



**Interview with
Jeff Joseph, President, SIIA**

**For podcast release
Monday, March 15, 2021**

KENNEALLY: The innovation ecosystem that drives economic growth and medical advancements in our digital age relies on technology – everything from physical devices to formless data. But without human creators and operators, technology turns to stone.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center’s podcast series. I’m Christopher Kenneally for Velocity of Content. The more students and staff see themselves reflected in innovation’s successes, the greater will be their interest and commitment to its pursuit.

Jeff Joseph, president of Washington, DC, based SIIA, the principal US trade association for the software and digital content industries, is urging his organization and its members to commit to making progressive change towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring practices, culture, operations, and offerings. Recently named one of Washington’s most influential people by the *Washingtonian*, Jeff Joseph joins me now. Welcome to the program, Jeff Joseph.

JOSEPH: Thank you, Chris. It’s a pleasure to be here today.

KENNEALLY: I’m looking forward to chatting with you, because the SIIA has really made a commitment beyond innovation to matters of diversity. I believe you see these questions as business issues as much as they are social issues, Jeff.

JOSEPH: I think that’s absolutely right. We know that the more input we have into the development of ideas, the more input we can have into innovation, the better the outcomes. So improving our outcomes on DEI is not just the morally and socially responsible thing to do. It’s a good business decision.

I often joke, imagine if Alexa couldn’t understand a Bostonian or a Baltimore accent. You’d miss out on that entire market. So wouldn’t you want product development to be as inclusive as possible to represent a wide array of views? Not just views in difference of ethnicity or gender, but also political views and social views, to create a better outcome that can provide you with the broadest market possible.

KENNEALLY: SIIA had some interesting comments in this regard, Jeff. Recently, the United States Patent and Trademark Office was asking for comments on the national strategy for



expanding American innovation, and you very pointedly put your fingers on the issue here that diversity is going to drive innovation in the future.

JOSEPH: That's exactly right. And I think that's part of the secret sauce for one of the things that has made our nation so great and so competitive globally, because we have traditionally largely embraced that diversity of thought to lead to innovation. Again, it's getting a variety of viewpoints and a variety of inputs to push forward.

So we talked to the PTO about several areas. One is increasing diversity in STEM programs. We need to get those communities who have not traditionally been engaged in STEM for whatever reason – we need to reach out and make sure that they feel comfortable engaging, that they have access to programs.

We also need to take a look and the PTO needs to take a look to see if its own processes have evidence of implicit or structural bias. You mentioned it early in your comments that those in disenfranchised communities, communities on the margins, need to see themselves. They need to see themselves represented so they believe that they have opportunity and hope. So the PTO needs to make sure that they are presenting themselves in a way that becomes accessible to a wide variety of innovators and help them understand the application process and the potential outcomes.

KENNEALLY: And for SIIA members, this is important, too, because it connects you to customers and to communities.

JOSEPH: Absolutely. Absolutely. Again, not only do you want to develop these products that are innovative and have all these various inputs, but that then not only connects you to potential customers and broadens your customer base, but it also reflects the communities in which we work and engage. We talk a lot about DEI, but another major trend we see a lot of companies engaging in and investors engaging in – the importance of social responsibility and environmental responsibility. We know that customers, that business partners, that investors are increasingly looking for quality work and a true investment in these areas.

Some of that comes from the transparency that's now provided through social media. Customers and partners can look and see if companies are really standing behind what they're saying. We're seeing investors push for specific metrics to show performance in these areas. So again, it's not just a matter of doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. It's really a critical matter of improving your business, of enhancing your business, and creating new market and business opportunities.



KENNEALLY: And for SIIA members, the kinds of workplaces, the communities, the customers you have, it really runs the full spectrum, because we're not just talking about all the household name brands that we know of in technology, but about startups and everyone in the middle.

JOSEPH: We have a vast diversity of membership in terms of business markets. We have companies that operate in financial markets. They create and access the data that drives the global stock exchanges. We have companies engaged in education technology, providing those platforms that so many of us – not only children, but even adults are using during the current pandemic to remain engaged in the educational process. So those platforms and those education technology companies are members of ours as well. And then B2B – business-to-business – media companies and information companies that are providing the critical data content that drives the global economy. To all these companies, these issues are critically important to continue to maintain their business, to serve their customers, to identify new partners, and to grow.

KENNEALLY: Tell us about some of the commitments that you and SIIA have made regarding these important points. It touches on the organizational policies you have, the members' experience, and so forth.

JOSEPH: That's exactly right. We strongly believe that it's one thing for me to appear on your show and speak in the media about the importance of this, but we have to walk the walk. We can't just talk the talk. We have to set the example not only for our members, but for the communities in which we work and in which we engage. So we recently worked with our board of directors to lay out a plan to firm our commitment to improving our outcomes on diversity, equity, and inclusion. There are a variety of elements that sort of go to the way we operate, the way we recruit and retain talent, and the way we present ourselves.

For example, we're in the process of identifying metrics for our events. We produce a lot of conferences and other events, and we want to make sure that those events truly represent the diversity of the communities which we operate in and represent. So we're taking a close look at – how do you measure that in a meaningful way and show progress?

We're looking at the way we hire and the way we recruit talent. Are we reaching out to a diverse community to really broaden the net, so to speak, so we attract diverse talent from all walks of life – again, ethnicity, gender identity, political affiliation, etc.?

And even looking, as we look at our board of directors and the way we structure our volunteer leadership to ensure that, again, we're bringing in a diverse array of voices to the table. So it's a commitment not only to speak out about and to represent our industry, but



to engage ourselves and make sure that we as an organization are doing the same things that we're asking others to do.

KENNEALLY: And it all comes down to something that will sound very familiar to your members, which is, it's about data.

JOSEPH: That's exactly right. I think one of the difficult things in the past about DEI or ESG has been collecting that data. Data is our lifeblood. In fact, data and content is what unites all those diverse markets that I mentioned earlier. We're all about the information industry that drives the global economy. So we need to use that data to drive better outcomes. The trick is making sure that it's accurate data and that it's the appropriate data and that we're using the right measuring sticks.

One of the challenges that we have in some parts of our industry is that the current pool for diverse talent is relatively small. So we need to set a metric not only for improving the outcomes with the existing talent pool, what exists, but driving more talent – again, working with STEM programs to encourage them to engage in technology and fill that pipeline so that we have a broader pool to draw from.

KENNEALLY: Jeff Joseph, president of Washington-based SIIA, thanks so much for joining me on the program today.

JOSEPH: It was a true pleasure. Thanks for your focus on this important issue.

KENNEALLY: Our co-producer and recording engineer is Jeremy Brieske of Burst Marketing. You can subscribe to this program wherever you go for podcasts and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for joining me, and see you again soon for another Velocity of Content podcast from CCC.

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