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Focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Travel and Events

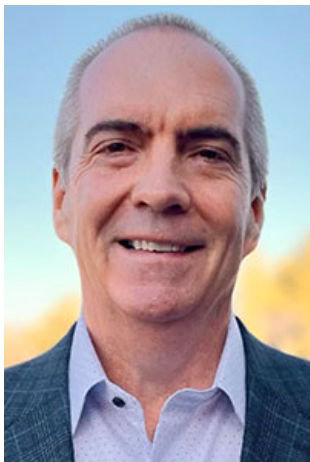
Mike Gamble, founder of Tourism Diversity Matters, discusses the impetus for starting the initiative, and its goals for the future.

Author: Jennifer N. Dienst



Tourism Diversity Matters, a new initiative providing the tourism industry with resources to learn about how to build infrastructure, will use its own board as an example in an upcoming white paper on board diversity.

"The 'aha moment' for me last year was to say, wouldn't it be great to have an organization that really focused on this 24/7, 365 [days a year]?" said Mike Gamble, president and CEO of recruitment firm SearchWide Global.



Mike Gamble

The "this" Gamble is referring to is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the travel and events industry, and how he came to launch a new initiative, Tourism Diversity Matters (TDM), in February 2021. The goal, Gamble said, is to create "a portal for all the good work that's happening in the industry" with resources for companies and organizations to learn about best practices to build their own DEI infrastructure as well as access the latest research and data insights. Along with SearchWide Global, TDM counts the ConferenceDirect Foundation, PHLCVB, and Sports ETA as founding partners.

So far, TDM's board includes Elliott Ferguson (<https://www.pcma.org/elliott-ferguson-pcma-groundbreaker-destination-dc/>), chairman, along with 21 other leaders representing a broad spectrum of the tourism and events industry. The board itself will serve as a topic that TDM intends on addressing in a forthcoming white paper on board diversity, which will eventually be made publicly available through its portal. It's resources like these, Gamble said, that will give companies and organizations the tools they need to make a difference at the grassroots level.

"We collectively have to make an impact on the way that our workforce looks so that it mirrors visitors and attendees of events," Gamble said. And "if there's anything that our greater industry — tourism, travel, hospitality, and events — can all agree on and collaborate on, it has to be this, right?"

RELATED: [Building a More Diverse Tourism Industry Through Apprenticeships \(https://www.pcma.org/building-diverse-tourism-industry-apprenticeships/\)](https://www.pcma.org/building-diverse-tourism-industry-apprenticeships/)

Another centerpiece of the initiative is an apprenticeship program, which will give underrepresented and ethnically diverse graduates six months of work experience and a guaranteed job upon conclusion. Split into three tracks — tourism, sports, and events — the program aims to attract more young people to consider choosing a long-term career in the industry.

"As much as we want to make a difference in the way that our industry looks from a leadership perspective . . . we have to impact the foundation and the entry-level area as well and keep these young people engaged in the industry, too," Gamble said. "Ten years from now, if we've got 1,000 young people who've gone through the apprenticeship program — that's not too lofty of a goal. Then they'll be directors and vice presidents, and moving up the chain within their organizations, and that's going to be a great value for all of us."

For more information, visit tourismdiversitymatters.org (<https://tourismdiversitymatters.org/>).

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