

Courtney Bullard:

Welcome to 2023 and to this podcast, The Law and Education. My name is Courtney Bullard and I am your host. I'm also the founder and CEO of Institutional Compliance Solutions, and a practicing attorney. And this episode is going to be a little bit different because I want to peel the curtain back and take you to the inside of ICS, the business, and Courtney Bullard, the business owner.

So as a CEO, I like to say sometimes that I am an accidental entrepreneur. It was not my goal in life to own a business, but here we are and it has been fantastic. A lot of that is the result of the incredible team that I have supporting me. So I'm not only a practicing lawyer, but I am absolutely a business owner. And so I love to listen to podcasts on business. And trying to bring the best services to our clients means operationalizing some of our work and making sure that we have systems in place to be efficient and available, of course, for our clients and our community partners.

And I listened to a podcast that talked about measuring backwards recently. And it really resonated with me because at the end of every year, I do take stock of all that we accomplished at ICS. And of course, this podcaster encouraged listeners to take time at the end of each year to reflect on accomplishments, on challenges that were faced, on any growth that was experienced, basically to measure backwards.

And so I sat down at the end of 2022 and engaged in the exercise I always do. I usually block out at least two days to really crunch numbers, to look at what worked, what didn't work, to talk to my team about how they're doing, and to check in with them, which I do very regularly, make sure that their workload is manageable, that they are enjoying the work, and all of those good things. And I also reflect on not only all that ICS has accomplished, but on the accomplishments of our clients and community partners.

So a few highlights that I shared via email with our community partners and in our main email distribution list, I send a Note From Courtney every month. It's one of my favorite things to write. And so the one that I wrote in December, I shared some of ICS's highlights, and I want to share those with you today. And then I'm also going to talk with you about the mission and values with ICS, me as a business owner and what I've learned, before we conclude this podcast.

So, some highlights for ICS. The first is one that I'm really excited about, and that is certification as a Women's Business Enterprise. We've always been woman owned, by me, and women led and run. But to have this official certification means a lot. I will say that it was in a very intensive process. I was laughing saying, "I think they're wanting my blood type and my firstborn going through this process," but we finally made it through and completed it and are officially certified, which is fantastic. We now have community partners and clients in 47 states, which really is unbelievable to me. It's a testament to some of the positives that came out of the pandemic, which is our ability to reach a lot of folks virtually. And so we love that, and it gives us a lot of perspective, looking at different areas of the country, different ways things are done, private institutions, public institutions, small institutions, large institutions, very small school districts, very large school districts, and everything in between.

In 2022, we certified over 1200 Title IX professionals in our live virtual trainings and our in-person trainings. Another exciting thing was that we have been back in person for onsite training in 2022, which has been great. In Title IX University, which is part of our community access and something I talk about in a future episode in the introduction that I have with Betsy Smith, I think it's the next episode we're going to air, but in Title IX University, we had over 15,000 logins from 3,600 plus users, over 9,200 courses completed, so more than 9,200 courses completed in Title IX University. And our platform runs predictions on how much money that saves clients, and it states that it's saved clients over \$4.5 million in training savings. And it will also give you predictions on commute time. So for our community partners, they can run similar reports that they can show to leadership as far as cost savings and training through Title IX University versus going to conferences. And by the way, we love conferences. I'm going

to highlight some things that are coming up and one is a conference. But that's not always feasible or viable. And the great thing about Title IX University is it can be a stop gap. So if somebody leaves your school or institution, they can jump in and get certified as an investigator per the regulations without having to wait for the next conference.

2022, we added DEI University, which is led by Celeste Bradley on my team. And we expanded our EEO and DEI services under her leadership. It's something we were always doing, but I would say has really taken off with Celeste at the helm of that work.

But, with all of those wonderful statistics, I do want to make clear that for ICS and for me, Courtney Bullard, as the owner, when it comes to measuring backwards, I measure our success not on our stats or our revenue, but on the impact we're able to make. Not on the number of our clients, but the quality of our services. And not on the size of ICS, but on the value we can bring to clients. Regardless of any success achieved as an organization or a team, our mission and values remain the same, and it's something that I go over and over with our attorneys and our operations team and our team as a whole in our monthly meetings.

For those of you on the ground, I hope that the holiday season was restful for you and that you had an ability to reflect on all that you accomplished in 2022, looking beyond the numbers and any stats at your school or institution, and really thinking about the impact that you have each day on students, staff, and/or your Title IX team. And if you didn't have a chance to do that at the end of December, I really encourage you to take a moment, take a beat here at the beginning of this year, and reflect on all of those accomplishments.

I want to turn and talk a little bit about myself as a business owner and the work that we do at ICS and the missions and values that we hold. So again, I mentioned I like to listen to podcasts and do a lot of research on running businesses to ensure that I'm doing the best that I possibly can in this role that I find myself in. And I learned not that long ago that me and ICS are part of a club that I really never expected, that only 2% of female entrepreneurs are a part of, and it's based on business revenue. And I put a long post on LinkedIn that I'm somewhat regurgitating here in this podcast, because it really struck me, this percentage is just not okay. We need a lot more women and minority-owned businesses out there, not just surviving, but thriving.

And so I put on LinkedIn that I don't have a magic formula. I'm not a perfect business owner. But what I can tell you is that our impact and the impact that ICS has is always what I am laser focused on. I'm always considering the best way to serve our clients and our community, with people over profit being my central mission. And what I mean by that is that there are times that I shut us down from taking new work because I want my team to ensure that they are not overloaded. Means we don't take on business at times because to do so is going to overly tax my team or impact the quality of service. That's just one example. It means that for us, one of our mottoes that comes from Betsy Smith is transparency is kindness. We are transparent with our clients and community partners. We're not perfect. Sometimes we make mistakes and we have to own that. It also means that we don't hide things behind paywalls. We try not try to. We try to be as transparent as we can on what we provide for free. And we provide as much as we can for free, like this podcast. And then what has to be paid for behind a paywall, like Title IX University and being a community partner.

But what I want to say is one of my goals for 2023 is to really connect with others out there that want to own or run their own business. I'm always open to sharing my experiences with anyone looking to pave their own way as a business owner. I do it often with friends and strangers who DM me, some of who are now working in this space and can attest to that. I love paying it forward. And I also am completely willing to talk to others in our space who want to carve their own path. Because the more good people doing the work, the better.

So again, as I said, my goal in 2023 is to do this more. So if you're in the planning stages, you're ready to launch or you're in the thick of starting your own business, please feel free to DM me any time. I would love to connect. And when I put this on LinkedIn, I've already had a lot of folks reach out to me asking to have a meeting. I have one next week with somebody. Because I recently read a really scary statistic about mental health and entrepreneurs. So it's really important to have a community in that space as well and to lean on each other. And if I can, I want to help those who are looking to forge their own path.

I'm really proud of what I've built at ICS, of my team. I get emotional at the end of every year. I get emotional in our team meetings. Because I really am so proud of what we've created and the work that we're doing. And we have so much more to accomplish going forward in 2023 with the women behind me that support the work we do. That includes my leadership team, Celeste Bradley and Betsy Smith, on the side of the work, the actual lawyers leading the Title IX and DEI and EEO space. But it also includes my director of operations, Jessica Thomas, Susan Eastman, who is absolutely essential and was my first person I hired at ICS on the operations side of the work. It includes our client development folks, Chris and Jenny. It includes our IT and our billing and our bookkeeping. We have a lot of folks on the team that you don't see on the website. It includes our social media folks, our design team. There's a lot going on behind the scenes to ensure that we can provide quality work, and everyone is very much in line with the vision of ICS, and I'm so appreciative of that.

I'll also quickly mention in here and see who listens to the podcast, we are looking to hire in a lot of different ways. And so if you are a lawyer or a subject matter expert interested in working with ICS, please feel free to direct message me on LinkedIn or any of our social media platforms. I'd love to hear from you.

Lastly, I want to point out things that are coming in 2023, first highlighting my year-end review, which is just going to be next week, with Steven Richard as a guest. I am so excited to have him on board because he is a Title IX litigator on the ground, and he is excellent. So he will be co-presenting with me. Be sure to register. I also have our first co-conference. It's for K12. It's going to be hosted at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. And we are co-sponsoring this conference with D-Prep. Really excited about it. So be sure to register for that and get that early bird special. I think that concludes on February one, but we'd love to see you in person at that conference. We anticipate another in-person conference in the fall for higher education with them.

We have a lot of virtual training, so go on our website, sign up, register for those. And we are creating a learning center at ICS headquarters, a training center, I should say. Sorry, not learning center, but a training center at ICS headquarters. It will be an intimate space of around 20 folks that can register for in-person trainings. They'll be extremely reasonable since they're hosted here. Our first one is going to be a higher ed Title IX Coordinator bootcamp, end of February, early March. Look for those dates. Hopefully by the time I'm releasing this podcast, that will be out for all of you. Very inexpensive. Come join us in Chattanooga, Tennessee, see our headquarters, be a part of a setting where there's a lot of practical information, but also our ability to interact at a meaningful level with our trainees. We'll provide breakfast and lunch for you and send you on your way back home. Some of these will be a day, some will be a day and a half.

And I will tell you, if you want to bring your team here to train in person, no fee to utilize our facilities. If you just want to get away from campus or your school district and have a space to learn and grow as a team, that is open to you as well. So look for all of that on our new website that's about to launch. Register, join us in person, join us virtually. We would love to see you.

With that, I'm going to close out this episode of The Law and Education Podcast, but as always, thank you so much for listening in. Thank you for being a part of the ICS family. Even if you're not a part of our

Welcome_to_2023_with_Courtney_Bullard_-_Behind_t... (Completed 01/31/23) Page 3 of 4

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community, if you're a client, if you're a podcast listener, I consider you part of our family. We appreciate you and we look forward to all that 2023 has to bring. I will see you next episode.

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