

Interview: Paul Skinnider on authenticity in the workplace



Paul Skinnider, experienced internal auditor, LGBTQIA+ champion and a member of the Chartered IIA's Scotland committee, spoke to us about the value of authenticity and the importance of being able to “bring your whole self to work.”

This is especially important within internal audit where auditors need to quickly establish trust with people, “when you’re asking people to be open and honest with you, being able to have those genuine professional conversations it’s a cornerstone to doing good audit work. When something resonates it starts to build trust that can really help with that relationship where they are willing to share issues, challenges or agreement to get to resolution.”

[Click here](#) to listen to our interview with Paul.

The role of allies

Skinnider says that people should not be afraid of saying the wrong thing in relation to any ‘ist’ whether that relates to LGBT, BAME, gender or age, “if there is something you want to know, ask, being an ally is a good place to start from, if the intent is genuine then that should help marry up with the impact of the question.”

The role of allies is extremely important; we should all be interested in benefiting from being more inclusive, “often a little bit of support is all someone needs to go a long way, we shouldn’t just think people are comfortable, things have been done and things have moved on. We should always seek to support further and being allies of each other is extremely powerful.”

Make your words count

Organisations can also support raising understanding, particularly in leadership roles by facilitating a reverse mentoring programme which enables people to “ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking in a different environment.”

A campaign that Skinnider has seen work well was called *Words Count* empowering colleagues to speak out as “it can be quite difficult to challenge back as the gut feeling is often it’s easier to avoid it.” The campaign made it clear that “if someone said something that had an impact on you, you could say ‘words count’ and it was then the responsibility of that person to reflect on what they’d said and work through it themselves or open up the conversation so that they could learn from it.”

Tone from the top

Diversity and inclusion is important, particularly to drive positive culture and protect against group think and everyone has the responsibility to create an inclusive work environment. Although Skinnider says that “tone at the top is important, when you are looking for comfort and assurance, especially in challenging situations, if you look up and what you see is entirely different to what’s out there or who you are then it can be a challenge to put your trust in that leadership.”

Catch our exclusive interview with Group Head of Audit, [Carolyn Clarke](#) for a comparative conversation on diversity, equity and inclusion.