody who knows somebody who knows them, or they give them, and they give them a real opportunity to obtain that particular position.

Amber Grigley 02:44

Perfect. How has representation or lack thereof and management influence content decisions? Just in general, from your experience from this newsroom to that newsroom, just the lack of representation and its influence on content decisions.

Valarie Guyton 03:02

I think it's important to remember who our audience is, when you first get to any city. And that certainly understand that certainly is the case of this one is to understand who you're talking to understand what community you represent, and you serve. Because we all are servants of our communities. And I think it's important that everybody knows from, you know, from the receptionist to the content creators to the people that sell our content, the sales department and of

course, marketing is knowing what our, what our audience looks like. So I think the first thing to do is to understand who your audience is, and what is made up of. And then once you kind of get that under an understanding of who you're really talking to, it's like, okay, let's figure out how we can better address the needs and wants of the community. And I am here in West Texas, we do have a very large Hispanic population. And it's almost about half. And I don't know if they, I don't know if they either knew it, or embraced it, or really understood how I think it's important to communicate to the Hispanic audience. So, one of the first things that I did was to make sure that we, I got here, you know, July August time, so I asked, Do we do anything for Día de los Muertos, which of course, is the Day of the Dead in Hispanic culture, and they were like, Nope, we do Hispanic Heritage Month. I'm like, Okay, that's a separate thing. Okay, good. So what are we going to do for it? Let's Well, nobody's ever done vignettes. Nobody has ever done anything that talks about the elements. It looks more like okay, well, you know, what your audience does celebrate. So, we're going to have to make sure that we're doing what we need to do celebrate, even if they know what the elements mean, and what the different elements are, what the different celebrations mean, and what the celebration is all about. Let's just put little vignettes out there that explain that Better to those that don't. And to help them understand that we honor what you honor, and we honor what you celebrate. And let's get a sponsored How about let's put some money on it, it happened, and we were able to get a sponsorship with one of the colleges here. We did do the same vignettes. And Abilene and San Angela were well, because they do have a larger Hispanic population. But part of that was just asking questions that others may not have asked before or may not have really seen and because I did work, because I did work with an NBC and Telemundo partnership duopoly. Then I understood that knew the importance of celebrating all cultures and celebrating all holidays that they celebrate. So just kind of having that filter and being able to ask the right questions, was able to get some of the right content in place, not just the news, but also the vignettes that we run throughout the entire day, part night part, you know, all day parts, to make sure that we kind of show up in throughout the entire day, when even when we're outside of news.

Amber Grigley 05:59

As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective of the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan, and promoting inclusion and representation?

Valarie Guyton 06:12

Well, from what I have been able to gather, being back with Tegna, after being gone for a few years, almost five years, it's really good. That part of the KPIs that all managers have to fulfill does include diversity and inclusion. So, part of the way that we get merit pay increases, as well as bonuses for those that are bonus eligible from the director level on up. Part of what we have to fulfill in order to get those percentages of KPI is DENI. And I think that part is really important to your overall structure as a company. Because that in that ensures that each of the managers think about, okay, you know what, I get a little bit more money. If I think about this, and I know, you know, you ought to want to do it for the spirit of you know, servicing your communities. But you know, when you put a little money behind it, it seems to be a little bit more of a of a highlighter to be the higher on the importance level. So, I really, really appreciate that change that they made. And the five years that I was gone from Tegna, to have DENI initiatives as part of your KPIs as a manager, because that is so important. And also, they are working with an inclusive journalism audit. So, this is the second year I think that they're doing that. But they do

have an inclusive journalism audit that all of the newscasts go through with the third-party company where they actually watch your newscast for like a week. And they kind of highlight different stories that you've done. They look for diversity within the people that you interview within the B roll as well as the experts. And all of those components play a part when it comes down to representation and making sure that we are for that DENIs on the forefront of what we're thinking about when we're putting our packages together and putting our newest product on.

Amber Grigley 08:09

I love that. So now we're talking individual perspective, as far as your stations that you're over, how do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model resonates well at your stations?

Valarie Guyton 08:25

I think it resonates really well with the stations because I get first timers. So being at this level, for all three stations, these are really these first-time jobs that a lot of the opportunities are extended to, so these are fresh out of college, a lot of the MSJ's, directors, producers, they're really all fresh out of college. So, I think what it does, it helps sets precedence with they're moving on up the ladder, and help them to better understand, look, the DEI is on the forefront of what we do within Tegna. And hopefully you will stay within Tegna as you climb the ranks and you climb market size, as your career increases. And you also make sure that you think about DENI as you look at your next station and make sure that it is just as important for that company that you are looking at, as it should be. And you think about that when you're going out and doing the story and you it's not an afterthought. It is purposeful. As far as you look for diverse voices and kind of maybe talking to somebody that doesn't look like you are a little bit more uncomfortable, comfortable being uncomfortable I like to say but the thing of that is that he does things when you look at who we hire. I mean we have a really diverse pool of MSJs, producers do you know, directors, and especially when it looked when you look at San Angelo, I mean out of all of Tegna I know they've said we've had the most Gen Z years, and we have the most diverse group. And I'm proud to say that I love that and I'm keeping that going because that's part of what I'm supposed to do, as somebody that can help guide and direct, I want to keep that up and keep that going and make sure that we keep that level of diversity when it comes down to who we hire, and it comes down to who we talk to as well in our content creation.

Amber Grigley 10:12

So earlier we discuss about just in general representation in newsrooms and management and how that impacted the content decisions. Now that you're with Tegna. How does Tegna's diversity initiative model impact your decision-making roles as a GM?

Valarie Guyton 10:37

Well, for me, I've always have had a DNI, as one of the one opportunity that I look forward, just because I look at I look at experience, of course, I look at, you know, the history of, of what they've been able to do on success stories, you know, as far as looking at the bigger landscape of what they've done, but you know, that level of diversity within them or diversity that which they've been able to preach, and coach and teach is important to me as well. So, for me, I look for when they send me reels, or when they send me anything that I look for diversity within the real. And I look for diversity within what they're submitting to me, I look for diversity within the

activities that they have listed. And I also ask about it. I just hired a news director in San Angelo, and Abilene and he's not diverse, but he is diverse minded. And by that, I mean, he has been a professor before he has had he told me about different scenarios that he had with it with budding reporters, those that were in Journalism and Mass Media Studies. And he's also been a former news director. And I asked about situations with that as well, and how he was able to coach certain people through certain things and how he was able to kind of, you know, learn by learn or teach by example, too. So, I think it's important to be able to ask again, ask the right questions and not be afraid to ask the right questions and see what they tell you and make sure that you know, there's facts to back up whatever they tell you when it comes down to what they've been able to do. And how much diversity and inclusion are a thrust. And their leadership skills too, especially when you're hiring someone like a news director or something to that effect.

Amber Grigley 12:23

Can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna? I know that you just recently got in that position, but I don't know if you could?

Valarie Guyton 12:34

Yeah, that's a little tough, because I just gotten this. So, I haven't you know, I haven't I haven't really been faced with that yet. And, um, I think I think it does really speak volumes about them for, you know, giving me the opportunity to do this. Because, you know, I do know, I do know that that I am the only black female GM in Texas, I'm the only black female GM in Texas, and there hasn't been another black female GM. In the state, which blew my mind, I didn't realize that, you know, it's one of those things where, you know, there hadn't been many. But when you figure out, you're the only and you are, you know, the first it's like, okay, wait, wait, I can't. That's a lot. That's a lot to comprehend and to deal with. But that's the big responsibility to me, you know, but I think in even doing that speaks volumes about opportunities that are afforded and available for women of color for people of color, in general, being able to make that statement. And this is my first GM job, I came strictly from news background. So, I've spent the past 30 years working within content solely not running entire station. So, you know, the fact that they were able to take that, you know, I like to say chance, because I think, you know, that sounds like you know, I was off the street and I'm not off the street, but it's just that I have not been a gym before. So, the fact that they were able to see what I see and allow me to be able to do what I do, says a lot for the company.

Amber Grigley 14:18

Absolutely, I really, I really liked that they are like finding talent and bringing it to the company. From what I've been hearing from previous participants. Like, you know, some of them they were like, I just got in this position, but I feel I won't have a problem moving up because day one, they ask what are your goals? What do you want to do? Alright, we're on that trajectory to make you reach those goals. So I it sounds like everybody kind of had the same idea or same answers as far as like, we're where they are right now with tagging that so that's great.

Valarie Guyton 14:53

Great that right and I say the same thing. You know, I mean, especially hiring first timers, it's like okay, what do you want to go What's your ultimate goal, we'll help you get there. Just give us a year or two, and we'll get you there. You know,

Amber Grigley 15:07

So how does Tegna's upper management proceed the impact of these diversity initiatives on air representation and content?

Valarie Guyton 15:18

Well, I think part of that has to do with this inclusive journalism audit. Because be now that since this, the second year of it from what I understand, and I'm about to go through, what we do with that information is we talk to upper management, you know, myself, the news director, assistant director of the department heads, talk about what all we get in this particular audit. And then not only do we just talk about it amongst ourselves with, you know, it within the station, we discuss it with other stations that are similar in size, our cohorts within Tegna, and discuss what we learn what surprised us, what didn't surprise us what we hope to learn more about and what we hope to see when we do this again next year. So we can have that vantage point of discussing with other stations, you know, again, they have similar, you know, similar ranking size as far as Markets concerned. And, similar, I think, also as similar as you can get with the makeup and demographics of our markets, because that does present challenge sometimes too. But we are able to discuss that with each other and have kind of a forum that's created, you know, by Tegna, to talk to three, sometimes four other stations about what we what we saw in our results, and what we hope to kind of create and help each other work through and improve on as well. So that I'm doing later on today. So I hadn't sat through that yet. But I was able to get a little bit of background just on how that works. And I love that they do that. And I mean, that's, that's kind of holding you accountable. And it's also kind of giving you a resource. Another station is dealing with some of the similar problems that you can also talk and reach out to and say, okay, News Director, to news director, let's say, I'm having a hard time with this, what did you guys do to help? Or what can how can we help each other even? How can we content share and help, you know, speak to an audience that we may not be able to talk to or reach right now?

Amber Grigley 17:21

How does Tegna define the success of its diversity model in local television news management?

Valarie Guyton 17:52

I think really, the success is defined two ways. One, I think isn't the merit increase. Having as part of your KPI, put your money where your mouth is. And I think the other part of this is also being held accountable when you go through when you get these results from a third party and being able to discuss that among your other peers and other news directors as well as also with GMs. And with a corporate to discuss, you know, okay, you did this last year, just slipping the numbers, you know, this year. So what are you doing to kind of create that income and create a pathway to success and increasing your numbers when it comes down to DNI coverage. So, I think that that that really kind of helps. And especially with the news directors and the management, because they are able to better service the community by having people like people hiring, you're hiring people to look like who you need to highlight in that community as well. So,

it helps in far as increasing the number of people you have on air that are diverse, because it's going to be calculated within just within this audit every year.

Amber Grigley 18:55

Now, that you kind of went through your personal background, what you're experiencing in this row, if you could just sum this up to as far as the measurable outcomes and impacts that have resulted in Tegna's diversity initiatives since it launched?

Valarie Guyton 19:45

Well, I certainly can see it in the content. I mean, from somebody, you know, that was able to look at like some of the content we would share You're among other tech news stations before when I was here in 2017-2018, to now seeing the content, I mean, it's much, much more diverse. I'm one that likes to stream, I like to watch a lot of other stations, streaming in watching OTT, read broadcast of newscasts, and I see different packages, because, you know, we are in Midland, so we do end up having to share a lot of different packages from across the country, because we just need to fill the time. So it's I mean, you know, it's good content, I'm not going to say it like that. But, you know, we do, we have to, of course, provide other content for all of our newscasts that we can always generate here locally. But even looking at those, I mean, it's been, it's surprising to me, and a very welcomed surprise to see the level of diversity within not just the MSJs and MSJ's that are that are putting the pieces together, but also who they talk to. And thinking about that being purposeful when you're looking for experts on certain topics, that you're looking for diverse people, and you're looking for people that look different, to be able to be the shape and the face and voice for an expert on any given topic. And I really, I can see the difference in that. And I think that that is kind of what's become universal within tech is to be purposeful, when it comes down to seeking out diverse experts and seeking out diverse talents who hire and seeking out diverse sound bites when you're putting the pieces together. And I know it can get hard, especially when you're a one man band and right and you're doing everything here. Right? And that you don't have the luxury of a photographer. But how can you really where can you go? Let's start with where you going. Because I think it's important to remember where you can find more diverse voices, you know, when you will when you go to certain spots, and you will when you go to some areas of your coverage that may not see too many reporters, right? So, but that's what you do. When you're purposeful about looking for diverse sound, you don't just go to your particular grocery store where you know, everybody and you know, everybody looks like you per say but you go somewhere else where, you know, there'll be a higher percentage of people that are of color, go in and talk to them, you know, make sure you got clearance, but go and make sure you can talk and be you know, let's talk about geographic diversity, because it's more than just people, right? They talk about geographic diversity and how we can be purposeful in where we go to get stories, well go to a Takiana. Because if you go to Takiana, you can probably get somebody who is Hispanic, and will be able to give you the sound from someone that doesn't look like somebody if you just went to a regular grocery store.

Amber Grigley 22:47

All right. And our last question as far as the effects of Tegna's diversity initiatives on newsroom operations, changing how they are perceived in communities? What are the communities that

you serve? How are they responding to the changes since the company launched this diversity initiative?

Valarie Guyton 23:07

From what I've heard, and again, I've been here for eight months, but from what I've heard, especially like from sales, because typically, you know, sales are the ones that go out and really hear their raw uncut when you're trying to kind of sell them airtime. They'll tell you; you know what, I saw that you did something that dealt with this. And I was so happy to see that you did this for Hispanic Heritage Month, or you did something for Black History Month. You know, they they're noticing, and they're noticing, oh, like we got so many different comments about the vignettes that we did for the last month or, so they did. I mean, so many. And I'm like that even air 30 days, it was I mean, because dinner is one day is Day of the Day, right? Is one day. So, we were able to like to stretch it among two weeks to get a decent sponsorship. But you know, it was two weeks, two weeks, the different vignettes, the random different day parts. And the feedback from that is still coming in. There are different restaurant owners, there are different people that have businesses that we have gone to, to now try to cultivate new business enterprise business. And they're saying, I saw when you did that, that was so cool. That was so well done. And I'm like, that's what I'm talking about. And that was in October. So, if you're still talking about it here. And its springtime, then that had an impact. And that had an impact on the community that normally would not maybe even entertain us coming to them to do a package or to advertise on air. So that's a that has been the biggest standout for me is hearing that from the AES about how we're getting such great positive feedback when they're going to new businesses and they're seeing what we're doing and that we're purposeful in our approach and they're seeing. The other thing is that they're seeing our logos, they're seeing our branding, they're seeing our we have one branded truck, they're seeing with a tower cam type of apparatus on it. They're seeing those different events. And I think that that's made a difference too, because they're seeing us show up. And that has also had them go, oh, well, you know what, okay, it's not just for this audience is for all of us. So, I think the combination of the two, kind of have helped people kind of see us know us recognize us and say something, and hopefully watch and hopefully buy and purchase.

Amber Grigley 25:22

Is there anything else you would like to add as it pertains to this topic that you would like to get out? Just, you know, being a woman of color. I don't know if I said it. But congratulations. So, is there anything else you would like to add?

Valarie Guyton 26:43

I totally agree with everything that you said. And I thank you, too, for the congratulations, sometimes it does get, you know, it gets you get lost in it, you know, and this is such, and making the switch from the newsroom to the GM role has been interesting, I'm still on that journey. Now. I mean, this eight, nine months, and I'm still, I'm still on the journey. But it has been so good to be able to not just speak to the employees of color here, but to really speak and open the eyes of those people that are not of color to really talk to some of you know, my white direct reports. And go, you know, what, here, this is the, this is what I see. And this is what I think we need to look at, and having them really be open to understand and then you know, running with it, because what I now understand is that, you know, what I say people actually listen to and I know that sounds kind of crazy, but I think you can probably relate, you say things

to certain people, and all of a sudden they just don't even listen. I mean, you know, they don't listen, or you know, they don't retain it, or, you know, whatever, they just move on. I've noticed miserable is like, Oh, you were really? It sounds like oh, yeah, of course they were. But you know what, that's not always that has not been given for me. And you know, from eBay, you know, IT systems retroverted all those other things, no big you know, having this role, amplifies my voice. And I don't take that lightly. And I'm so thankful and appreciative that, that I'm able to do this and able to, you know, preach the good DEI sermon, and to say, you know, what, not only do we need to be, you know, purposeful with this, let's make sure that we have a growing list and living list of diverse experts, we need to have a diversity list. And we have that now, they hadn't had that before. But we have diverse experts that we have a growing list because that helps you know, especially young, you know, journalists who are just now kind of going out doing this for the first time. But it gives them a place to start. And it gives them someone to speak with who is purposely diverse and talk about what their expertise is and I don't care if they're a pharmacist, get somebody of color that this can talk about this. You know, there's always the metaphor to talk about right. But when we go to professor's we have several colleges around here. Let's figure out how we can get college you know, some people in all the guests because we're all in God's country out here, but who is you know, who will speak to us who is diverse about all the oil and gas industry and could talk to us about finance can talk to us about all other awesome things, that we're always talking about news, but be purposeful about the approach. And I think that is that has really been something that I think I just kind of amplify what Tim what Tegna has already said in place before I returned is as to amplify the importance of diversity and inclusion and to be part purposeful about it, it's not by accident, it's not by happenstance, you have got to set out just like you set out and to hold the powerful, accountable, you set out to be diverse, and in your approach, and you have to have that commitment to it in order to make it work. And everybody has to be committed to it to make it work. And all I'm doing this just standing on what they've already built, and just screaming it out loud, to say, you know, be purposeful, in what you're doing when it comes down to DNI. Don't just say it, be about it every day.

Amber Grigley 30:29

I love it. Thank you so much for your time, I really, really, really, really appreciate it.

Interview 6 – Thuy Lan Nguyen – March 22, 2024, at 3:00 pm EST

Amber Grigley 00:30

If you could first start off by telling me your name, your position your station. And how long have you been with Tegna?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 01:06

Yeah, um, my name is Thuy Lan Nguyen I am the Assistant news director at WBIR. And I have been with Tegna now for five years, and two of those years have been here at WBIR.

Amber Grigley 01:22

Awesome, okay, so first question. This is just in general, throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color.

Thuy Lan Nguyen 01:36

I would say kind of the opportunity to be presented with the option of moving into management is one of the biggest challenges. It's something I had to seek out myself. I don't think a lot of times I don't think I would have ever been approached to be in management had I not expressed my interest to a lot of people.

Amber Grigley 02:15

How has representation or lack thereof in management influence content decisions? Throughout your journey, just what you have noticed about that rep, lack of representation in management and the content decisions made at various stations.

Thuy Lan Nguyen 02:32

This was actually what encouraged me and inspired me to move into management. In 2019, 2020, 2021, there was obviously the COVID-19 pandemic, there was George Floyd, there was the Atlanta spa shootings. And I had no direct managers that were people of color. And so what happened with the lack of representation in management, the responsibility for content and decisions and story ideas relating to all of these things, fell on the people of color in my newsroom. And so that was really difficult, because it always felt like we should be the ones being supported right now. But instead, we're being asked to do the work. And that became really difficult for burnout, I was getting burnt out, because every day something would happen. I knew I was going to be asked to do it, I was going to be asked to cover it because I was the person of color on air in that newsroom. And that was really hard for me. And I just didn't want to do it anymore. I didn't want to be the one person responsible for doing all of that coverage, because you're a person of color means you can give perspective, but it doesn't mean it's your job to tell those stories. And so that seeing that and experiencing that I was like, how do I stop that from happening to somebody else. And that was what motivated me to make the jump and look for those opportunities to fill that gap. Because if no one steps in to be that representation in management and make those decisions and be aware of the burnout that it causes for other people. We're going to have talented people of color leaving the industry because they feel a burden. And because they feel a lack of support, and they feel a responsibility when it's not theirs to bear.

Amber Grigley 04:32

Wow. I love your response to that. And I felt all of that. As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the diversity initiative plan and promoting inclusion and representation just in general?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 04:52

Yeah, I think there's a really big difference in saying that you do it and checking a box and caring and then having the intention to do things differently. I think what Tegna has is the intention. So, they say, Yes, we have all these DENI programs. But who doesn't? Right? And Tegna has done a really good job of saying, okay, we're going to do it. But how do we make it known that we have intent behind what our plans are and what we want to do? And what is our vision, it's not just we have DEI, because we're supposed to have it, it's how do we use this, to help support stations across the country that don't have the diversity that they should have? Right, because some of these smaller newsrooms in smaller, more rural areas, quite frankly, they're not going to be that diverse, because the community is not that diverse. And it's really hard to ask a reporter or producer of color, to move to a city where it's 92% white, it's really hard, because you're asking them to be isolated personally. And then you're expecting them to carry that burden as work as well. But having programs that promote diversity in the company to say, okay, you might not have the resources to cover AAPI Heritage Month, but look at what we've done as a company, and we're providing you so that you can, you don't have to do the work. But you have the resources to promote and talk about the diversity that you're supposed to. But we understand if you can't do it. And I think that's really helpful, because the intention is not just, we're checking a box, the intention is, we encourage all of our employees to come to work with their full, authentic self. And we're going to share that not only at the local level, but we're going to share it across the company, so that you can help other places that don't have the resources that you might have at your station. And so, I think that's really big. It's just the intent, and the sharing of all the resources not only at a station level or region, but as at a companywide level.

Amber Grigley 07:02

Awesome. How do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model resonates well at your station?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 07:09

I think it's always a process. And it's never something that's going to be one day, we're going to say, Yeah, we're doing it perfectly, or it worked. So, well. There are no changes, everyone's on board, it's never going to be that way. Because there are going to be people who don't want to, they're going to be people of color, who don't feel like it's their responsibility to educate or be a part of that. And there's nothing wrong with that whatsoever. Every person has their own choices. But I think the impact that it's hard for me in my newsroom has been absolute support. It is a value that I feel like company leadership truly embodies. And when we bring ideas or we bring concerns, it's heard, and we get support, to do the things that we need to do. And so in our newsroom, not even just the newsroom at our station, we've started a cohort called "10 Together," where we have internal listening sessions, we have education, we have some resources. And that's been really great. Because we have people from all walks of life who are just interested in learning. And then some others who come in and want to do some of that education and be allies and, and just be a part of it. And I think that's been really great to have

station support, say absolutely whatever you want to do, do it because it benefits every single person in this building. And so that's been really great to see.

Amber Grigley 08:52

How does Tegna diversity initiative model impact your decision-making roles now that you are in the management room?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 09:03

Yeah, I wouldn't say that the company's diversity initiatives have any impact on me, and what decisions I make on a day-to-day basis, it's more of the inverse, I know that my decisions will be supported by the company because of the values that they have shown us that they think are important to them. And so, I feel like if I want to make this coverage or content decision, that I can make it and I'll get support, or if I want to make it and I don't know where to go from there. I'll know that there's company resources in order to talk those things through.

Amber Grigley 09:44

Can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 09:52

Um, I have been really lucky. And I personally wouldn't say that I have had any barriers because as soon as I expressed interest, I was lucky enough to have managers above me that said, yes, what can we do to help you? Let's give you increasing responsibility in these areas that may not fall under your purview. Let's give you one on one training sessions with the general manager. So, you can learn some leadership skills. I was very lucky not to face any of those barriers. The barrier was more for me overcoming the fear of like, I don't have the experience to be a manager, how could I possibly do that? Or normally, a manager comes from the producing route. And so how do I become a manager without having been an executive producer? And so, the barriers that I had to overcome were just like, I think cultural within myself before because I can't speak for all Asian people, but for me, in my experience of my culture, and you're not loud. You don't, you're not boastful. You're not prideful. You don't say, I'm so qualified, I can do it. No problem. And so that was really hard for me to say, no, you know, what you're qualified and the things that you don't know, you're fine, because there are lots of people who get promoted and are not qualified. So, you should go from the same things. And so, the barriers that I had to overcome myself, were just me first. And then I was lucky enough to just have managers that said, Yeah, we support you, what can we do to help? Let me be your advocate, let me teach you let me take the time, I will give you that hand up that you need. And I was very, very lucky.

Amber Grigley 11:44

I love that that is exciting to hear honestly. How does Tegna's, upper management precede the impact of the diversity initiatives on air representation and content?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 11:59

Yeah, I think they see it as super important, because our goal is to reflect the communities that we serve. Otherwise, if your staff does not look like your community, what reason does the community have to trust you. And also, it helps break down some barriers, because I think a lot

of times its language, its cultural. Asian communities in markets that I've worked in have not been very forthcoming to come to the media. But guess what changes? When you have a reporter who can speak Vietnamese and say, Yeah, I'll speak to you in your native tongue, and then I'll translate it so more people can see this story. Because the culture is a limitation in the community. But when you make intentional hires, and hire people who may not be fully qualified, but they're really close and could use some training, I think that's really important. And they do that so that they understand that the communities need to look like, or the newsrooms need to look like the communities they serve. And I think that's really great, because Tegna has a program called PIR, which is "Producer in Residence." And so that takes students who may not be traditional journalism majors, they may be communications or film studies, or a law or Poli Sci major, and they teach them how to be producers. And that gives them the opportunity to, like get that education and learn, because their education would be a barrier to their employment in the newsroom. And so Tegna says, that's okay, we'll teach you to do it. And if you like it great. And so that's a really cool program to say, like, we know, we need people from different perspectives, and they don't all have the training and they'd all employment with Tegna didn't go to J school. So like, how do we bridge that gap and help train them and put them in our newsrooms and put them in our community so that we can tell better stories? I think that's really cool. And also, they've been able to like put race and culture units in a bunch of newsrooms. I think Seattle has one Denver has one Sacramento has one. And so that's really great to see that there's intentional focus on that kind of storytelling.

Amber Grigley 14:23

Nice. How does Tegna define the success of its diversity initiative model in local news management?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 14:32

Yeah, I don't know if I can speak to that specifically, because that's really a technical leadership thing, and I don't know their big grand vision for what that looks like on a station level. So that's not something I think I can answer just because I don't know.

Amber Grigley 14:47

Okay. What measurable outcomes and impacts can you pinpoint as far as to say that has worked or is working for their diversity model since they launched it.

Thuy Lan Nguyen 15:09

Yeah, I think one of the things that comes out of this is like, we have something called being inclusive journalism, inclusive journalism group within Tegna. It's where all stations can talk about their coverage, and they can share. And so that's really a big one to say like, hey, I am working on stories for Arab American Heritage Month, does anyone else have anything they want to contribute or any ideas that we can embody? I think that's been a real success measure. And something that's been really great, because we can share all of our resources as a company. And then I think that builds a lot of comfortability. For when something happens, we can say, um, hey, let's be really mindful of the conversations we have about covering something like the Israel Hamas conflict, what are the words and phrases that we should avoid, or things that we should be conscious when we're talking about in reporting, and so if you don't have somebody from that background, or somebody with that experience in your newsroom, you would never

know unless you seek it out. And having opportunities to share that and be in a company where we can speak freely and say, hey, let's not use this verbiage. And that gets sent out incredible to know that you can speak up as one person and have an impact beyond your newsroom, I think is so incredible. And I feel incredibly valued. And allowed to speak up without any retribution, to have opinions and to have educational moments. I think that's so great, and really just beneficial for the company. And in the end, the communities that we serve and the peoples whose stories we tell.

Amber Grigley 16:55

And the last question, what would you consider as far as the effects of technics diversity initiative model on newsroom operations and the communities they serve? In terms of what kind of response are you all receiving from the community that you probably didn't receive prior to the launching of this diversity initiative.

Thuy Lan Nguyen 17:18

I wasn't with the company before this existed. And so I can't speak to the comparison of what has happened before and after, really, but I can say my experience, I think the things that we do, or my experience as a reporter, and having the sport to pursue some of these stories, has been really great, because I was able to build bridges in the community that did not exist before me. And so when another Asian reporter came on the team, when I was a reporter, at another station, and I was leaving, I got to hand off contacts that I spent years building that did not exist with the station before that. And so that was really great, and really powerful, because it created relationships that went beyond me, and I think will continue way beyond me because those contacts will continue to get passed down. But like the Asian community wasn't covered super well before me at one of my reporting jobs previously, and then having the freedom and the support to pursue some of the stories helped me build those bridges. And then that impacted the community because all of a sudden, they felt like oh my gosh, yeah, there's somebody who looks like us on the station, and we can go to them, and we trust them. And we know that they can tell our stories, because they have. And so, I think that's really been the benefit is just increasing the reach. And making people feel like they have an avenue to do that. Even though there may be other barriers, like language or culture or experience. And so being able to do that it's been a really awesome.

Amber Grigley 19:02

I like that. Well, that wraps up the questions I have, do you have anything that you would like to add as far as you know, being a person of color and just this new pathway to see more diversity and upper management see more diversity in our newsrooms? Um, is there anything else you would like to add to this topic?

Thuy Lan Nguyen 19:22

Yeah, I think it's pretty evident. There are not enough people of color in news management. We've made really good strides in putting people in color on air and in our newsrooms, but I think there needs to be more people of color and management because it makes a huge difference, especially for the employees that you're bringing on in the room to see themselves reflected in management and then not have to explain certain things if they're not represented. Because, for me, I came to a point where I was really comfortable to say to my managers like

hey, can you not ask me in the editorial meetings about that. And if you do have a question, can you bring it to me offline, so we can talk about it in private instead of putting me on the spot, because that makes me feel really uncomfortable. There were so many other people that weren't comfortable doing that. And so, imagine, if you have a manager that understands that already, and then you don't have an employee who has to explain that to you, or be frustrated and unsure, because they don't know how to approach you. And they're not comfortable because they're afraid of losing their jobs or getting in trouble. So there needs to just be more events. And I think reaching out and leaning on other people who are in management, if you're not in management is going to be really important. Because there's room, there's room for it, and it needs to happen sooner rather than later.

Interview 7 – Brenden Nakamine – March 27, 2024, at 11:30 am EST

Amber Grigley 00:11

Can you say your name, your title and what station you work?

Brenden Nakamine 00:15

Yeah. My name is Brenden Nakamine and I'm the assistant news director at WHAS in Louisville, the Tegna station out here.

Amber Grigley 00:25

How long have you been working with working for Tegna?

Brenden Nakamine 00:28

A little over a year and a half. I started here in July of 2022.

Amber Grigley 00:34

Perfect. All right, so first things first, um, this question is a generalized question. Throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Brenden Nakamine 00:52

Yeah, oh, obviously, I feel like I've been pretty fortunate, just kind of with my experiences just in the newsrooms that I've worked in. As far as kind of opportunities that I have. I've worked in newsrooms that have been in as far as demographics go fairly progressive markets. Um born and raised, Los Angeles, and a lot of the markets I worked at are on the West Coast. And so, I feel like in cities and communities like that, there are a lot more opportunities for advancement. I've worked for, I worked for managers who have been people of color in the past. So, I actually feel like I've had a pretty like I said a fortunate experience to where I really don't feel as if my ethnicity has really hindered my advancement in a way. But I do, I did go to AAJ last year for the first time. And that was kind of an eye-opening experience, because you hear stories of other people who have faced not necessarily roadblocks because of their ethnicity, but perceived roadblocks, because their ethnicity where they felt as if it would be tougher for them to apply for a job and get a job. And so, they may have been more hesitant to go after a promotion, because they didn't see people who look like them in positions of power and authority. And so, they didn't really see a roadmap for it. And so that was something that kind of made me realize how fortunate I've been in the circumstances that I've kind of worked in in the past.

Amber Grigley 02:22

How has representation or lack thereof in management influence content dish decisions?

Brenden Nakamine 02:27

Yeah, I think representation definitely helps with forming decision making as far as coverage strategies and coverage plans. Obviously, after you know, all the George Floyd protests, things like that, it became a huge talking point within newsrooms, and it makes you realize, when we started having those conversations, I was in San Francisco before this as the assistant director, and you really when you start making a conscientious effort to have those conversations, you

realize how much you weren't having them before. And it's not because you're trying to not cover certain stories where you're actively trying to brush her aside? It's just because I think before that was such a main talking point and a point of interest with covered strategies, it was just kind of these are the stories this we're going to cover, let's just go out and kind of cover that. But when you start putting them through the stories through a filter of okay, how are we covering these stories in relation to certain communities? How do they affect these communities more so than just the general audience, you and you realize how much that wasn't part of the conversation before, and you realize how important is to have those discussions?

Amber Grigley 03:42

As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan, and promoting inclusion and representation?

Brenden Nakamine 03:52

So, I think for Tegna, specifically, it's what it's at the forefront of a lot of decisions that we make everything from hiring to interviews to, again, just story content and planning. We have regular audits within the company, where an independent kind of panel I guess, goes through stories recovered, and they go through everything from not just the story itself, but the video we're using in the story is their representation in the video that we're using, how are we scripting the stories? What sound bites are we using? The experts that we're using for stories. How diverse are they as well, so and they score us based on the sample that they take, and kind of give us I guess, things to work on and things to be aware of as we're moving forward. And then the next time they do an audit, they'll compare us to how we've done versus previous ones. So, it's definitely something that Tegna when you're interviewing for the company, they talk about it being a priority, but once you're within the company, you see how much they actually do. support that and back that up.

Amber Grigley 05:00

How do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model resonates well at your station?

Brenden Nakamine 05:07

I think there's a lot of binds with it. I think that when we're having these discussions about coverage plans, that is something that's definitely a topic of discussion that we kind of run through when we're figuring out how we want to assign stories out for the day. Um, I think one of the things that again, the audits can help with this is trying to be more aware of is when we're finding experts to bring in for onset interviews and things like that, making sure that if the health department is providing somebody or University of Louisville providing someone for us to talk to, we're doing our part to make sure that there's a fair and accurate representation with the people they're providing with us. And so, there is an active effort on our end to try to implement and diversity strategies that Tegna, wants us to, but it really is kind of a team effort at the station, make sure that everybody is following up on DEI strategy.

Amber Grigley 06:08

How does Tegna's diversity initiative plan, impact your decision-making roles now.

Brenden Nakamine 06:15

Yeah, I guess that kind of goes back to just the lens that you're putting everything through, right? It's not as simple of Okay, let's go start with this story. It's okay, if we're going to cover this story. How does this impact certain communities? How does this impact underrepresented communities? Is there a story that we need to cover because it specifically there's more of an impact on an underrepresented community, we're doing a story today, for example, about an expansion project for a waterfront park we're having. Well, on the surface, it's just great. This is a waterfront park area; it's going to be good for everyone to go and enjoy it over the summer. But the real impact for it is the reason that they're expanding this, the Waterfront Park is because they're trying to provide more outdoor activities and opportunities for the West End community, which is where the primarily people of color kind of live more in that area. And they haven't had as many options when it comes to outdoor activities, waterfront park areas. So, it's really the story itself on the surface level is expanding this park region. But if you're diving deeper in it, it's expanding it in order to better serve this historically underserved community. So, it's really finding those avenues of stories that really help focus our decision making.

Amber Grigley 07:30

Perfect. I know that you've been there for a year and a half. But can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna?

Brenden Nakamine 07:43

Honestly, I haven't. Fortunately, I get this to the first job that I've gotten here. So, I haven't really pursued any, but I will say that Tegna has been really great about sending me to enrolling in training, sending me to leadership conferences, leadership training sessions. And I will say when I did the most recent one, which is three parts called Leadership and action series that was based out of our corporate headquarters, there was a lot of diversity within our little cohort there of about 40 or something, people.

Amber Grigley 08:29

How does Tegna's upper management proceed the impact of these diversity initiative plans and its initiatives on air representation and content?

Brenden Nakamine 08:46

Yeah, um, as far as how they do it, I feel like they're supportive of it. I think there definitely is a kind of realization, especially when it comes to the hiring process, when we're really focusing on representation getting better representation within our market, as far as on-air talent, that you it really has to be an effort to really find talent that really reflects the demographics and the makeup of our community. It's really easy to just go and just find the first person that buys that's a quality candidate for it. But there's tons of quality candidates out there. And so, making a concerted effort and making it part of our recruitment process to ensure that we're giving interview opportunities and giving the process time to really look for diverse candidates as well, not just the first quality candidate that comes across our plates, because we need to get the job filled. It may mean a job goes open for a little bit longer, because we're trying to really find the most the widest net cast the widest net I guess for candidates when it comes to that diversity and equality and inequality. But I think it's really important because it does help with not just

representation within the newsroom, but it's for the audience perspective, right? The audience sees that our on-air make up reflects who's in our community.

Amber Grigley 10:16

When you think about local television news management, how does Tegna define the success of its diversity push or diversity initiative, and the television news management.

Brenden Nakamine 11:05

Yeah, I mean, I don't, I don't think it's a specific metric. Right? I don't think that we sit there and say, okay, we need one of our executive producers has to be African American, one of our executive producers has to be Hispanic, one of our senior reporters has to be Asian. I think it's just when you look at the make-up of the leadership team holistically, and you just read, and you see accurate representation across the board. So, I don't, because I think if you start saying, okay, we need this, this number of people here and you can't go down that route, then it's not. You're not really hiring people based off narratives well as representation, right? You want to make sure that you bring the best people in the world. But while you're doing that, you're looking for you're giving everybody a fair shot, right, and you're looking at everybody. So, for example, for us from a leadership team. Right, I'm the assistant news director, right here, I have Asian heritage, we have two executive producers who are African American, our senior reporter is Hispanic and Asian. And again, it wasn't as if we went out seeking these ethnicities for these roles. It's just that when you look at when you look at it holistically, and who the make-up is, it's an accurate representation of what our community make up business. Well, I think that's when we tried to approach it.

Amber Grigley 12:53

What outcomes and impacts have resulted from technics diversity initiative launch that you can tell, or you can see, or maybe you went to the station, and you're here from people who were there before and they're like, oh, now it's X, Y & Z versus how it was 10-12 years ago.

Brenden Nakamine 13:47

Yeah, I can, as far as just what I've heard, kind of like anecdotally about just kind of how its impacted. Our content, or at least on that aspect of it is really a lot of it is the types of stories that we cover. So, we've done a series of stories about food insecurity. Again, it predominantly affects our Western Community, which is made up primarily people of color. We did a series of stories about called the color of health, which focused on the lack of immediate health care resources for people of color within our community. And I don't want to say with 100% certainty, but I'm pretty confident that if it wasn't for the diversity in our newsroom, those probably aren't stories or specials that we probably would have put together. Because unless your part of those types of communities, or you have family members in those communities, or you have family members who are affected by those issues, it's probably not something you're going to think of off the top of your head as a story, especially a high interest story have a high impact story to put together. So, I think having a diverse makeup in our newsroom and emphasizing that helps us find those stories that really reach that audience and really help them However the issue facing that community specifically.

Amber Grigley 15:05

And the final question, this should be easy because I felt I feel like you answered this question pretty much throughout the whole interview. Since Tegna's diversity initiative. What response are you all receiving from the community from the newsroom operations since they kind of made this push to include diversity or put it in the forefront? How would you say the community is responding to that?

Brenden Nakamine 15:36

I think they're appreciative of it. I think one of the things that they've noticed is, as far as feedback goes, that a lot of times in communities that are made up primarily of people of color, historically, the main reason you go to those stories is for negative coverage board, right? There are homelessness issues over there. There are jobs, insecurity issues over there, there's crime issues over there. But what we've been really trying to focus on is obviously, yes, cover those stories, but also find other opportunities to go there. So if there's a teacher, the school over there at the bottom for something, or if the students at one of the schools is doing something to help contribute to the community, like a donation for cancer patients or something like that, or a community leader is being honored there or a park is being renamed or something like that, just those pieces that make people proud of their community. There's definitely been an emphasis on trying to find those opportunities. And I think that the feedback we get from our audience kind of reflects the effort we've been put on stories.

Interview 8 – Taylor Berry – April 5, 2024, at 11:30 am EST

Amber Grigley 08:42

So, first, I would just like you to say your first and last name, your position at your current station.

Taylor Berry 08:49

I'm Taylor Berry. And I'm the morning executive producer at KHOU. How long have you been with Tegna? The company Tegna.

Amber Grigley 08:53

I have been with Tegna almost two years now. Most And how long have you been in the industry?

Taylor Berry 09:12

Almost tenure.

Amber Grigley 09:29

So, the first question, this is just like a general question. Throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Taylor Berry 09:48

I think I will say for me like a big thing when I was starting out was the age thing like starting out in Houston. I was really lucky to get my first job here and I would see people in similar situations be afforded certain opportunities or like things would just happen. And I would be like, I'm doing all the things. And, you know, it was like a little bit more of a push. I'm super ambitious and very persistent. So, it was nothing to me at that point. I'm kind of like every, anyone who tells me now is basically giving me fuel to be like, let me show you why it should be, I guess. So that would really be the biggest thing. I've also been really fortunate to, in certain roles have minority women above me who could help me along as well. But when I look back at it, I think being a black female who was starting out younger than most, especially getting into management, that was just a huge, huge hurdle. At the start of my career, and even honestly, up until like, a year ago.

Amber Grigley 10:59

How has representation or lack thereof of management influenced content decisions in your various newsrooms? Just going through this journey?

Taylor Berry 11:19

So my last few years in news, I've had more diverse leadership team, my first few years, we did not at all, and there was an extreme disconnect to minority communities as far as what the story should be, and how we should go about telling them, I can remember like Black History Month, I thought it was like, oh, there's these new baristas. And it's these two black guys. And we were like, that's not a Black History Month story. So, you know, things like that, that connection to the community isn't the same. being plugged in, it's just not the same. I mean, there are just so many examples, I don't know. And to too many, but this is, you know, I've been in situations,

especially with, you know, the George Floyd, period. And like the movement of racial injustice, where it's just, even these managers want to create a space. Now to talk about things however, they don't go about it the right way, because that there's no diversity in that leadership team to kind of know how it should be approached. So, it really becomes very uncomfortable and for some disrespectful situation. The last two years, I've worked on a leadership team that was extremely diverse. My last job that I was the morning EP for, there was only one white male on our leadership team. Everyone else was Hispanic, Indian, black. That was the first time I had been in a room like that. Our coverage of stories in range was significantly different than most newsrooms I've been in, there was a consistent effort to include every voice. So, it's just different. Now. I'll say in the newsrooms, where the leadership looks, wasn't as diverse the employees led a lot of those conversations and pushed it and, we luckily had managers who were open to those conversations and doing those stories, but it's just from the top down, it's just a completely different experience.

Amber Grigley 13:29

As a Tegna employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan, and promoting inclusion and representation across the board?

Taylor Berry 13:58

I think the company does an incredible job for I mean; it's really been shocking. And of course, this is my experience at the stations I've been at and like what I've heard from people I've connected with, so someone else who's been in it longer may feel differently. But this is the first company I've worked in where I've been like, it is everyone has a seat. They want everyone to grow. We prioritize those conversations and creating space for others. And I mean, the inclusivity of the company, it's just on another level. I would say that it's a main priority for them. My station and I was the morning EP in Tampa, and we actually partnered with pride, like we were the people who kind of did the Pride Parade. We were the pride station, and I was just like, I've never seen a local newsroom do that. That was that's huge here in Houston we cover every single month Black History Month, AAPI month, Hispanic Heritage Month, we're on everything. And it's the same level of effort. It's just but that's like a companywide thing, you know. So, it's just really incredible. And I think it really shows in its employees, because a lot of people within the company can feel that our corporate officers come down like its constant conversation. And also, they always ask us for feedback, you know, like, how can it be better or, and it's not in an uncomfortable way. It's like, if you'd like to share about your experience, or if there's something we can be doing better, let us know. And I just think that oh, no, it's incredible. I, I feel extremely lucky to be working here in Houston. It's honestly like the healthiest newsroom environment that I've been in.

Amber Grigley 15:53

How do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model resonates well at your station?

Taylor Berry 16:01

Yeah, I mean, KHOU, well first of all, say our new structure is a Hispanic woman, right? So that's where I'll start her. She is being a minority in herself. The entire thought of the newsroom is this newsroom has to look like the city. And she has the support of our corporate leaders, because you know, on our on our hires go through corporate. But then also, I think, because our

company is so big on diversity, and I'm not going to say so big, I'm just going to say, our company does prioritize that. And we can see that that's clear. Everything that we do, I mean, down to our partnerships. Our partnership partnerships are even with like inner-city schools and trying to burn up people from all walks of life, not just you know, the high-end school where it may be presumed safer than different areas. And I just think we wouldn't be able to do that, if that wasn't starting from the top. And it's trickled down to each role. Our leadership team is diverse, our producer team is extremely diverse. They're this again, this is the first newsroom that I've been in a while where our full team, the managers, the producers, the reporters, the anchors are reflective of the city that we live in, and actually follows through with what our management team, our upper management team says they say they want it to be diverse. They say they want to hear from each community. They encourage us to the pieces and content from each everyone's background, honestly, right now. They're like, we're not doing enough. Like we need to do more. And we have those check ins, constantly, where it's like, are we doing our due diligence? are we hitting this community correctly? So again, I and that's I get from the top like our corporate leaders when they come into town, and they check us and say, this is what we see from the shows that is coming from them. So, I again, I just think, and I didn't ask this, but I can just feel it in the newsroom. And I just feel very passionate about this, because I'm big on the culture. But that has just been such a huge thing that I immediately noticed, like one of my first week I was like, oh, okay, we really care. And like, we want to make sure it's diverse and inclusive and a positive space.

Amber Grigley 18:31

How does Tegna's this diversity model impact your decision-making row? Now, at your current station? Is it different from any other station you worked at? Now you have that backing and support?

Taylor Berry 18:45

I'll say that I feel more, I guess comfortable to do stories without thinking over, they're going to think we're doing too much on the black community or too much in the Hispanic community. And that is really comforting. I think just the space that we're in and the push that they have one in our newsroom what we see every day and then obviously with our content address in the community, that has been really nice, because I think as a minority in this industry, a thought for me. I mean, honestly, like coming up, it's like, Am I doing too much of this content, because everyone doesn't see it the same? So, it's, I think it's just more comfortable. And you feel like, I can do it and there's no questions and no one's wondering, I in this newsroom. I don't feel like someone's like, why do we have another black expert or Hispanic expert or, you know, I also don't feel like it's as much of a checkmark. I've been in newsrooms where it was like okay, well, we've had this many people who are white talk now we need to get at least three black and two Hispanics. You know, it's, it's this is what we do, and you Just do it. So, it's I don't I don't, I don't feel like I think about it as much. I'm just I'm literally coming to work and just working versus having to go through that calculated process. And I think a lot of people have experience.

Amber Grigley 20:17

Can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your employment with Tegna as a person of color?

Taylor Berry 20:27

Right now, only because I've only been in the company for about two years, I can't say that I haven't honestly. What's weird is, I guess, not weird. But what is weird based on his previous experiences, they have actually really celebrated me, and, you know, pulled me into a lot of rooms, and I've gone to corporate every other month for like a six-month program. You know, it's just, it's interesting. My experience has been just completely different. I feel very seen here. I feel like my voice is heard, and it matters. And I have support around me for people who genuinely want to see me succeed. And that has been like amazing in and of itself. Now, I will say, when we were in the corporate leadership group, it was probably like a hand, I'm trying to get a count, like, remember how many people were minorities in that group? I think it was a room of almost 30 of us, maybe 26, 27, somewhere in there. And I think it may have been like, 10, minorities. So that was something like, we saw each other. However, I do recall having a sit down with one of the other women in the group. And I was like, she was like, oh, did you notice, you know, and that was something that stood out to me. However, we don't know, your news director has to your management team recommends you. So that's why I say for me, my experience can be very different compared to others. But then at the same time, there may not be as many minorities, you know what I mean? So, it's just that from what I've seen in the newsroom side, and then from Tegna, it's been fairly diverse. And I will say I always said I would never work for Tegna. So, I've been very surprised. From my experience, it actually is like a very positive company. So, I've just been completely taken aback. Because they had been reaching out to me and I kept being like, I'm not responding. And I finally was like, let me respond just I don't burn any bridges, and ended up loving it. And the experience has been really great. I think I know at some point, just from what I've heard, like from people who've just been with the company for a long time, they did a lot of, you know, how can we make sure we are being better like as an employer. And one thing I will say is they listen to the employees like us, us little worker bees here at the corporate level, which is really nice. And they change a lot of their policies based off of what they're hearing from us. So, this doesn't involve like diversity and inclusion. But the maternity leave plan was changed based off of a female employee who was like, this is insane, I can no longer work here. If this is what it's going to be. They took that up to the top and now the whole plan system is completely different. And anyone in the company talks about this one woman who like was pushing for change and corporate heard her. And being in that corporate leadership group, they speak a lot about that they're like we asked, like we genuinely want to hear so we can make it better. Y'all talks about the benefits, we changed the benefits. You talked about the lead, you know, so I think they really tried to consistently like here what we need in all aspects. And we also have, obviously a diversity and inclusion director who actually meets with us. And you know, we just check in with him, which is also really nice. I had never seen the person who did that at any company I worked with, so it was nice to actually hear from them, and understand like what the process was and what they're trying to do. So that was nice too.

Amber Grigley 24:58

I talked to a lot of folks. And they're pretty much along the same lines as far as what you were saying, as far as opening the doors a little bit for people of color to what they want. And it's like, hey, well, you're here, we hired you for this. But if this is your goal, we're starting today to get you to that goal. So, I'm hearing that for multiple people. I'm kind of like, this is not just you know, something that they posted on the website of what they're doing in their goal to get the

company by a certain mark, in five years or so. It actually feels it feels like they are in like, invested in this. And you don't feel like you're a part of a quota.

Taylor Berry 26:19

And that feels so good. I think that's why like, I guess I haven't even really thought about it that much until we've had this conversation. But I feel like that's why there's such a level of like, I'm so light at work, because my mind isn't even on that, like I see so many. I see every race represented in our newsroom. And it's yes, intentional because of what our city looks like, but also just genuine. And it's celebrated. And it's just very different. I guess I didn't even think about it really until we started talking about this. But yeah.

Amber Grigley 26:54

So how does upper management perceive the impact of these diversity initiatives that they rolled out on the On Air representation and the content just in general?

Taylor Berry 27:05

I think what I will say, I feel like Houston news has just always been fairly diverse, just because the city is so diverse. I mean, we had a black mayor, we've had a gay mayor, we've had a Hispanic police chief you know, I mean, like it's so that's just what our city is. It's such a huge melting pot. So, I feel like news here has to represent what that looks like. And honestly, every station on air, I don't know as much so behind the scenes, but on air at least it does look that way. For us, I think what they've noticed because we do it and put so much pressure on it is we actually have a series every month well, every month, it's like the women's history, black history, Hispanic, you know, "we do our story, our history," which I guess before I got here, they saw was resonating with viewers. So, they created this whole franchise, our story, our history around it. And each time it's a month of something we celebrate that culture fully every day, every week, there's a piece every day there's a bomb, and it's not like a full screen with like, who created the peanuts. It's like a genuine, we've gone out, we found someone with a great story. And we're featuring them. And it's spread across. It's not the same, you know, typically it's like the same two people being like, well, I guess I'll do the month again, and everyone participates all the producers do and I think that was like a huge thing for us because it's something that is now sponsored, it's a priority. People are pulled off their shows to work on it. We're actually shooting AAPI Month, next week. And what's really special is I feel like they know that people care because this community here in Houston is so diverse, that it's gone above and beyond like, for AAPI month, we're actually having like dancers and we have the dragons, you know, and it's just like, it's different. So, I think that they really can tell that people see what we're doing and it's paying off but also with our coverage. You know, it's not a count, but they also celebrate the fact that like all of our experts are diverse. When we're telling stories every day, it's diverse our B-roll you know, it's just something where we don't talk about it every day. It's just happening, and I think that's when that di plan and like from the top trickling down is really working when it's just happening, and we don't have to talk about it. People are just doing it because it's the right thing to do. Okay, so we talked about how they perceive the impact of, I guess, on air representation in the content at their various stations. Now we're going to switch back to the management role. How does Tegna define the success of its diversity initiative in local television news management? From the conversations I've had, it's not it has not been a like, oh, we need to have this number, which is nice. I think they're very mindful of like, do we have voices from each

community? And but we've never had a conversation in any role, any capacity of like, we don't have a black writer, or it's never been that which is nice. It's just purely we making sure we have these voices and leadership, and they do. One thing, I will say that I have noticed, when I look on the, you know, company site at the corporate level, it's, you know, I think at that point that has to kind of continue to change. I think when you look at EPs, news directors, Assistant user, all of that, yes. When you look at some of that with the lower-level corporate positions, like digital VPs, you know, things like that, you Yes, I see that when I look at strictly corporate in our corporate office, I don't see as much. And that's just me looking on, like the sites like who's in charge and XYZ. So, I think there is space at that level. For me, just looking at it. But from what I conversations I've had with my managers, it's just something it's not something we've been talking about honestly, like, where it's never in previous jobs. Yes, it was like, okay, we need a black assistant news director, or you know, that we just don't even talk about it. It's literally and it may be my newsroom, because my news director is a minority woman. But yeah, when I look at the leader to come into town and visit, it's just that just what it is, I don't know if it's something that they are thinking about constantly. Because if so, they don't say it, to me at least. But I have a great relationship with my managers and my GM. So, I feel comfortable saying that I think I would be in the loop on some of those conversations if that was the case.

Amber Grigley 32:48

So that brings us to our final two questions. The first one is just kind of like if you could sum it up with the outcomes, measurable outcomes and impact that have resulted from taking this diversity initiative since it launched.

Taylor Berry 33:17

Um, so since I haven't been in the company, I can't really like speak to when they did this whole change. I will say, like, as I've hit on a little bit today, I think just in work ethic, like content that we do, it's now just so natural, to just make sure you know, we as a newsroom is inclusive, our coverage is inclusive. I just think it's such a safe space across the company. Again, from what I see, I love speaking for everyone. But it just seems that I don't know it's just a place people want to work and grow. They have a lot of people who've been in the company for like 40 plus years, even our association. And I think a large part of that, for minorities is like the fact that I'd say the fact that it's inclusive, the fact that you can grow, even if you're black or Hispanic, whatever age you are. So, I think it's really positive. I wish I knew more of their journey just because being on the back end of it, I can tell they've done a lot of work. From what I've, you know, like little things you hear about and new stations, but I can just tell that they've come a long way from where things used to be and like how it is now.

Amber Grigley 34:40

I love that finally, using all the effects of the Tegna diversity initiative, what kind of response are you receiving from the community since the change?

Taylor Berry 34:56

Um, so what's funny especially being from hear a lot of people, I feel like I always stocked up with people. But I feel like I know like half the city because I'm always on and my family's out. And people do recognize like that this like our station is diverse. And it's something that I think a lot of people don't think viewers see. But the fact that people will say like, oh my gosh, like, I

love that you have, you know, an Asian anchor with this Hispanic anchor, like, we typically don't see that or like, my morning team is all female. And we have a Hispanic, Black woman, white woman, we have a Nigerian woman, you know what I mean? So, it's like, people do see that, and they celebrate it, and they resonate with us. And we've had people who write in here like, I feel so seen or like, I feel like I connect to so and so because we also celebrate those cultures consistently. And we want to show like our viewers that we celebrate that in our newsrooms, so that's been really special, like coming back and seeing, it's just very different. And, for me, I grew up watching KHOU. And I always saw diverse people there. And I always said, If I could come back home to Houston, I'd want to work in K to you. So, I guess in the back of my mind, not even realizing that plays a part, right? You just feel comfortable. So, it's really, it's just nice. It's nice that our viewers see it, and we see it. And also, we do a lot of community work. Our station is really big. Tegna is really big on philanthropy. So to go into different communities, not just the like communities or like the high end areas, like we're really servicing different communities and those communities actually say to us, like thank you for highlighting us or one not just telling the bad stories in our area, but the good stories, you know, things that we talk about that are checkboxes like it's stuff we consistently do. So, yeah, it's just I don't know, it's just really special, I think.

Amber Grigley 36:59

I love that. That concludes the interview.

Interview 9 – Lucia Suarez Sang – April 9, 2024, at 10:30 am EST

Amber Grigley 00:39

Can you first start off by saying your first and last name and how many years you've been with Tegna?

Lucia Suarez Sang 01:03

Yeah, so I first last name, Lucia Suarez Sang, I like to use both of my last names. And I was with Tegna for three years.

Amber Grigley 01:14

Alright, let's jump right in, throughout your career, what challenges if any, have you faced in advancing to management roles as a person of color?

Lucia Suarez Sang 01:24

Oh, starting from the start real hard. Um, I really, I think one of the big obstacles was, you know, for a while people didn't, you know, didn't know, if I spoke English properly, or, you know, that sort of thing. And I speak, speak and write in English fluently. I have all my life, but because of my last name, people were like, Huh. And I'm an immigrant as well. So, there was always, you know, the stereotypes. And then once I got over that hurdle, it was really you know, I think the biggest thing was, was really just people didn't believe in my skill set. I knew how good I was. And it was just getting those opportunities. And then I had, you know, I've had good bosses and not so good bosses, some who opened the door, and, you know, hold me in if I needed to, and then there were some who were the complete opposite of that and shut the door. And so, one of the things that for me, I, I've always taken with me in my career, and in my life is kind of the lessons that my family taught me. You know, I'm, I am an immigrant, but I'm also a grandchild of Chinese immigrants to the Dominican Republic. And so, you know, my grandfather was never given anything in his life, he worked his butt off. And so, one of the things that, and I never got to meet him, but what my, my mom and my aunts and uncles tell me is, like, he carved, he carved his road. Like, there wasn't a road for him. And he just, he carved it. And, you know, he was able to learn a different language and build businesses. I mean, he had, he had a restaurant, he had a, like, General Store he had so much and so it's that kind of persistence and perseverance that I attribute to how I how I've handled myself, right, in the sense of, you know, not every door was open. And so, I found a way to kind of figure out how to get around that door or that window. Right. And, and, and walk my own path. And it was hard, you know, it is hard. I'm sure you know, it was well, of you have people who, even if they don't mean to the comments that they say, you know, it's interesting, because it was only within the last year that I ever got the stay in your lane comment that was blatant. That was completely blatant that I was like, what? I've gotten it as a microaggression. But that that was like, stay in your lane. That was the first time in I've been doing this for 12 years. And that was the first time.

Amber Grigley 04:44

How has representation or the lack thereof in management influence content decisions in your various newsrooms?

Lucia Suarez Sang 04:55

I mean, it's been I mean, it's, you know, one of the biggest things that, especially after George Floyd, but really before that, where people were newsrooms were like we represent, we have to have, you know, Hispanic and Black and Asian representation in our stories, because that's kind of the culture wave that we're on. And, you know, they would say it, but then not act on it. And it got to the point where I was getting sick of them saying, Yeah, we need more diversity in our stories and our content. And then nothing happens that I was that I ended up saying, well know that we have to. And so especially in my three years, with Tegna, one of my one of the things that I'm proudest of, is that I was the unwavering voice and every literally every single editorial meeting of what's our diversity story, what is, you know, if we're doing the story, can we make sure we talk to these people? And if we're talking about the economy, can we be intentional about not just getting the same white person from the same university to talk about things that are impacting everyone, but let's be intentional and get a diverse voice for that interview. And, and it's, you know, I, I remember, clearly in a meeting with kind of the editorial staff and I, because I was the only one of three people have kind of color minority, however you want to put it. And I said, I just want to remind everyone, that being the only voice of many cultures, or many groups is exhausting. But I'm going to do it, because it's important. But I and it was interesting, because I got a message then from a colleague who's white, straight, you know, the beneficiary of privilege. And he came up to me and said, thank you for saying that, because I didn't even think about that. Like, that's not even something that is in his kind of worldview, but that a lot, kind of I opened his eyes to that. So that was really cool.

Amber Grigley 07:20

I love that, as a Tegna. Employee, what is your perspective on the effectiveness of the company's diversity initiative plan in promoting inclusion and representation?

Lucia Suarez Sang 07:32

I think it was, from my perspective, it was very effective. I was treated very well, during my time in Tegna given opportunities for leadership training, opportunities to have conversations with like-minded people, one of the really cool programs that they have, it's internal. And it's, for all of us, I call them the diversity months, they get people who are part of those communities, and we have kind of a mini townhall conversation with everyone, just, you know, a group of people, we are asked the same questions. And those conversations are then shared with the whole company. And so, I was able to do one for Pride Month, which I was very excited about doing. Because my perspective, and my experience is different. And that, you know, those conversations, those opportunities to have the conversations, and then take them back to the newsroom are, are ways that Tegna from my perspective, really tries to engage us, especially engaging the people who represent those communities. And they really have worked hard to improve content, improve the culture within the stations, when it comes to DENI was one of the reasons why wants to work there. Because I had a friend there, but it was one of the reasons why I stayed when as far as long as it did, and I would have stayed longer if it wasn't for things that were happening outside of kind of work and in my personal life. But I would have happily stayed at Tegna for years. Had it not been for other issues.

Amber Grigley 09:32

Now your recent role at WTIC how do you feel like Tegna's diversity initiative model, how did it resonate well at that station?

Lucia Suarez Sang 09:47

I will say that that station has for the through the three years that I was there was going through a culture shift it's One of the was one of the last stations to enter the Tegna group and the Tegna model. And so, there's been a lot of just changes hard, man changing mentalities and changing is hard. It's, it's much better. And I was glad to be part of kind of that help that transition. And, you know, I know that the leadership at the station is very focused, and then want to be intentional about DENI and changing the culture around DENI for the positive. And if I had stayed, I would have been, you know, right there with them. There is a DENI task force that was started, which was really great to have, like, like I said earlier, like-minded people to have conversations. But what really, what I really liked was that there were people who, who aren't, you know, BIPOC, who were like, no, I need to be at the table, not just because I'm interested in but to support people who can't be at the table. And to until listen to them. And that for me, I remember one person who came to the last meeting, and she said, You know, I'm, I'm, I'm, she says, she's like, I'm a white woman, straight white woman, like, I'm very privileged, but I want to be here to help to support all of you, because you are all my friends, and you're all my colleagues. And you all matter. And for me, that was really like that, that that was really impactful. Because for, I'm sure you know, this, you know, there are a lot of people who've just, they're, you know, oh, I, I support it. I have a black friend; I have a gay friend I have when you know what I mean? Yeah. But to actually say, you know, to be you guys, you actually matter to me, and I want to be in your space. So that I can make room in my space with understanding for me was really, I was really touched by that.

Amber Grigley 12:31

So, since Tegna, rolled out their huge diversity initiative push I believe it was 2020 During right around the time for the George Floyd and the national reckoning. How did Tegna's diversity initiative model impact your decision-making roles? Once they rolled out that plan? I heard that you were always seemed to be that voice. But now that you had like that, kind of like support from a higher up standard, saying, this is our new standard, and this is direction that we're moving? How did that then impact your decision-making roles?

Lucia Suarez Sang 13:09

It really helped because I knew I had corporate support, I had technical support, right? Because there's, you know, I can be the loudest voice in the in the newsroom when it comes to this. But if I don't have the support of management, I don't have the support of literally the company who owns us, then then I'm just a voice making noise. But the fact that I had their support, I had access to other like-minded people access to trainings and programs and language, and all of that really allowed me to explain the why and I had almost more clout with saying, Hey, we should be doing this, and we shouldn't be doing that. If we really want to be reflective of our community. And you know, when you think of Connecticut, you think Gilmore Girls, right? Like that's usually the first thought when you think of Connecticut, Connecticut is 34%. Diverse. 17% is Hispanic. Right? That's a big number, the majority of which are were within our DMA, you know, Hartford, New Haven and New Haven and Waterbury were the three biggest cities in our

DMA, majority BIPOC identified people in those in those three cities. Right. And so the fact that the image of when you think of Connecticut is Gilmore Girls, but the reality is different. As news people we have to make sure that we're showing that that there's more to Connecticut than Fairfield County, which is like Greenwich and like the rich part of Connecticut, which is not even in our DMA.

Amber Grigley 15:00

Can you describe any barriers you have faced in seeking promotional opportunities during your time with tech man?

Lucia Suarez Sang 15:27

I personally didn't have any. I, you know, I was there for three years, in a leadership role from the beginning. And I had, I had opportunities for promotions, that would have taken me in different places of the, you know, in our business, you know, you jump from station to station or place to place. So I didn't have any, from any barriers, per say, I had many opportunities. But because of things that were happening outside of work, I couldn't really do a lot of those. However, one of the things that Tegna did provide, which I'm will forever be thankful for is leadership training. And one of the things that they said specifically from the beginning is that they basically said, we understand that this industry, like you are all not going to stay at Tegna. However, you were, we want to train the leaders of our industry, not leaders of technology, if you can be a Tegna. Awesome. But we want to train the leaders of our industry, so we have a better industry, when it comes to leaders, and of the group that was there. I mean, I want to say our majority were women. And we may be a fourth, we're a BIPOC, or queer, or both, which is really cool. Just to see the diversity in the room, we had different that representation was different ages, different ethnicities, different life experiences. And that was really cool. To see an eye opening to see and to be in kind of in that community of people, who were hopefully the leaders of our industry.

Amber Grigley 17:25

How does Tegna upper management proceed the impact of the diversity initiatives that they rolled out in 2020, and how it was represented as far as on-air talent and the content?

Lucia Suarez Sang 17:52

I don't know exactly from kind of upper management. But I do know that. It was they have been very intentional, when it comes to rolling out this initiative. And it's an ongoing change every year, it updates every year, which is really refreshing. Because a lot of people are like, here's our DENI, and then they stop. And it's like, no, this is the continuous thing. And so, every year, they're new conversations. You know, they, they really, they were it like maybe a year and a half to two years ago, they started an inclusive journalism, kind of track, it feels like and that really focused on inclusive content. And, and, and then recruiting and like, the conversations were really about all aspects of our newsrooms, and not just content but recruiting on their talent, recruiting behind the scenes. And that's a big one, because these are conversations I've had with other leaders and kind of upper leaders of if we want to tell those stories we need to pet people, the people who write those stories, be those people. Like if we want to really have an authentic view of an experience of a particular community, the people who are writing those stories of

producers, digital producers, photographers, importers, they need to have had those experiences as well. Or similar experiences.

Amber Grigley 19:44

Well, can you think about outcomes and impacts that have resulted from Tegna's diversity initiative, since it launched. How can you how would you define the success of it?

Lucia Suarez Sang 20:21

Well, I mean, from just from where I worked at my old station, we had our very first Hispanic Heritage Month special, our very first Juneteenth special, nobody had, they had had three, first Pride Month special, an AAPI series, Black History Month series, and that wasn't at the forefront of people's minds, unfortunately, right. And the fact that we're having the conversations that we're having the content generation, and not just in our diversity months, as I like to call them, but throughout the year, and one of the things I'm most proud of, and this was this only came to me because of what Tegna has been able to do was I created a diversity and inclusion calendar for the station, and literally spent like a month and a half, going day by day of the year and saying, Alright, these are the things that are celebrated by from different communities, different religions, different countries, that might be an interesting story. Nugget graph, whatever it is, in our shows, and, or interview or whatever, and I put them in the document. And every month, we put those, we put the list of stories in on our whiteboard in our editorial room, and it is a constant reminder of hey, you know, today is the start of so and so, or the start of whatever, you know, this is coming up. So, let's start planning for, for how can we represent that? Is it an interview? Is it a full story? Is it graphics, and that's not just for content that's going externally in the terms of what's on our TV, on our in our broadcasts or on our website, but also internally? So, what kind of education can we do internally, for these days and months. And, and for me, I was super proud of that, because I got a message from someone who said, thank you for, for showing, you know, we did a for Black History Month, I selected 10 historic figures in the black community in Connecticut, who probably no one had ever heard of. And I just we did one cheater that we put in our monitors in within the station. And I got a message like oh my god, thank you so much. Like I didn't even know that like this existed or that this had happened. And we then were able to use those on air as well. Because if us as the news gatherers, as the communicators didn't know about it, then there are people in the community who didn't know about it. So, and I was only able to do that, because of the conversations. And the initiative that take that rolled out. That probably wouldn't have been, probably would have been on my radar. But what probably wouldn't have been other people's radar. And, you know, that was I think that's the most impactful thing is that it put these conversations, and people who had never had to think about it.

Amber Grigley 23:47

All right, last question. Um, once Tegna rolled out their diversity initiative plan, what kind of impact could you say that it had on the community that you all served?

Lucia Suarez Sang 24:05

I mean, I was it was, I got there. I got to Tegna about six months after they revealed, you know, unveiled their, their initiative. And so, I've really been almost at the beginning of it. And like I mentioned earlier, the session I was at was really just purchased was had been purchased, like, months before. George Floyd like it was 2019, end of 2019 that that they entered Tegna. And so

I really I was really in like, the start of it. And I've met so many people here in Connecticut, who, who are very thankful that we've been intentional of showing our communities as authentically as we can, and not just going to communities particularly can communities of color, where a lot of people just go when the crime happens, and then they leave. And, you know, that gives a perspective that all of these communities are crime riddled, and you can't go there, and it's unsafe, and blah, blah, blah, and all of that. And the fact that we were, we've been very intentional going into this community is not to tell a story, but just to talk to them, talk to the community, and get their perspective as to what we can do better. What we're doing wrong. Where did we miss the mark? Where did we, you know, where did we get it? Right? It has nothing to do with a story per say, but just getting their perspective. And that, for me, was kind of the highlights the impact that this initiative has had, as long as the stations and the people decisions, accept it, and really go for it, I think they will see the impact in both in the short run and the long run. And I've been able to have such amazing connections with people in the community. Because of this work, that I wouldn't have had before, I could have easily just been writing my stories and been done and but because of this push for being authentic, and being diverse in our authenticity, I've had been able to have such amazing connections. And I know that other people across Tegna, are having this kind of the same feeling as well.

Amber Grigley 26:43

I love that. Well, that completes this part of the interview, is there anything else that you'd like to say, as a person of color and management, what you would like to see happen for the future of our industry? Is there anything else you would like to add that you think that is important to make known as I complete this research part of it?

Lucia Suarez Sang 27:03

Yeah, I mean, I think the biggest thing for me is, you know, especially for the people who are already in management, especially people who are, you know, the first put, put the describer, right, the first in management in their station, is to remember, to bring people along with you, right to train people. And that's the biggest thing is, a lot of the time we are we are put in a place of, of leadership, or we are promoted or whatever, you know, and then we forget the people who are after us. And it's not giving them a hand, right, it's not giving them the promotion just because of how they identify but giving them the skills and tools and possibilities of what could they do, if they put them you know, they worked for it in the future. And being a role model to them. Like this is, this is where you could go. And here are some tools that can help you there, it might not be my role. But it could be a role like this. That's you know, I've, I've had some great mentors, who have pushed me in different ways. Mentors, who were white mentors, who were Hispanic, mentors who are women, queer, black, all of them, and they all gave me something different. And my goal as a leader is to give as much as I can to people who look like me, people who don't look like me, and really just open their minds to why having diversity behind the scenes is just as important as the diversity in front of the camera, right?

Amber Grigley 29:08

A lot of people I spoke to during this project that was one of the things that they wanted to end on so that bursts like a whole new topic as far as now we're getting These positions, what are we doing to stay in these positions and continue to leave the door open for the next generation and the next person of color to come in and join us, like, there's room at the top for all of us. And

now that we are finally breaking that glass ceiling, we have to continue to bring more up with us. So I do appreciate you for bringing that out.

Lucia Suarez Sang 30:21

And you said it, right. It's not, it's, it's keeping my job, right and showing, you know, but it's, for me, it's, you know, taking everything, I know, when I've learned and giving it to someone else. So that when they get into these roles, they know what to do how to keep their job. Right. And, and I know as a, as a first in many, in many ways that the spotlight is on me, and the microphone microscope is on me of like, we have to, you know, I have to succeed, so that the stereotypes of people who look like me, don't become a reality, if that makes sense. For people who are ignorant. And I also know that while I'm fighting that I'm bringing up, right, so that I can keep, keep showing that people who look like me belong here. And not just as a, I don't know, I don't know, but they belong here, just as much as I do just as much as they do. Absolutely.

Amber Grigley 31:45

Again, I thank you for your time this morning.

Lucia Suarez Sang 33:23

I'm rooting for you. I'm excited to see what other people said. Thank you so much for including me, I really appreciate it.