



Karen Blackett

BUSINESS LEADER

Most senior leaders inherit organisations that talk fluently about culture and inclusion and deliver very little of either. The board wants growth, the workforce wants meaning, and the gap between the two has widened since the pandemic. Leaders need someone who has closed that gap inside a FTSE-scale business, with the numbers to prove it.

Karen Blackett is a former UK President of WPP and Diageo non-executive director who helps boards turn culture and inclusion commitments into measurable operating outcomes.

Karen Blackett's 2026 Biography

AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

Why organisations work with Karen Blackett

- She ran WPP in the UK during the COVID turnaround, responsible for around US\$2 billion of revenue and 13,000 people, which gives her authority on what cultural change at FTSE scale actually requires.
- During her five years as CEO of MediaCom UK, ethnic diversity moved from 11% to 19% and women in senior management reached 44%, the kind of attributable shift most leadership talks cannot reference.
- As the UK government's Race Equality Business Champion under the Race at Work Charter, she has worked across sectors on the specific mechanics of progression, not the rhetoric of inclusion.
- Her current Diageo board seat and her co-founder role at the Black Equity Organisation give her a live view of how the same questions land in a FTSE 10 boardroom and in national civil society.

KAREN'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Change Management
- Corporate Culture
- Culture Transformation
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Future of Work
- Inclusive Leadership
- Marketing & Branding

Biography highlights

- Former UK President, WPP, with responsibility for around US\$2 billion of revenue and 13,000 people.
- Former CEO of MediaCom UK and CEO of GroupM UK; MediaCom named Campaign Agency of the Year in 2013 and 2014 under her leadership.
- Non-Executive Director, Diageo plc, since June 2022; member of the Nomination and Remuneration Committees.
- Non-Executive Director, Cabinet Office Board; previously UK Race Equality Business Champion under the Race at Work Charter.
- Co-founder, Black Equity Organisation (2021), alongside David Lammy, David Olusoga, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Ric Lewis and Dame Vivian Hunt.
- Chancellor of the University of Portsmouth, the first alumna to hold the position.
- Awarded CBE (2025) for services to Advertising and the Creative Industries; OBE (2014); first businesswoman to top the Powerlist.

LANGUAGES: English

Biography

Running a marketing services group of 13,000 people through a pandemic exposes whether a leader's cultural language is operational or decorative. WPP UK was Karen Blackett's brief for four years, with around US\$2 billion of revenue under her remit and a workforce that needed to be both held together and pushed forward. She came to the role after running MediaCom UK as CEO, where the agency was named Campaign Agency of the Year in 2013 and 2014.

The MediaCom record is the one she is most often asked about. Across her five years as CEO, ethnic diversity in the business moved from 11% to 19% and women in senior management reached 44%. Those numbers are unusual because they exist at all. Most senior leaders speaking on culture cannot point to a specific business they changed by a specific amount.

That track record is why government and boards now use her. She was appointed UK Race Equality Business Champion in 2018 by Prime Minister Theresa May, working through the Race at Work Charter with Business in the Community. She sits on the Cabinet Office Board as a Non-Executive Director, and on the Diageo board as a Non-Executive Director, where she is a member of the Nomination and Remuneration Committees.

In 2021 she co-founded the Black Equity Organisation with David Lammy, David Olusoga, Kwame Kwei-Armah, Ric Lewis and Dame Vivian Hunt, an independent national civil rights body for Black Britons. She was awarded an OBE in 2014 and a CBE in the 2025 King's New Year Honours. She was the first businesswoman to top the Powerlist of Britain's 100 most influential Black people, in 2015.

Key speaking topics

- Leadership at scale through periods of disruption
- Culture as an operating system, not a statement
- Inclusion as a measurable business outcome
- Board-level race equity and the Race at Work agenda
- Future of work in marketing and creative industries
- Brand, growth and consumer change

Ideal for

- CEO and board audiences considering how to make culture or inclusion commitments measurable
- CHROs, CPOs and group HR directors responsible for senior progression data
- Marketing and communications leadership teams in FTSE-scale businesses
- Networks and councils focused on Black leadership progression in UK corporates

Audience outcomes

- A board-level frame for treating culture as part of operating performance rather than a separate workstream.
- A specific worked example of how senior leadership composition changes when progression mechanics are redesigned.
- A clearer view of where Race at Work Charter commitments most often fail and what holds them in place.
- Sharper language for talking about inclusion in a contested external

environment without retreating to compliance speak.

Karen Blackett's Videos



Karen Blackett's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

	EUR	GBP	USD
Home Country	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Asia Pacific	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Europe	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Middle East & Africa	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
South America	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
United Kingdom	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
US East Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
US West Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Virtual	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000