

Amanda Clarke

My name's Amanda Clarke. I'm the current director and chief of staff for cybersecurity and IT. I work for Bharat Amin at the Corporate Office.

So I went to school in Kentucky, grew up in Kentucky all my life. I started playing basketball when I was in sixth grade, and it carried me through all the way through high school, through college. Actually, as an eighth grader, I was invited up to play on the varsity. I took on a starting leadership role on that basketball team, as the starting point guard as a sophomore. Played in lots of tournaments and championships. Basketball just gave me that foundation to really learn who I was as a person, how to build relationships. It was great.

Had a great high school career and had scholarship offers, and I ended up a walk-on position at University of Louisville. I actually turned down scholarships to stay really close to home. A Division I school where we flew everywhere, the opportunity was amazing. Played that first year of Louisville as a walk-on, then I transferred to Kentucky Wesleyan, a smaller DII school.

So my undergrad from Kentucky Wesleyan College in Kentucky is accounting and a minor in business administration. 17 years at the company, but the first three and a half or so of that was in accounting and finance, rates and forecasting. And then I shifted my career over into the IT space, where I've been for the last 15 years.

So one of the things I've learned over my career is sometimes you have to have other people and relationships that see the talent in you, as well. From an early age, from playing sports in the background, I've had relationships and mentors who have helped me see potential in myself that maybe I didn't see, and the transition to IT was one of those situations where I had a good friend, a mentor, who said, "Hey, I see something that you may be good at."

The position I played in basketball was the point guard. So if you're familiar with basketball, the point guard really is the general or the leader on the court. And for me, my coaches taught me, not only do you need to know your job, but you also need to know the job of the players on the floor, and really set that tone, set the pace, take the responsibility for making sure things are going well on the court. And as I go through my career, I see myself naturally playing that role in the positions that I've been.

I think community is very important to me personally, and to us as a company at HII. I think that's how you give back. I am a volunteer coach. I help with son's soccer team, daughter's rec basketball league. My husband and I both coached together for several years, but just like I learned those skills, it's not always just the basketball court, it's the skills that you learn for life. It's the lessons that you learned with teamwork, and responsibility, and hard work. And learning that grit. Somebody has to push you and challenge you, and sometimes it's easy to give up. And if you have a coach, or a leader, or a mentor in your life, at an early age, you learn how to persevere through those things and the challenges, just like, you know, that we're doing today, the pandemic.

And I think as a company, and I think our cyber and IT organization with the switch to remote work, we really showed that that's where you persevere. And I think the foundation of that is the relationships that you build.

My job is to connect the team, and I bring the team together. In basketball, we talk about what plays we're running. In a career, we talk about what presentations, what messaging, how we are communicating. We're accepting of our differences. And I think that's what makes us special, is as a team, we're different. We bring talent, skills to the table, and that's what inclusion is, that we're all part of a team. And if you appreciate that, then you're going to be open to hearing what someone else has to say that may be different. My experiences of growing up in Kentucky versus someone else, it's okay to be different.

From sixth grade through college, that was really my role. I was a point guard. I was used to passing the ball. And I wasn't the scorer, and I was okay with that. I enjoyed seeing the success of my team. That's how I see my career. I want to be that team player that can help us as a team. I might not be the one out front, but I'll be glad to be the one to pass you the ball, and pass you what you need to be successful.