



Ayana Mackey on transforming challenges into opportunities in the construction industry

Deloitte is proud to introduce the next profile in our series of women in the manufacturing industry. By highlighting the stories of women in manufacturing, we hope to help facilitate meaningful conversations, create connections, and showcase the myriad of opportunities available to enter and thrive in the manufacturing industry.



Ayana Mackey is an Audit & Assurance managing director with Deloitte & Touche LLP. Ayana is responsible for leading large groups of professionals in executing high-quality audits of both public and private companies, including those with complex and challenging accounting matters. Incrementally, Ayana strives to provide each of her clients with the highest level of service, and she adds value to organizations with her dedication to quality and a strong investment in her teams and people.

Ayana Mackey
Managing Director
Deloitte & Touche LLP

Career transformation: Turning lemons into lemonade

Unlike many who may have had a straight career path in manufacturing or within the construction industry, Ayana worked across many industries throughout her auditing career. After graduating from Georgia Perimeter Community College and then Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, Ayana joined Deloitte and worked on a plethora of clients across the Real Estate; Construction; Technology, Media & Telecommunications (TMT); Hospitality & Services; and Consumer industries until finally concentrating in the Construction sector after taking a leave of absence and returning to Deloitte in 2015. Ayana describes that over the past decade, she slowly began to work on construction engagements, which provided exposure to various complexities and challenges.

For Ayana, she took these lemons and made lemonade. Hidden beneath the complexities, Ayana recognized a need for a centralized center of excellence for engagement teams serving construction clients. In an innovative move, a diverse mix of professionals from different disciplines and backgrounds were brought together to form a unique group within the Audit & Assurance business: the Construction Studio. This studio, born from the synergy of internal talents and fresh external perspectives, was specifically designed to cater to major players in the construction industry. By standardizing the audit approach in this specialized sector, the studio not only works to enhance service quality, but also offers invaluable industry insights to our clients.

Leading through unprecedented change

As the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, Ayana adeptly balanced her role as a military spouse, with her husband deployed in Afghanistan, and mother to her two young sons. Embracing remote work allowed her to continue advancing her career while delivering high-quality audits and value to clients.

The pandemic served as a catalyst for change with more transformative ways to work. Recognizing this need for transformation, Ayana was able to launch the Construction Studio, which she continues to lead. The Construction Studio is focused primarily on auditing within the construction industry, and the concept of this specialized studio has gained recognition nationally and internationally and is now inspiring the establishment of similar dedicated groups for different sectors across Deloitte.

Redefining work-life balance to create impact

A career highlight for Ayana was returning to Deloitte in a less traditional role, where she worked part-time and remote (years before the COVID-19 pandemic), in leading audits and helping to win new business from her “bedroom,” allowing her to create value for construction clients while raising two small children.

This idea was the launching pad to create “future of work” ideas, benefiting not only Ayana, but many others in a similar situation. This innovative studio concept opened the door to provide many working parents or those caring for aging parents, who needed the ability to work from home, opportunities to serve some of the largest construction clients while taking care of personal family needs. Helping others has been one of the most rewarding experiences for Ayana, both personally and professionally.

Working on strategic projects, such as creating a more equitable coaching experience through Deloitte’s prestigious Ellen Gabriel Fellowship program, she observed the ideas and recommendations set forth by her and her team be implemented across the various businesses, which ultimately helped to improve the coaching experience for many professionals within Deloitte.

On the importance of mentorship

Mentors played a crucial role in advocating for Ayana and providing encouragement.

Ayana credits her Deloitte coach (a senior partner), and mentor (now a retired partner), for helping to propel her successful career.

Ayana had several mentors throughout her career, whom she refers to as her “Board of Directors.” These mentors serve as trusted advisers both within and outside of Deloitte. Her mentors shared different perspectives and pointed out her blind spots by giving constructive feedback, shaping the leader she is today. At times, her mentors provided challenging deployment opportunities allowing her a chance to shine amid difficult assignments.

Apart from professional mentors, Ayana has additional mentors in her personal life including her father, a retired PwC partner, and her husband, a commanding officer in the US Navy, who consistently provide her with support and leadership. Mentors played a multifaceted role in Ayana’s career, providing guidance, opportunities, perspective, and constructive criticism that helped her grow professionally. She encourages everyone to have their own “Board of Directors.”

A professional philosophy for women in manufacturing

Early in her involvement within the consultation industry, Ayana shares her experience of frequently being the only woman in the room. Despite such challenges, she managed to climb the ladder, paving the way for other young female professionals. When asked about the impact of her gender on her career, Ayana shares that she got used to being the “only” from a young age. Whether it was being the only Black person or the only woman in the room, she learned to navigate these situations.

“Be comfortable with the uncomfortable.”

Ayana emphasizes that women bring unique perspectives and skills to the table, which can be crucial for innovation and problem-

solving in the construction industry. Ayana also mentions that women in construction are defying outdated notions that work and family life are incompatible. This shift in mindset is influencing the next generation and challenging traditional gender roles in the industry.

Ayana also advocates for increased diversity and inclusion in the industry. She believes that organizations can be enhanced by the creativity, time management skills, and energy that a diverse workforce brings to the table. Ayana highlights the challenges many face in advancing from entry-level

to managerial positions, emphasizing the need for systemic changes to facilitate equal opportunities for career progression in the industry. Ayana is an advocate for increased diversity and inclusion within the industry. She recognizes the value that a diverse workforce adds through creativity, time management skills, and energy.

Ayana's professional philosophy centers on being prepared and responsive. By championing these systemic changes, Ayana not only promotes a more inclusive and

equitable industry but also exemplifies how preparedness and responsiveness can drive meaningful progress. Her efforts illuminate a path forward where diversity is not only encouraged but also can be integral to the industry's success.

Ayana Mackey: The lightning round

Women in
Manufacturing

Describing herself in three words: Committed, collaborative, compassionate

Favorite food or drink: Jamaican food, fried fish, jerk, curry chicken!

Favorite places to travel: Paris

One thing on her bucket list: Travel to South Africa

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