

# People of Pure: Meet Jason A. Riley



Sure, you can tell a lot about a company through the headlines it makes—earnings reports, reviews, and stock prices—but Jason A. Riley, Pure Storage’s VP of Talent Management and Chief Diversity Officer believes an organization’s values tell an equally important story. Leading from the front means having diverse teams who drive better outputs, an environment that promotes learning and accountability, and leaders who set an example.

Below, get to know one of Pure’s newest team members, the work his team is doing, and how he hopes to shape Pure’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program in the years to come.

## Jason A. Riley’s Path from IT to DEI

Many careers aren’t a straight line, and for Jason, a valuable experience early in his career led to his pivot from IT to DEI.

*“My background is actually in computer science/engineering,” he shares. But interactions in that role, not projects, are what ultimately took him in a new direction.*



**“I learned that while technology is complex, there’s nothing more complicated than people. They can be more complicated than any piece of software or equipment.”**

---

## **Jason A. Riley**

VP Talent Management & Chief Diversity Officer, Human Resources

Cracking *that* code—of interpersonal connections, homogeneity on teams, the talent agenda, and the importance of leadership—became his passion.

### **Diverse Teams Drive Results**

*“My experiences led me to realize that, when it comes to an organization’s ability to achieve their goals and targets, leadership, the talent agenda, and DE&I are **key enablers**. They are directly connected.”*

He saw the challenge (and opportunity) to improve DEI in order to truly set organizations up for success. It sparked a question: “How do we sort out diversity and inclusion when they’re such key enablers—when they’re *this* connected to everyone’s success?”

*“Tech companies that seem to be leading from the front, and the companies that are showcasing innovation as the lifeblood of their organization—their teams are diverse.” – Jason A. Riley*

He notes that most companies are combating homogeneity on teams. “It’s easy to try and surround yourself with like-minded people. But the reality is, the product of a homogenous team won’t be as dynamic, fruitful, or high quality.” He says the data shows more diverse teams mean better output. “Tech companies that seem to be leading from the front, and the companies that are showcasing innovation as the lifeblood of their organization, their teams are diverse.”

### **The Pure Values That Stand Out Today**

*“So far I’ve seen the value of teamwork consistently on display here at Pure. It’s the one I see the most, hands down.”*

For example, during a recent ratings calibration training, Jason witnessed [Coz](#), our co-founder, jump in and join his team to co-lead a training project. “This training ensures we drive fair and equitable rating distribution for the entire enterprise, which as we all know, drives compensation decisions for the entire company. To work in an organization where the founder is still around is one thing, but to see him driving that, like an HR leader, was impressive.”

## Why Innovation in DEI Is All about Balance

When we asked Jason what innovation in DEI means to him, he notes success hinges on balance. “You have to balance what people value the most with what the business is ultimately trying to achieve. You can’t over-index on one or the other, focusing on what individuals want over what the organization needs, and vice versa. There has to be a balance.”

That requires adopting a growth mindset and being a good listener. “The last thing you want to do is drive hard on something people don’t see value in, or worse, discontinue something that they do value to make room for something they don’t see value in.”

Innovation in DEI is also about finding new ways to break old barriers, which isn’t easy to do. “I think innovation, when it comes to DEI, truly comes down to the number of attempts you make to break barriers on traditional challenges in non-traditional ways.” [The People Report](#) within [Pure’s first-ever ESG Report](#) last year showcased what Pure has done so far, most notably with our Inclusive Leadership Index.

## Why the Inclusive Leadership Index Sets Pure Apart

*“A leadership academy is a big deal to have in an organization—most companies don’t. We’re trying to develop quality leaders of tomorrow, and one way we’re doing that is strengthening our diversity and inclusion muscle.” - Jason A. Riley*

Launched in 2022, the Inclusive Leadership Index helps to drive DEI accountability with VPs and above. It’s an innovative and empowering approach to driving leader action around diversity, equity, and inclusion, enabling leaders to understand their current standards compared with their peers, across factors:

*“It’s meant to recognize role model DEI behaviors among our leaders. We’re going to share results in early Q1 of FY’24 to see who the top scorers are. Then, every year, leaders who attain role model results according to the Index will be recognized, and we’ll share their best practices with all other leaders in the company.”*

## Looking Ahead: A Growing Focus on URG Communities and Stopping Attrition Where It Starts

When we asked what he’s most looking forward to, he noted, “Personally, I want to learn more about how we can accelerate the development of our underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (URG). If we think we need to see more URGs in executive-level positions, we need to ask those tough questions to get to meaningful root causes.” He says that’s where the most effective countermeasures come from.

Then, he wants to help amplify employee value propositions. “I want to ensure we’re answering questions like ‘What’s in it for me as an employee?’ but across all communities and walks of life.” Value propositions

are directly connected to engagement, and engagement is a key to reducing attrition—an issue many organizations have faced in recent years.

*“If your engagement is moving in the right direction, that means you’re combating attrition. It’s a big retention play.”*

But there’s more to retention, Jason says, and it’s something the Leadership Index can support. “We recognize people leave managers, not companies. For people managers, especially, we want to help them connect with employees who are different from them—in ability, gender, etc. The Leadership Index is one way to proactively minimize or neutralize that.”

[Learn about more of our amazing people of Pure!](#)

## Addressing DEI on a Global Scale

Pure is a global company, which means what works in the US may not work in every region or community. It’s a complex issue, but his team is rising to the occasion.

*“When it comes to different cultures and different regions, the key is setting expectations for core, common KPIs or metrics, then leaving room for creativity to bring those things to life in local environments.” He says core KPIs could be representation, development goals and targets, promotion targets—things that, regardless of where you are in the world, are easy to interpret and easy for us to focus on. Then, our ERG’s and internal champions can help develop regional programs to support them. “That’s how you create a good recipe for diversity on a global scale,” he says.*

## Jason A. Riley’s advice to those who want to learn more about DEI

*“Honestly, my advice has less to do with training and standing up programs and more about learning the basics—having the courage to ask why things aren’t further along, and then understand the root causes that deserve countermeasures. The one thing you have to tell yourself: You’ll never know it all. You’re never finished learning.”*

He also walks the walk outside of work, where he encourages those closest to him to keep learning, too. For the past six years, Jason founded and funds a family scholarship program, where each cousin, from elementary school through college, has the chance to compete for education funds. “I choose a topic, and everyone submits a written essay and delivers a presentation,” he says. “All in the name of two of my great aunts and one of my great uncles who were professional educators themselves”.

His personal interests also reflect a respect for those who push to be their best selves. Hailing from Indianapolis, home of the Indy 500, Jason has always nurtured a love for motorsports, Indy Car, NASCAR, and Formula One—including rooting for his favorite driver, Lewis Hamilton.

He’s bringing that competitive spirit to Pure.

*“I’m not just passionate about this, I want to help us lead from the front. It’s about partnership and having the courage to admit what you don’t know and learn from one another. I don’t know everything*

*there is to know about this, but I'm passionate, and I'm learning."*



[See more People of Pure interviews](#)