

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

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Shomari Wade ([00:14](#)):

Hello, my name is Shomari Wade, a government contract shareholder based in Greenberg Traurig's, Washington, DC office. Welcome to our second episode of the GT Client Spotlight Series. The goal of the series is to highlight our clients who have diverse and interesting backgrounds and give them an opportunity to discuss their careers, their lives, things that interest them and make them tick.

([00:38](#)):

Our esteemed guests today are from a phenomenal company, Indelible Solutions based in Tallahassee, Florida. Jasmyne Henderson serves as vice president of legislative affairs and John Thornton, the Chief legal Officer. Indelible is a national management consulting firm based in Tallahassee providing regulatory compliance, emergency management, transportation infrastructure, healthy human services and technology solutions to public and private sector organizations. It is also one of the fastest growing minority owned management consulting firms in the country, with revenue topping \$70 million in 2022 and approximately 150 employees. Beyond the impressive growth and skill set, the organization is committed to giving back to the communities that they serve.

([01:23](#)):

Two of its co-founders, Josh Hay and Mike White are graduates of Florida A&M University, where they've established a \$250,000 scholarship endowment for their alma mater's business school. Jasmyne leads Indelible's government affairs efforts at the state, local and federal level. She's been listed by the National Bar Association's 40 under 40 Nation's Best Advocates, as well as a rising star by Florida Politics Influence Magazine and a 2020 International Women's Week Outstanding Young Female Lawyer Honoree. Jasmyne holds her undergraduate degree from the University of Florida, Masters of Science from Florida A&M and JD from Florida State University College of Law.

([02:03](#)):

John serves as Indelible's lead in-house counsel, where he provides solutions to a range of issues while also building and operationalizing the company's legal processes to complement its various business functions. Before joining Indelible, John practiced at two international law firms as well as the boutique litigation firm practice, and also served as a clerk to the Honorable Donald Graham of the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida. John earned his undergrad at the University of Florida and JD from the University of Miami.

([02:34](#)):

As a point of personal privilege, I'll say at the outset, I've always enjoyed working with you and your team. To a person, you're all top-notch and I personally love what you guys have achieved, what you're about, and it's been a real honor to get to know you both over the years. So after a fairly lengthy introduction, I'll be quiet now and ask you some questions. I'm always curious how clients develop the concept of their company and identified opportunity. I understand the two co-founders, Josh Hay and Mike White got their start working with the Divine Nine in a large accounting firm. How did they pivot to working with the government?

John Thornton ([03:07](#)):

That's a great question, Shomari. Indelible was founded in 2018 by Michael White and Joshua Hay. The partnership originated, like you mentioned, with a contract in state government after Josh and Mike had been serving nonprofit organizations that included the Divine Nine. Jose, who's now an owner of the company, along with a gentleman named Jerome, provided Josh and Mike the opportunity to partner with a prominent brand and a strategic partner in a large big four accounting firm.

[\(03:33\)](#):

The initial contract that Indelible partnered with was on a matter involving the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and from that initial contract, Josh and Mike realized the opportunity to scale and become more intentional about the growth of the firm. And that brings us to today, where Indelible has four target markets, emergency management, health solutions, IT advisory solutions, and transportation and infrastructure solutions.

Shomari Wade [\(03:57\)](#):

Thanks, Sean. That's really incredible and particularly how they identified an opportunity early on and double what it is. So Jasmyne, over to you. What would you identify as a pivotal moment in Indelible growth and what was it?

Jasmyne Henderson [\(04:10\)](#):

I would identify the pivotal moment in our growth as the pandemic. The pandemic provided a unique opportunity for firms like us to really get involved in the process because there was so much money flowing down to state governments from the federal government for things like COVID vaccinations and Homeowners Assistance Fund. With these particular projects, they had an eye for social equity. You wanted to make sure that you were providing vaccinations to minority populations and rural populations, and with the Homeowners Assistance Fund, you wanted to make sure that you were providing these mortgage repayments to people of a certain socioeconomic status.

[\(04:52\)](#):

So because of our background with agencies within Florida and Virginia and states like that, we were given the opportunity to do not only the administration of the program, but the outreach of the program to reach these specific populations. So that really spurred a lot of our growth and enabled us to reach a lot of different governments and state agencies that we previously weren't working with. But I would say that's certainly the pivotal moment.

Shomari Wade [\(05:19\)](#):

It's interesting how, even in the wake of all that uncertainty and chaos around the COVID, again, you all were able to leverage your relationships in a way that was so impactful.

[\(05:30\)](#):

All right, John, so I mentioned in your intro your clerkship and your time with international law firms. So I'm curious what surprised you most as you transitioned from private practice into being the chief legal officer at Indelible?

John Thornton [\(05:42\)](#):

I think two different things really capture the biggest surprises about the transition from private practice to being an Indelible CLO. So the first would be going from having 15 to 20 clients with one or two matters, to having one client with 40 to 50 matters at any point in time and having to manage those

matters in a strategic way. Because you're no longer looking to work with multiple different people in the sense that you're not working with a lot of in-house councils at 15 to 20 different firms.

[\(06:12\)](#):

Now I'm working with business people on the business side, I'm working with our owners, our CEO, other C-suite executives, all the way down to our junior associates who may have questions that are impactful and integral to their engagements. So I think that change has been surprising.

[\(06:29\)](#):

Something else that I find, I don't want to say I was surprised by it, but how you handle it can be surprising. And I think it's important to think about is from the inside, how you now manage outside counsel, manage expectations with them, how you request they manage expectations with you. Everything from the deliverable work product to what I think we all care about but don't necessarily talk about, which is the invoicing and the billing. I think that's important. So I think those two things were the most surprising parts about the transition.

Shomari Wade [\(06:57\)](#):

Jasmyne, you have a legal background as well, so maybe this same question for you. I know you spent time in private practice as well, but I know that having experience and opportunities to work with the business folks, this is a different pace, it's a different perspective. What sort of surprised you when you joined Indelible from a legal perspective?

Jasmyne Henderson [\(07:15\)](#):

What surprised me the most from a legal perspective about Indelible was simply just the management of all of the different interests that we had going on. So of course you want to make sure that you're timely in responding to things, making sure you're getting contracts out as quickly as possible, but doing it in a way that protects the firm. And so our firm moves at such a quick pace. We may get a call from a subcontractor for an engagement that starts tomorrow, and we have to make sure that all of the legal side is wrapped up tight.

[\(07:51\)](#):

So that was just getting used to that pace. I think like John said, when you're practicing on a case standpoint, you can kind of control the flow. You file your documents, you know you have a certain amount of time to respond, you have a certain amount of time to do discovery, but our partners are never going to be like, "Okay, well we want to start this engagement in Virginia tomorrow, so take these 30 days to review the legal documents." So just the pace of it was definitely new and exciting.

Shomari Wade [\(08:22\)](#):

I get that a lot and for what it's worth, even for our very talented but younger associates, I try to preach the same thing where we have to make a business friendly work product. No one really needs, especially you or John, don't need an 18-page treatise on some esoteric part of Anglo-American law, you just need a practical guide to make an informed business decision. And that's sort of the disconnect sometimes I found between the legal thinking and the business thinking because of course the business opportunity is there and you need to make sure that your client, the C-suite executive could make a good, quick decision, is also informed and balanced and so yeah, no, that's great advice.

[\(08:59\)](#):

I guess Jasmyne, I'll bounce back to you. You mentioned the work you all have done in Florida and Virginia, but what project or accomplishment from Indelible are you most proud of or excited about either previous or moving forward? I know you guys have some really exciting growth opportunities as well.

Jasmyne Henderson ([09:16](#)):

Accomplishment that I'm most proud of is what we do with Indelible gifts, which is the annual event that we hold to provide resources, provide Christmas gifts, provide clothes to families in need and areas that we've worked. So for instance, we did it in Lee County, I think it was not this last year, but the year before, which was devastated by a hurricane and we were able to provide thousands of families with resources. So that's the thing that I am most proud of that we do as a firm.

([09:47](#)):

Project-wise, what I'm most excited about is the growth that we've seen in the New York market. That's a really new market for us and we've really been working hard and penetrating and I'm excited for some of the upcoming opportunities that we have there as well as the federal market. So Shomari, we worked a lot with you to get our federal compliance in tip-top shape and we recently did just a business development session internally to kind of get our business development side in order. So we have some opportunities with some backdrops as well as partners that we're looking at Tribal and ADA partners to do some really good projects. So I'm looking forward to the growth that we have in the federal market as well.

Shomari Wade ([10:30](#)):

Yeah, that's awesome. And from my perspective as well, it's always fun seeing the new projects you guys have. I learn a lot and it's fun. You guys have been a great partner and look forward to growing with you in that respect.

([10:42](#)):

John, speaking of compliance, this is a good segue to the chief legal officer. Question one, what do you typically look for when you hire outside counsel? Either a small firm or large firm, just sort of what sort of jumps out at you and also the age-old question for in-house counsel is what does keep you up at night when you're thinking of compliance and obligations and all that good stuff?

John Thornton ([11:02](#)):

I think there are two primary things that I'm looking for, which is substance and mobility competency, right? Expertise in a particular field and how they work well with others, how they work well with me, how they work with their team, is their team reflective of our company and its ideals and its values? I think those are two things that are very important. Obviously nothing trumps competency, substantive expertise. That's why we pay what we do to outside counsel to receive that advisement, that counsel, but also we want to see that the folks on the other side, our partners on the outside, our outside counsel are reflective of Indelible and our values and that can be diversity in background, racial, ethnic, religious, experiential diversity and a commitment to improve the community around us. I think those are things that we look for.

([11:51](#)):

To your second question, what keeps me up at night? There's a lot of things that could keep a CLO or a GC up at night, but I think what you don't know. What's going on that you don't know about? Because I want to skate to where the hockey puck's going to be. I don't want to skate to where it is, but you don't

always know where it's going. So I think what you don't know can keep us up at night and that's why we try to foster a culture of if you see something, say something, escalate it, we can resolve any problem if we get ahead of it. We're very confident in our abilities and the abilities of our outside counsel. But what I don't know keeps me up at night at this point.

[\(12:26\)](#):

But obviously you, Shomari, have been a great resource and partner to the firm, so you've done a great job of allaying a lot of those concerns for us.

Shomari Wade ([12:33](#)):

That's kind, you're humble, but to your credit, you and your team have built a really great job of creating a culture of compliance and it's been infused in the organization and that reflects the success that y'all have had.

[\(12:45\)](#):

Next question I have, this is something that's sort of near and dear to my heart as well, is that you guys have been a huge supporter of FAMU where the co-founders Josh and Mike attended as well as other HBCU, like your thoughts on why the skills that HBCU grads bring to industry are so important and why? Maybe I'll start with John and then pivot over to Jasmyne for the same question.

John Thornton ([13:06](#)):

So full disclosure, I did not attend an HBCU, but I've had the pleasure and the privilege of working with a bunch of our employees who do, and I think there's such a rich cultivation of ambition, of hunger to succeed, to learn, to become a master of their craft. And I don't want to say that that doesn't come from other universities as well, but it's something that I think I've particularly seen of HBCU grads and there's that comradery, that relationship they all have amongst each other that you tend to envy a little bit, right? We have a bunch of HBCU grads at our company. I tend to be not one of the only Gators at our company, but it's a little quieter, right? People are much more excited about their universities when they have graduated from HBCU, and I admire that. That's something to be heralded and reprised. That would be something that I appreciate about our HBCU grads and our alumni and our company.

Jasmyne Henderson ([13:59](#)):

Of course, like John said, I went to UF undergrad, but I did get a grad degree from FAMU and have a family full of HBCU graduates and attended a lecture recently just about the value that HBCU brings to students. And one of the things that they talked about is the fact that you are able to get an education from people who are from the same background as you have the same interest as you, and you are able to get real life experience based on the fact that you have these people at your fingertips. And so the education and the quality of education that you received at HBCUs, I think better prepares you to become a business leader in the industry.

[\(14:47\)](#):

And John really talked about work ethic. I think work ethic is another thing, there's just something different about, and swag is not the right word, but the approach that HBCU graduates have. And so I think it's not only enriched our culture, but enriched the drive that we bring to the projects that we do.

Shomari Wade ([15:10](#)):

I love that and thank you guys. And for me personally, I'm a third generation HBCU grad, and I found sort of the same though. I love the camaraderie and sort of the work ethic and the foundation that has

provided me. And I also love my other alma mater Tulane, go Wave. Again, I applaud what you all do and how you've just created that a great pipeline for HBCU alums.

[\(15:31\)](#):

What are some advice that you would give for people of color, young people and other historically disadvantaged groups looking to start a business or even be being your shoes, either as a government contractor or again, just generally?

John Thornton ([15:44](#)):

I think this applies to everyone, but I think particularly to the people, the groups you just mentioned, is to dedicate yourself to hard work. Out-work, everyone. There are so many things in our careers in the world that we can't control. You have to control and become an expert at the things you can. And I think the one thing you can control is yourself and how hard you work and how much you dedicate yourself to your craft, whether it be government contracting, practicing law, any other form of entrepreneurship, any other industry in general. Whether right or wrong, I was always raised, and I'm biracial as a background. Both my parents were very aware of where the world was and where it is, and they always taught us to see the positive in everything, but they never wanted us to not be realistic. And they always said, "You need to work four times as hard to be twice as good, to possibly get that same recognition."

[\(16:38\)](#):

And I'm sure that's something a lot of people hear coming from minority backgrounds, people of color, historically disadvantaged groups. And that's not to say that everyone should work hard. We all should, right? I think that applies to everyone, but I think that when that's something that you hear over and over and over again, the same way when you hear you can be anything you want in this world, work hard, you can do anything right? You start to believe it.

[\(16:59\)](#):

And when you internalize that and you start working hard and you set a goal for yourself, I mean the places you'll go, nothing can hold you back. You shoot for the stars, you'll fall in the sky as they say. So that's always been something that I've taken near and dear, and I have two little boys and I try to teach them at a young age, "Just try your best. Daddy doesn't care how well you do at this age, but give it your all. You can try your best." So work hard, grind it out, have that grit, that tenacity, and you'll be shocked just how strong and successful anyone can be when doing that.

Jasmyne Henderson ([17:31](#)):

Definitely one move confidently through whatever industry that you're going into. A lot of times we get into these industries, and if you're in an industry like ours, there's not a lot of firms that look like you. There's not a lot of people that have been in some of the rooms that you want to go in. And so there's sometimes this mystique around the process and you think that there's some secret sauce, but there's not. You just have to move confidently and like John said, give hard work to whatever you're doing.

[\(18:03\)](#):

And to that end, find mentors and people, and not necessarily people that just look like you, but people that are doing the things that you envision yourself doing. Talk to them and figure out, "Okay, what is it that you did? What is it that you did early in your career prepare you for where you are now?" I've had some really good conversations with people who are older who are like, "This is exactly what I did. This is the blueprint, and these are some of the things. You don't have to do everything that I did, but these are some of the things that I think that would help." So one, never feel like there's some mystique that

you don't belong. Move confidently through whatever you're doing. Two, work hard and three, find a mentor.

Shomari Wade ([18:43](#)):

Guys, that's phenomenal advice. And I feel the same way. It's about hard work, being responsive, being timely, being excellent at what you do, and walking in confidence and not of having that I call imposter syndrome. We belong here, but we have to work hard to show that. But that advice, to the extent there are aspiring attorneys or aspiring entrepreneurs listening, I think just listen to what John and Jasmyne just said.

Jasmyne Henderson ([19:11](#)):

Also, know your value. Don't ever let people take advantage of the hard work that you're giving and not give you opportunities to grow. So measure your value. Know your value and advocate for yourself.

Shomari Wade ([19:23](#)):

Yeah, you're right. Humility only gets you so far a little bit. You have to have to sort of advertise and market, which some of the accomplishments that you've had, I'm learning that. Some closing thoughts. I'm just curious, what do you think sets Indelible apart? You've had such phenomenal growth over the past five, six years. What do you think the secret sauce is between the co-founders and you guys and the C-suite? What makes you all unique to the markets in Florida, Virginia and New York, federal side? You guys definitely do stand out, but in the best way.

John Thornton ([19:52](#)):

I think we're nimble. We're a nimble company. There's strength and weakness in all companies of all sizes. Some of the larger companies can't move as fast, can't target smaller projects that end up being larger projects. There are business thresholds, there are business realities to being a massive company that may prohibit you from going after some really interesting, impactful projects and being able to ramp up quickly to do so.

([20:17](#)):

And I think one of the things that makes Indelible the best company in our field, especially for our size, is how quickly we can ramp up for a project. And I think what's indicative of that is what Jasmyne briefly mentioned before is when some of the hurricanes hit Florida's southwest coast and I mean there was just total devastation, so sad, and they're slowly moving, rebuilding and improving that area. But when Indelible was called to action, it was quickly able to ramp up and seize the moment to help others.

([20:54](#)):

It was able to ramp up to help the state of Florida and to help its citizens. And I think that's something that not all other firms have. Some people have, they say the right stuff, like you said, the secret sauce. I think that's our right stuff, right? We're able to so quickly ramp up for a project, for an engagement and to deploy our resources, human and otherwise to assist people in need. And I think that's not something everyone can do and do well, and I think we are pretty darn good at it. And I think that's what sets us apart from other management consulting companies in our field.

Jasmyne Henderson ([21:33](#)):

The fact that we are so nimble and are able to respond quickly is definitely a competitive advantage. And the fact that we are definitely going to find creative ways to get things done. I mentioned earlier in

the pandemic and outreach and there's a lot of management consulting firms that would just do a plug and play approach to a lot of the things that we were doing, but we wanted to be creative in the ways that we targeted the people that we were trying to reach, to make sure that we were able to effectuate whatever assignment was given to us. So I think that creativity and that responsiveness is the hard.

Shomari Wade ([22:09](#)):

I'm only on the outside looking in, but I can attest to the fact that you guys are very quick. It is fast-paced, sophisticated work, and you guys are definitely, like John said, very nimble but very efficient as well.

([22:22](#)):

Last question I have really is again, from your vantage point, what do you see the industry looking like in the next 10 years, 15 years? And by that it means the management consulting, that high level value-added piece that you all are so good at, and where do you see the industry sort of growing? There's a lot of thought pieces about AI and whatever else is sort of going on now, but I don't think anything can replace thoughtful value-added advisory services that you all have and not to mention you're so many different verticals. Hold a crystal ball, see where you all, what do you envision?

Jasmyne Henderson ([22:56](#)):

I won't speak for the market overall, I'll just speak for Indelible, and I would definitely say in 10 years I see us being an international firm, that's what our goal is. We do have four verticals that we work with now, but as you said, as AI grows in different areas, we will respond to those. And so just making sure that we continue to maintain our reputation for excellence, that we move into the federal market and that we develop international clients.

John Thornton ([23:29](#)):

Just to build off of what Jasmyne shared, because we are management consultants with a government focus, at least for our company. I think what I'd like the industry to look like in the next 10 to 20 years would be for state and federal governments, local, state and local government municipalities to continue to realize the efficiencies of management consultants performing some of the work for them when needed to maximize value for their citizens. I think there are certain types of projects that lend themselves to the outside management consulting space as to being kept within the government structure. And I think that sending via the competitive bidding process or otherwise, depending on each state's law, creating a space where outside consultants can maximize that taxpayer value, provide excellent deliverable work. I hope to see that continue to happen. I think that's where I'd like to see it happen.

([24:28](#)):

I think we all realize there can be inefficiencies with state and federal government. We obviously hope they're minimized, but I think that management consultants can assist with that process, can assist in maximizing efficiency amongst the state and federal governments. I mean continue to work with them as a partner. I think there's a lot of value in working with our state, local and our federal partners and other companies. And I think that I'd like to see us and the industry continue to do that. Collaboration, maximizing value for everyone and just making everything work just a little better than it does now.

Shomari Wade ([25:00](#)):

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I have every confidence that you guys will meet those goals in 10 years and then some. So it's been great watching you all's growth, and again, what you're about, not only just on the bottom line, but also like Jasmyne mentioned, the Indelible gives efforts. It's just really fun. So congratulations to you all, and again, I can't wait to see what you all have in store for us moving forward, but congratulations on everything. Any last insights or advice we share with the audience before we close out?

John Thornton ([25:31](#)):

Shomari, I'd like to say thank you again for inviting us on. This has been a great experience. I hope we get to work with anyone that is listening, whether it be a governmental entity or another management consulting company. Indelible is a great firm. We have our processes, we want to learn from others, we want to share what we can with others as well and to continue to grow this space. A rising tide truly rises all boats and we want to continue to be a part of that.

Jasmyne Henderson ([25:57](#)):

Thank you. I also appreciate the opportunity, Shomari for us to join, and I really appreciate the questions. I think a lot of it speaks to not only what we do at Indelible in our work, but also the culture that we try to create within the firm and the impact that we try to have on the communities in which we serve. I think that our service is very important to us, and it's the way that we can ensure that as we continue to grow our populations and grow business leaders that look like us, that we are empowering communities to do the same.

([26:35](#)):

So whether it's our communities or whether it's our partnership with HBCUs, we want to continue to grow professionals and enable them to be able to enter the industry. And we feel like that will enable us to go even further in our strategic goals. So I appreciate you all and your insightfulness and your thoughtfulness that you put into the questions, and I look forward to hearing feedback from anybody who listens to the podcast.

Shomari Wade ([27:00](#)):

Thank you, Jasmyne. And thank you John. Really appreciate your time. I know you have a lot on your plates, and so thank you for carving time out in your busy days to join us on the GT Client Diverse Spotlight.

([27:10](#)):

I'd like to thank our listeners for listening to this episode, and please be in the lookout for future GT Client Spotlight Series episodes.