



# LEVERAGE

ISSUE 4  
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2021

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## Pushing ahead at a pivotal time for health equity.

One of the great wakeup calls from this pandemic is the devastating impact it

has had on the lives of people of color all across the globe. It has made much more public the well-documented fact that the inequities and disparities experienced by those communities are a legacy of centuries of systemic racism. As the social justice movement, propelled by George Floyd's death and by the devastation wrought by COVID, gained real traction in late 2020 and early 2021, there were promises made by employers and public institutions to do better. Many of us who have advocated for change knew to adopt a "trust but verify" attitude toward those promises, even as they seemed more wholehearted than those of the past.

So far, there's not much to verify. A health equity scorecard released in November by the Commonwealth Fund uncovered deep-seated racial and ethnic health inequities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare boards need to assess the effectiveness of board diversity policies, in light of new data from executive search firm WittKieffer and the Health Management Academy. They found that only 3% of health systems had appointed a health equity expert to their boards, which remain mostly white, male and over 50.

In the face of this, The Leverage Network (TLN) continues to march forward, carrying the torch for equity, diversity and inclusion in healthcare leadership and governance ([watch our video on the year in review](#)). Change must start at the top if we are to solve persistent inequities of access, quality

and outcomes of care. We need boards and senior leaders who "get it." I continue to be blown away by the caliber of the people who take part in our programs and 2021 was no different! If you truly want talented, experienced executives with expertise who happen to be diverse, they are part of the TLN community.

This past September saw the successful debut of our Emerging Leaders program, which uses the same approach as our Healthcare Board Initiative (HcBI), but this one focused on the C-Suite. The inaugural class of 19 leaders will complete the 6-month program and be ready for advanced executive leadership roles in March. Cohort II will begin in September. TLN will accept the first 20 qualified applicants for the program beginning in the summer. For information on how to submit an early application, please [contact Excell Hardy](#). For a video on the program, [click here](#).

Even as the first cohort works their way through the program, we are already seeing upward mobility of its members:

- **Denzil Ross** started a new role as the Chief Executive Officer of Northwest Medical Center Houghton in Tucson, part of Community Health Systems
- **Courtney Avery** was named Senior Consultant at Culloton + Bauer Luce
- **Andre Boyd** became the new Chief Operating Officer at Christ Hospital Health Network

Meantime, we completed our fourth HcBI program and send congratulations to the members of HcBI Cohort IV on the completion of their six-month fellowship.

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TLN takes great pride in the preparation of our HcBI cohorts for executive board opportunities along with their positioning for greater visibility within the industry through access to our influential network and corporate partners. Recently we have seen a number of past HcBlers get new gigs:

- **Patricia Webb** joined the board of Telecare
- **Patricia Howard** was promoted to Chief Operating Officer at Point32Health
- **Corwin Harper** became Chief Executive Officer of Ochsner Health's Northshore and Mississippi Gulf Coast Region
- **John H. Stewart IV, M.D.**, became founding Director at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center

We are excited about continued growth and success for TLN this year.

*Antoinette (Toni) Hardy-Waller*

Antoinette Hardy-Waller  
Founder and CEO



## HcBI Cohort V is Almost Here

TLN utilizes its HcBI program to build a robust pipeline of talented, well-prepared Black executives through a three-part strategy established to prepare, position and promote qualified Black executives for viable health industry board opportunities.

Enrollment for HcBI cohort V, set to kick off in March, is now underway. TLN will accept the first 20 qualified applicants as a participant in cohort V. The deadline to apply is February 1st.

[Contact TLN membership and programming lead Excell Hardy.](#)



## EWOC IS BACK – CLAIMING OUR TRUTH

RITZ CARLTON HOTEL  
CHICAGO – JUNE 6-9, 2022

The Executive Women of Color Summit (EWOC) is a professional leadership and Board Governance conference designed to increase the representation of Black women on boards and to enhance their leadership journey. We bring together some of the most dynamic, influential and successful women in healthcare and corporate America to share candid, authentic conversations and lessons learned.

Our theme for this year's summit is "Claiming Our Truth." We use the symbol of Sankofa – a metaphorical symbol of a bird with its head turned to take an egg from its back, which expresses the importance of reaching back to knowledge gained in the past and bringing it into the present in order to make positive change. Our ability to acknowledge and claim our truth opens up a promising path to healing.

Come join us for a powerful, enlightening and healing experience and claim your truth!

Keep an eye out for early registration coming soon.

[For more information click here.](#)

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## Q&A WITH BERT ALLEN

*Bert Allen, principal at Allen Executive Consulting, is TLN's first resident Executive Coach. A trusted adviser to CEOs and C-suites since 1981, Bert brings a*

*unique combination of human resources, operational and entrepreneurial experience to TLN. He has created and led employee productivity, succession planning, global leadership development, executive compensation, M&A and turnaround initiatives for Fortune 100 and private companies. He will be resident coach for the Emerging Leaders program.*

**TLN:** More often, you hear the term coach and you think of sports or maybe helping people change careers. How is executive coaching different?

**Bert Allen:** Coaching is often confused with teaching, mentoring, consulting and therapy. While there are elements that coaching shares with these professions, coaching is distinct. Increasingly over the last several decades, coaching has been an important aspect of executive development in the workplace. I define executive coaching as collaborating with an individual or team in building their skills to achieve their specific goals and results. Most importantly, the coach doesn't teach or solve problems or offer solutions. The coach gets the executive to develop his or her own solutions to problems through a process of discovery.

**TLN:** Why is coaching so important?

**BA:** Coaching helps us see our strengths and weaknesses as others see us, not how we believe we exhibit our strengths and weaknesses. Coaching pushes and motivates us to achieve more than we thought possible. Coaching provides the environment to explore, discover, practice, test, make mistakes and fail without real consequence – all in the name of personal growth.

Coaches ask questions, listen, generate ideas, tap into executives' experiences, expand their thinking and inspires them to choose their own course of action to achieve their goals.

**TLN:** Why is coaching particularly important for people of color?

**BA:** Executive coaching has expanded rapidly over the last 10 years. Once exclusive to a few high potential executives or a last-ditch effort to "fix" an employee in a key role before firing them, now many organizations provide coaching for employees at all levels. Executives of color have not received the benefit of coaching at the same rate as white

executives, contributing to the relative lack of people of color at senior level positions.

**TLN:** What's your role as resident Executive Coach for TLN?

**BA:** As a former executive officer of publicly traded and private-equity-owned companies across several different industry sectors, I bring a unique set of experiences to coaching our Emerging Leader cohort. My role is to facilitate group discussions and exercises for these executives of color that contribute to the growth and development of the Emerging Leaders program and to the individuals in it, who will be big players in the next generation of top leaders in our industry.

## WANT TO SERVE ON A BOARD? SOME TIPS ON BEING MORE VISIBLE



**Billy Dexter, Partner,  
Heidrick & Struggles**

- **Get the right experience.** Seek out experiences that provide both depth and breadth of perspective and responsibilities.
- **Raise your profile.** Speak at conferences, play an active role in industry associations, become an author, be present on online professional networks, create blogs or podcasts, and become a thought leader.
- **Get educated.** Attend programs (National Association of Corporate Directors, ELC Corporate Board Initiative, Heidrick & Struggles Board Institute, Stanford and Harvard's Directors College, The Leverage Network, etc.) aimed at improving your ability to contribute meaningfully to corporate oversight activities.
- **Be proactive about networking.** Make the "net work" by developing relationships that provide guidance and visibility and participate in both formal and informal networks.
- **Assess your readiness for board service.** Examine your leadership experience and specific expertise. Don't rely solely on self-assessment – get advice on your strengths and weaknesses.
- **Develop your elevator pitch.** What do you have to offer a Board? How do you tell your story?
- **Approach your board search as you would a job search.** Do your due diligence, develop a board resume, develop a list of contacts related to board governance.