

4,096 views | Nov 30, 2018, 04:48am

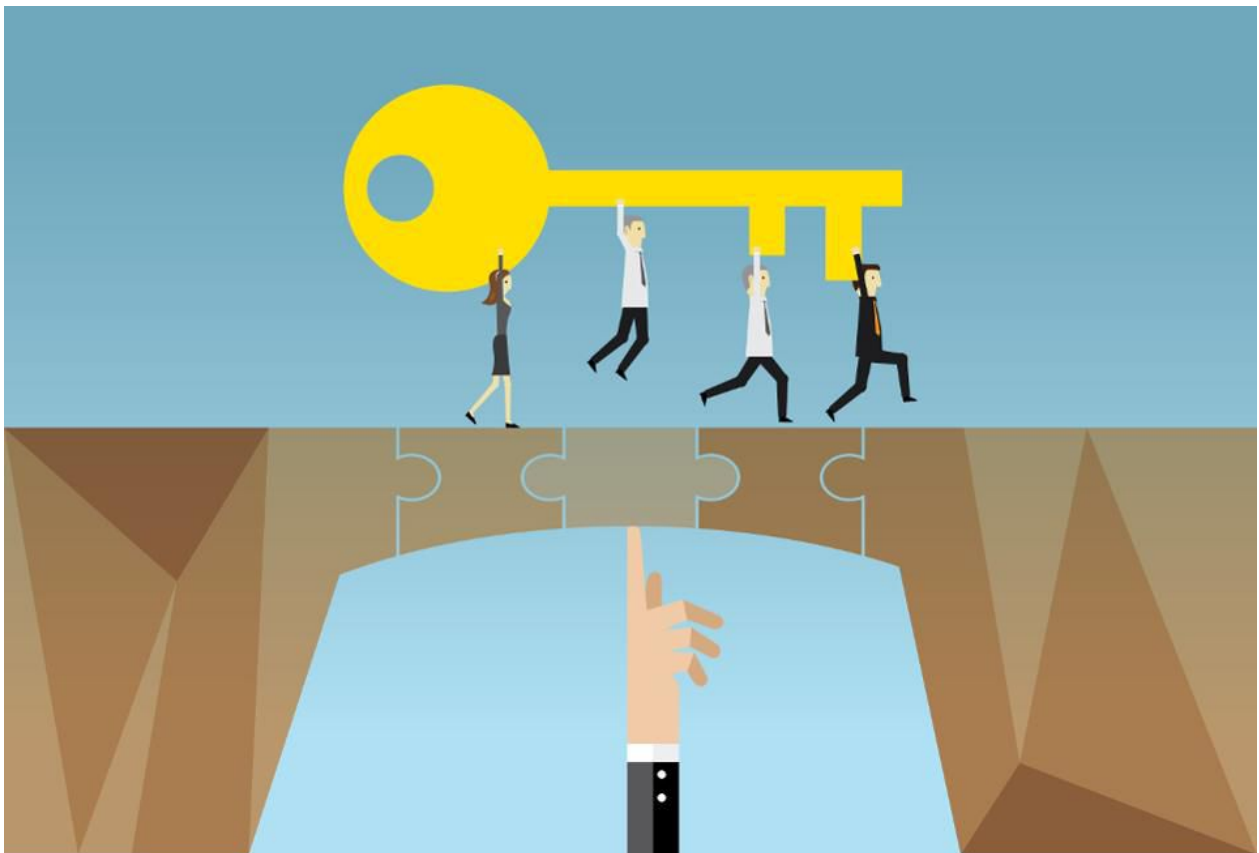
# Allyship - The Key To Unlocking The Power Of Diversity



**Sheree Atcheson** Contributor 

*Award-winning Diversity & Inclusion Leader*

It is no secret that the tech industry has reshaped how society lives – from ordering weekly groceries online, recording fitness goals, revolutionizing healthcare and everything in between. Technology is intrinsic to almost every single thing people do. With this in mind, the industry creating these ground-breaking solutions must represent the society which uses it so readily - currently, it does not.



Bridging the gap in technology GETTY

## Representation in technology

In a [report](#) released by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2016, it was outlined that white people are represented in industry at a higher rate in the tech sector's executive category than the rest of the private sector, at 83%—more than 15% higher than their representation in the professional category, which includes jobs like computer programming. Other groups are represented at significantly lower rates in the executive category than in the professional category, including African Americans (2% to 5.3%), Hispanics (3.1% to 5.3%), and Asian Americans (10.6% to 19.5%). Additionally, if we focus on gender, [less than 7% of tech professionals](#) in Europe are female.

The representation of those in [intersectional](#) communities is even lower. For example, between 2007 and 2015 [there has been a 13% decrease](#) in the number of black women professionals. Even though white women are now substantially more successful in reaching the executive level than all minority men or women, white men are still 47% more likely than white women to be executives.

To have the most successful and well-rounded tech industry, representation of marginalized groups in industry must improve. To invoke this change, the majority must help, support and advocate for the minority. If engaged correctly, allies hold the power and the key to stimulate positive change.

## **What is an ally?**

An ally is any person that actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.

Everyone has the ability to be an ally as privilege is [intersectional](#) - white women can be actionable allies to people of color, men can be allies to women, cis people can be allies to members of the LGBTQI+ community, able-bodied people can be allies to those with different abilities, economically privileged people can be allies to those who are not and so on.

## **What is allyship?**

[Allyship](#) is:

- a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people.
- not self-defined—work and efforts must be recognized by those you are seeking to ally with.
- an opportunity to grow and learn about ourselves, whilst building confidence in others.

### **Becoming actionable allies**

To be allies, words and action must be in sync. Words without actions are detrimental and work against changing the culture in technology.

To be a true ally, you should:

- Lift others up by advocating,
- Share growth opportunities with others,
- Not view venting as a personal attack,
- Recognize systematic inequalities and realize impact of **micro-aggressions**,
- Believe underrepresented people's experiences, and
- Most importantly – listen, support, self-reflect & change.

### **Small actions, big impact**

Allyship is a continual investment of time in supporting others, holding ourselves accountable when mistakes are made, apologizing and being prepared to rework the approach towards allyship as needs change.



Diverse teams have the ability to make full-bodied solutions for society GETTY

Through personal actions, a more inclusive environment can be fostered by:

- Becoming a sponsor – champion someone from an underrepresented community to support career growth and increase company retention. **Being a sponsor is different to being a mentor** – sponsoring is being actively involved in aiding someone’s career progression, mentoring is providing advice.
- Calling out inappropriate behavior – People in privileged positions have the ability to call out unacceptable behavior towards underrepresented people and be heard. Underrepresented people may not be comfortable raising issues due to a fear of backlash or risk of jeopardizing professional relationships.
- Tasking all employees with getting involved with diversity and inclusion related tasks – **embracing diversity & fostering an environment of inclusion is good for business**. Everyone should be involved. Do not assign this daunting task to underrepresented people only.
- Using inclusive language – Be aware of gendered terms, and use language which embraces all walks of people. For example, **using “partner”** instead

of gendered terms such as “girl/boyfriend” or “husband/wife” to be more inclusive of those in the LGBTQI+ community.

- Rolling out unconscious bias training regularly – Understand that unconscious, unchecked bias cannot and will not be fixed after one unconscious bias training session. This is a growing process and continued challenging of ourselves and peers must happen to aid growth and learning in this space.
- Trying different recruitment methods – To attract and retain different kinds of people, use different recruitment methods. Partner with organisations which actively push for equality in that space, be present at conferences, and reach out to underrepresented people for their honest feedback on where they would look for roles – listen to the people you are trying to reach.
- Recognizing privilege and use it to amplify underrepresented voices – Understanding and [recognizing privilege](#) can be a daunting and uncomfortable task. Having uncomfortable conversations with yourself, understanding the systematic and societal issues which may have played in your favor is eye opening and allows you to use this privilege to amplify those who do not have it.
- Following an array of voices – Learning and growth will not happen without being challenged. Follow different people and listen to them. Challenge yourself to cross-examine your bias after learning from different voices.

In conclusion, a true ally must regularly listen to those around them, adapt their thinking, rework what they believe to be correct & become comfortable being uncomfortable.

It can be a unique and challenging journey becoming and remaining an ally, but certainly one worth taking.

*I write about bottom-line benefits of embracing diversity within your organisation and how leaders can take impactful steps in making a difference. Follow me on [Twitter](#), or connect on [LinkedIn](#).*



**Sheree Atcheson** Contributor

---

Listed as one of the U.K's most influential women in technology, Sheree is an award-winning Diversity & Inclusion leader who is a global change maker in pushing for ... **Read More**

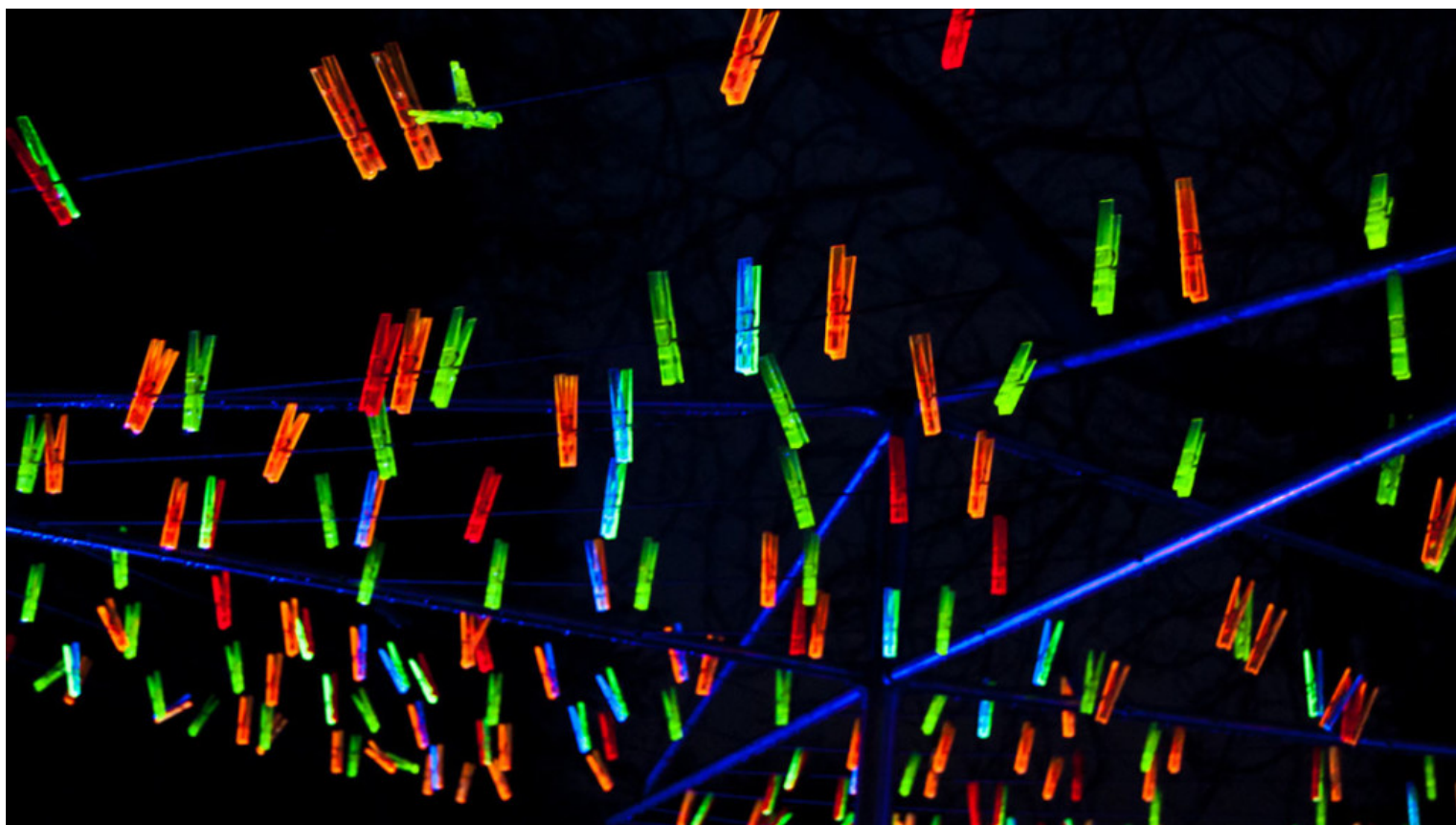
---

GENDER

# Corporate Diversity Initiatives Should Include White Men

by Avivah Wittenberg-Cox

SEPTEMBER 06, 2016



“There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, ‘Morning, boys. How’s the water?’ And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, ‘What the hell is water?’”

So starts David Foster Wallace's famous commencement speech. It is a beautiful summary of the core challenge for inclusion work. Dominance is invisible to the dominant group, and extremely visible to everyone outside it. In other words, fish don't see the water they're swimming in.

Thus most of the work of diversity and inclusion approaches in companies to date has focused on empowering the "out" groups or training the "in" groups about their unconscious biases. This has succeeded only in annoying everyone. Meanwhile, most senior executives are still white men. The more companies talk about it all, the more skeptical everyone becomes. Who is calling whom diverse? And who is being asked to be inclusive of whom? How many times have I heard executives refer to the fact that they have several "diverse candidates" for a job? This weirdly common expression is meant to cover women and the range of minorities listed in diversity approaches.

The exception is the companies (or countries) where two rare but simple things are present: commitment to change and skill at getting *everyone* to buy in to it.

When old majorities become new minorities, it's time to update our approach. If this summer's transatlantic political events have taught us anything, it is the value of inclusion – and of broadening how we define it. The Trump phenomenon and the Brexit vote are case studies in the dangers of ignoring or discounting resistance to change.

And yet rarely have I ever seen inclusion strategies that stress the need to include, listen to, and work with the dominant group – the one that is seeing its preeminence questioned. That is where leadership is most needed: in helping today's dominant group embrace tomorrow's reality.

Nowhere is this more true – or less obvious – than in the issue of gender balance in companies. In most companies where I work, there are two common subterranean mutterings among executives, which usually emerge as soon as you ask:

- Gender is "over" (even though some high-profile people have recently lost their jobs for saying so publicly). Most American executives like to think that the issue has been solved, despite huge and persistent gender gaps within their own organizations, especially in the leadership ranks. The new reality of major countries, such the UK and Germany (and perhaps soon the U.S.), electing female heads of state will likely only confirm this perspective.



- All the focus of D&I programs is on women and minorities, and straight white men are being unfairly discriminated against. There is still a huge push on “promoting women” in most companies, accompanied by a slew of programs, conferences, and initiatives aimed at women, run by women, and branded for women.

But what if good leadership were responsible and accountable for engaging *everyone* in change? Companies that effectively achieve balance drop the talking and move to action, with CEOs visibly leading the way. They treat gender balance like any other business issue. CEOs and executives teams are accountable for clear targets (not HR, not women, not the head of diversity). Leaders get skilled at convincing their dominant majorities why balance is essential for the business, just as they would with any other initiative. Core business systems are redesigned to support the change using research that short-circuits biases.

Yes, communication is still key, but the companies that get it know that less is more: Emotional issues require carefully designed communication strategies. Research shows that much of the communication to date has backfired. Ensure that all messages and vocabulary are “inclusive” of 100% of the target audience. For example, President Obama recently penned a personal essay on why he is a feminist in Glamour magazine. “That’s what twenty-first-century feminism is about: the idea that when *everybody* is equal, we are *all* more free.” [Emphasis mine.]

Smart companies are wary of approaches that single out and target a particular group – still the dominant approach in too many large companies. Singling out women is hardly inclusive in a context where the majority intake in many companies is trending female. Inclusive leaders will be those skilled in getting everyone to embrace balance, and keep an eye on the balance between genders, across all functions and levels. (An HR department that’s all female is just as problematic as a tech team that is all male.) They will help their teams see the shift not as a threat but as a business opportunity that the smartest will learn how to capture – and be rewarded for.

Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau became an international sensation when he explained that he was gender balancing his cabinet “because it’s 2015.” This is inclusive leadership at its best, and it’s a video I show often to emphasize what the concept looks like. It points at the bigger picture, the obviousness of the trends, and the fact that some leaders are totally comfortable with the future.

Business leaders face the same realities. They need to become more gender bilingual. How? They could start by dropping the word “women” entirely and develop more-inclusive vocabulary. Learn from the men beginning to claim their inner feminist. Because it’s 2016.

---



Avivah Wittenberg-Cox is CEO of 20-first, one of the world’s leading gender consulting firms, and author of *Seven Steps to Leading a Gender-Balanced Business*.

---

## This article is about GENDER

 FOLLOW THIS TOPIC

Related Topics: DIVERSITY

## Comments

Leave a Comment



GENDER

# The Men Who Mentor Women

DECEMBER 07, 2016



While women make up 51.5% of all managers, much fewer women rise to the C-suite. A survey of 25,000 Harvard Business School graduates found that although male and female graduates had similar levels of ambition, men were significantly more likely to have positions in senior management, direct reports, and profit-and-loss responsibility.

We know having a sponsor who supports your career can help level the playing field for women. So who are the men in your organization known as informal champions of women, for the way that their behaviors advance female leaders? And what do they have in common?

From previous research, we already know that these “male champions” genuinely believe in fairness, gender equity, and the development of talent in their organizations, and that they are easily identified by female leaders for the critical role they play advancing women’s careers.

But we wanted to know more about what these men *do* differently. How do they stand up to pressure from peers or the expectations of outmoded organizational cultures? How do they use their power to create diverse, inclusive organizations?

We asked senior male and female leaders in Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations to tell us about the behaviors of these “male champions.” We conducted 75 semi-structured confidential interviews with leaders in the C-suite or one to three levels below C-suite in both Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations. After subjecting these interviews to a rigorous qualitative analysis, we saw several themes emerge.

### **This article also appears in:**

Generally, we saw that “male champions” have learned that gender inclusiveness means involving *both* men and women in advancing women’s leadership. Although many organizations have attempted to fight gender bias by focusing on women - offering training programs or networking groups specifically for them – the leaders we interviewed realized that any solutions that involve only 50% of the human population are likely to have limited success.

More specifically, we found that some of the key behavioral themes associated with gender inclusive leadership that support women’s career advancement are:

### **Using their authority to change workplace culture**

As researchers, we know that gender parity in the workplace is associated with improved profitability. Companies with female board representation have been found to outperform those with no women on their boards. Gender parity has been found to correlate with increased sales revenue, more customers, and greater relative profits. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were found to be 15% more likely to outperform those in the bottom quartile.

In our experience, most executives don't know about this research. But even so, many of the leaders told us that gender inclusiveness is simply good strategy for the organization, and they explicitly used their authority to push for it.

For example, one leader addressed the business logic for diversity and inclusion, stating, "Let's do cost/benefit. If we are excluding half the talent on the planet...[do] we have the best chance of getting the best talent, or if we doubled our chances of getting the best talent do you think we'd have the best chance? Obviously, we want to fish in a bigger pond." Another leader emphasized that a lack of diversity demonstrates a lack of effectiveness in systems, noting, "My experience is when you get to very high levels, whether it's government, higher education, or business, there are excellent men and women so if you're really not making good progress toward having representation at all levels of the company, you're doing something wrong."

Taking this attitude has an impact on the overall culture of the organization. As one of our leaders described her champion, "He's creating the environment that says, 'I care about all,' and that may be broader than just women but that is modeling an environment that makes it harder for others not to be champions, too."

Another leader mentioned that he had built so much trust within his organization that he was able to single-handedly champion women into very high positions of power, saying, "I can walk into the Executive Committee and say 'This woman deserves to be on the bench 2-3 years from now. I want her to become the CEO.'" In a more nuanced way, another leader championed women by vying for them when they were in positions where success may have been unlikely, noting, "I was in a position of power to do something, and I suggested coaching for one woman whose direct boss was not very good. I just did the little things you do for someone to position them to move up in the organization."

While they were able to have a strong impact on women's careers in many ways, the male champions also recognized that their values were not always shared by others in their organizations. Leaders reported the need to show courage and persistence in order to overcome resistance to gender inclusiveness even in their own teams and peer groups.

One described the ways in which he pushes back on non-diverse pipelines directly: “I have what I call ‘talent days,’ in which my management team spends the whole day once a quarter, and we try to look through our organization for rising stars and try to identify people early. The other thing that we do is we try to make sure that we have proactive interviewing. For any position, we have leading and lagging metrics for diversity. And I ask them: ‘How come, in the last month, you’ve gone after a large number of new people, and you haven’t interviewed one woman for the position?’ I started asking questions like this - I am not expecting them to have the answers. I’m expecting them to know that the next time I ask these questions, you better have the answers because I already have the data.”

Similarly, one of our champions mentioned the importance of pushing back on gender stereotypes, saying, “I think just having the courage to raise the questions is important. If I’m in a people review with all the business leads and we’re talking about behaviors and we’re saying, this woman is just really, you know, aggressive, the Scarlet A! Then I ask them ‘Are we’re talking about it with almost the exact same behaviors as a male, in a very complementary way?’ So being able to have the courage to raise those questions, and not in an antagonistic fashion, but more in a very constructive, non-judgmental way is very important.” Finally, one of the females who had been championed, summed it up, saying, “Many of these men with whom I worked, clearly were very comfortable in their own skin and believed in the values of having equity in the workplace and were willing to stand up and fight for it.”

### **Recognizing gender inclusiveness as effective talent management**

Although many of the male leaders said they had not known they were considered to be “male champions” until recommended for the research study, examples of their behavior show that they practiced talent management effective for gender inclusion, using best-practice strategies in recruitment, early identification of talent, and succession planning. For example, a leader described his hiring process, detailing, “We’ll remember if we hired the absolute best person for the job, which includes considering women and building diversity in our team. So I hold the jobs open, [and] we’ve never lowered the bar. That’s probably not that unique, but I make sure we have a slate of candidates that include all who are qualified for the job.”

Similarly, another leader noted, “It’s not particularly hard for me ...to make sure that we have a slate of candidates that are qualified folks that include women.” Finally, other leaders mentioned that they were consciously consistent about ensuring that men and women were given the same opportunities on their teams. For example, one leader stated “We do have mentor programs, we do have emergent leader programs, we have things that require executives and SVP-types within the business to participate. It makes the high potentials better leaders”, while another leader noted, “I always try to get at least 50% women in my groups and I’ve been pretty successful at doing that and my current group I think is 80% women and there’s a lot of research that shows you need diversity, and it’s just smart to do that.”

### **Providing gender aware mentoring and coaching**

Mentoring was recently found to be the most impactful activity for increasing diversity and inclusion at work, compared to diversity training and a variety of other diversity initiatives. Receiving mentorship from senior males can increase compensation and career progress satisfaction for women, particularly for those working in male-dominated industries.

Many champions made special efforts to provide visibility to talented women through mentoring and coaching. For example, a leader mentioned strategically exposing women to the leadership process, stating, “One of the things I would do is take one of our high performing women executives and often make them chief of staff to me so they would run my office, participate in executive committee meetings, format the meetings, really be an extension of my office to give them an opportunity to see the world top down and to work with other senior executives, which was a very important developmental experience for them.”

Other leaders mentioned that they helped to coach women by providing necessary skills that they would need to get the job done. For example, one leader recounted a conversation with a female he championed, stating, “She said ‘I’m not sure if I’m good enough to do the job.’ I said ‘Well, I think you really are so let’s talk about where you feel you need more development.’ So if they’re not confident before they have the job, you’ve got to be proactive and ask them ‘What do you need to be comfortable with that job?’”

Finally, one of our champions mentioned that understanding the goals of women he has championed was also key, saying, “They don’t necessarily have the visibility either because of the roles that they’re in or because they’re not necessarily getting sponsored... We expand their visibility but also arm them with experiences that will broaden their perspective and therefore enable them to compete even more effectively for big roles.”

Women leaders also recognize when opportunities for visibility are provided to them. One of our female interviewees mentioned, “I realized before I gave the presentation, thankfully, that he was giving me a huge opportunity to be seen by a much broader audience and he never made a lot fanfare about it. He never told me that he wanted to help my career. He just did.” Similarly, another female interviewee highlighted the importance of being let into strategic networks, stating, “I often went to lunch with him when he went to lunch with people. I sat in on a lot of phone calls.” In the same vein, another female interviewee mentioned that being privy to new contacts within the organization was helpful in career advancement, noting, “You get increased contacts across the organization and more senior contacts than you typically would, because even if you haven’t met somebody, if they’ve seen your name on a report or heard of your name with regard to a high profile project, when you do meet them they already know who you are.”

Further, as a result of the mentoring and coaching, many women reported feeling greater self-confidence which gave them the comfort of doing even more. One female interviewee stated, “The outcome of some of these actions that my male mentors took is they helped me understand that I had a lot more capacity than even I knew.” Similarly, another female interviewee mentioned, “It’s building self-confidence, it gives you the confidence that you belong at the table and that you have a right to be there.”

### **Practicing other-focused leadership**

For cross-gender mentoring relationships to be successful, Stacy D. Blake-Beard suggests mentors need to possess both crucial mentoring skills but also an ally mentality. Allies are “dominant group members who work to end prejudice in their personal and professional lives, and relinquish social privileges conferred by their group status through their support of nondominant groups” in the commonly used definition.



Enabling the development of others' leadership requires moving away from a focus on one's personal power so that others may be recognized for their achievements. Many of the male champions we interviewed embodied this spirit of leadership as an exercise for others - not for oneself.

One leader explained, "How many people can you point to who are in leadership positions in the company because they worked for you, with you, and you helped make them better? A lot of times people want to hire, what I call "younger brothers and sisters" that are not threatening and not really as effective as they need to be. Your job is to hire and develop people who can be better than you, if they're not better than you to begin with."

A female interviewee concurred, stating, "I also think that there might be some level of altruism too, right? They're doing it for the greater good of the organization, and, and not necessarily having a strategic goal in mind, but it's the right thing to be doing for people."

Through behaviors like these, men can begin to change organizational cultures from the top down. Acknowledging the crucial role that men can play in creating gender equality at work is necessary in order to truly engage the entire workforce in conversations surrounding equality and fairness at work. The examples provided by male champions and female leaders who have been championed by them contain important leadership lessons, useful for any organization interested in promoting gender inclusivity at work.

---

Anna Marie Valerio, Ph.D., is an executive coach and the author of two books, *Developing Women Leaders: A Guide for Men and Women in Organizations* and *Executive Coaching: A Guide for the HR Professional* (co-authored with Robert J. Lee.) She is President of Executive Leadership Strategies, LLC.

---

Katina Sawyer, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Management at The George Washington University. She holds a dual-Ph.D in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and Women's Studies from The Pennsylvania State University.

---

September 11, 2014

## ARTICLES

# Practical Steps for Engaging White Male Attorneys as Champions for Diversity and Inclusion

When asked why they advocate for greater diversity and inclusion, white male allies and champions point to different reasons.

By Kathleen Nalty

Share this:



White male executives who engage in diversity-valuing behaviors are given higher performance ratings by their peers, according to [a new research study](#). While a career boost is certainly beneficial, it is the least compelling reason driving the white male champions I have worked with to advance diversity and inclusion in the legal industry.

When asked why they advocate for greater diversity and inclusion, white male allies and champions point to different reasons. Some are innately motivated because it is the right thing to do. A few have experienced exclusion themselves and have greater empathy for others who are marginalized. Others have experienced “aha” moments through exposure to colleagues who changed their worldview, research studies documenting hidden barriers in the legal profession, the bottom-line business benefits of diversity and inclusion, or the simple fact that their clients value and require it. Still others are involved because they see how their spouses/partners and children are impacted by inequities in the workplace.

However they arrive at this position, white male champions are absolutely indispensable in diversity and inclusion efforts, and they should all be more actively involved.

A few years ago, I wrote an article listing eight practical steps for engaging white men in diversity and inclusiveness efforts for NALP. Kathleen Nalty, “Practical Steps for Engaging White Men in Diversity and Inclusiveness Efforts,” NALP Bulletin, September 2010, pp. 15–16. The steps outlined were based on my work with many white male attorneys and are still relevant today. I have personally witnessed the transformative impact of these steps on many white male lawyers.

## 1. Include White Men in the Process of Uncovering Instances of Hidden Barriers in the Firm

Hidden barriers that disproportionately impact attorneys in underrepresented groups are usually completely invisible to those in the majority, which is why so many white male attorneys aren’t fully engaged in diversity and inclusion efforts. [According to several national research studies](#), there are hidden barriers to success for [female, LGBTQ, disabled, and racially/ethnically diverse attorneys](#). These groups are disproportionately excluded from opportunities that are often intangible but critically important in any lawyer’s career development. Hard work and technical skill are the foundation of career progress, but without these intangible opportunities, attorneys simply cannot advance in their firms.

According to the research studies, these opportunities are shared unevenly by people in positions of power and influence, often without realizing that certain groups are disproportionately excluded, which causes them to remain on the margins in the firm. Specifically, the research reveals that attorneys in underrepresented groups (female, LGBTQ, disabled, and racially/ethnically diverse) have less access to the following benefits:

- 1 Networking opportunities—informal and formal
- 2 Internal information or intelligence
- 3 Access to decision-makers
- 4 Mentors and sponsors
- 5 Meaningful work assignments
- 6 Candid and frequent feedback
- 7 Social integration
- 8 Training and development
- 9 Client contact
- 10 Promotions

The studies all point to bias as the major cause of these hidden barriers. Certainly, discrimination still exists and contributes to this dynamic. But it turns out that a specific kind of unconscious bias plays the biggest role. Affinity bias, which is a bias *for* others who are more like you, causes people to develop more meaningful work relationships with those who have similar identities, interests, and backgrounds. When senior white male attorneys gravitate toward and share opportunities with others who are like themselves, they (mostly unwittingly) leave out female, LGBTQ, disabled, and racially/ethnically diverse attorneys.

Tracking who gets these opportunities makes inequities visible—who gets to go on client pitches, who receives the best work assignments, who is serving on committees that lead to promotion, who gets invited to client meetings and networking opportunities, who has influential mentors and sponsors, and who has access to leaders more often? Affinity bias is a very powerful form of unconscious bias—you don't have to do anything bad to people who are different from you; you can unintentionally disrupt their careers just by doing more favors for people who are like you.

**Light Bulb Moment:** After a meeting on diversity and inclusiveness for 35 law firm managing partners (more than 95 percent of whom were white and male), one white male managing partner took me aside and said his outlook completely changed when I explained how affinity bias causes hidden barriers that disproportionately impact the career paths for attorneys in underrepresented groups. He said, "I never thought about it that way before. I can really see that happening."

## 2. Change the Discussion

Stop talking just about diversity. Adding inclusiveness to traditional diversity efforts fundamentally changes the conversation. Inclusiveness is about everyone in the organization and focuses on maximizing everyone's access to the opportunities they need to do their best work. When white male allies understand that inclusiveness is about them too, they are more inclined to participate. While research studies demonstrate that hidden barriers in law firms disproportionately impact the careers of attorneys in underrepresented groups, these barriers can impact white male attorneys as well. Allies and champions recognize that removing the barriers to increase utilization, engagement, productivity, and commitment is in everyone's best interest.

## 3. Ask White Men to Participate

Oftentimes, white male attorneys stand on the sidelines, wondering whether and how to participate in the firm's diversity and

inclusiveness efforts because *they* aren't diverse. Simply being asked to be involved is just what many are waiting for. Converting white male attorneys from passive bystanders into active participants is actually critical to the long-term success of any diversity and inclusiveness initiative. They can be particularly effective with their peers in discussing the "why" of diversity and inclusion.

#### 4. Leverage White Males in Influential or Leadership Positions

Nothing changes in law firms unless influential leaders are on board. Because white men comprise 74 percent of equity partners in U.S. law firms, diversity and inclusion initiatives must focus on leveraging the power of white male allies and champions in order to make the requisite structural, cultural, and behavioral changes. The best way to leverage their positions and power is to make sure they have important roles in the change efforts.

**Real Life Example:** In my former role as executive director of the [Center for Legal Inclusiveness](#), I oversaw a pilot project through which several law firms, corporate law departments, and government law offices started inclusiveness initiatives. The heads of many of these organizations (mostly white male attorneys) "walked the talk" by using their positions of influence to drive their organization's change efforts.

#### 5. Include White Men on the Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee

Inclusiveness is about everyone, including straight white men, so their voices must be included in the firm's diversity and inclusiveness strategy. [As I wrote four years ago](#), "[i]f you can persuade powerful white men to play an active role on the . . . committee, that alone will send a strong message to the rest of the organization about the importance of diversity and inclusiveness."

**Real Life Example:** One law firm's white male managing partner decided that every attorney in the office would be required to serve a term on the diversity and inclusion committee at some point (and he had the influence to enforce this requirement). A white male partner, viewed by his peers as a skeptic, was asked to fill a vacancy on the committee. The chair asked him to review background materials on diversity and inclusion before his first meeting. Everyone was surprised when he shared a creative idea for changing the work assignment system to help interrupt unconscious bias in the firm's free-market system. He later became the chair of the diversity and inclusiveness committee.

#### 6. Educate White Men about Why Inclusiveness Is a Business Imperative

It is true that "[p]eople are more apt to change if they perceive a personal benefit in doing so." Many white male attorneys have not been exposed to the research on how [diversity](#) and inclusion [improve](#) the performance of [decision-making groups](#) and [adds to the bottom line](#). Corporate counsel are generally more knowledgeable about this research, which is one reason why they insist on diverse teams of lawyers on their cases. That's the external business case for diversity—meeting client's expectations and desires for greater diversity—which necessarily requires creating the inclusive environment that leads to sustainable diversity.

But the internal business case for diversity is just as compelling. Research studies published in the past two years clearly document the link between greater diversity and [inclusion](#) and essential components of the bottom line, such as engagement, productivity, [team commitment](#), and retention. Law firms that don't address the hidden barriers through inclusiveness initiatives are simply leaving money on the table.

#### 7. Give White Men a List of Tasks and They Will Help

If you ask them, most white male attorneys will say they want to help foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace, but they just don't know exactly what to do. When I wrote on this subject a few years ago, I suggested a to-do checklist. Several law firms have also developed extensive lists of activities that everyone in the firm can engage in to advance diversity and inclusion.

However, I have found that this "activities checklist" approach conflates "activity" with meaningful "action" and results.

If an attorney can complete his/her checklist on the day of the deadline, that is not inclusion. An authentic inclusiveness initiative is about embedding inclusive behaviors and practices into what people do every day as a part of their jobs (much like ethics, cost control, efficiency, quality, revenue maximization, and other behaviors that underlie people's daily behaviors and decisions).

The better course is to develop diversity/inclusiveness-related competencies, which help people incorporate inclusiveness into their job duties and responsibilities, for which they are held accountable in evaluations and compensation decisions. When the competencies are related to accomplishing the firm's business goals, inclusiveness is seen as an integral part of doing business rather than a side issue that involves just a few people in the firm.

**Real Life Example:** Within one year, the general counsel of a Fortune 500 company formed a diversity and inclusiveness committee that includes himself, several top leaders, lawyers, and staff from his global team. This committee held training programs, formed subcommittees to start and expand programs and communications, and created a comprehensive list of diversity- and inclusiveness-related competencies that spell out behaviors in three categories—"unskilled," "skilled," and "highly skilled"—so all employees know exactly how to incorporate greater diversity and inclusiveness into what they do every day. These competencies are part of a set of "critical success factors" that are incorporated into individual performance evaluations.

#### 8. Provide Incentives to Sustain Diversity and Inclusiveness Efforts

Sustainability requires recognition and rewards. Even the most ardent advocate will get burned out if his or her contributions are not acknowledged in some way. [As I wrote previously](#), "organizations that are serious about change and sustainability provide credit toward billable hour requirements, offer awards or bonuses, and/or otherwise include individual efforts in job duties and responsibilities that factor into the compensation system." The latter is the real key to success because the end game for inclusiveness is embedding it into what everyone does every day to make the firm more successful.

Inclusive behaviors, endorsed and modeled by law firm leaders, "unlock" the diversity in the organization, allowing the full potential of the firm and its diverse composition to be brought to bear on driving greater levels of organizational performance. Going all in is the only way to achieve genuine success in diversity and inclusion efforts. Adoption of diversity and inclusiveness competencies and organizational competencies—not just by leaders but by everyone in the firm—will embed diversity and inclusion into the structure, culture, and behaviors of the firm and lead to real change and results.

---

Copyright © 2014, American Bar Association. All rights reserved. This information or any portion thereof may not be copied or disseminated in any form or by any means or downloaded or stored in an electronic database or retrieval system without the express written consent of the American Bar Association. The views expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the American Bar Association, the Section of Litigation, this committee, or the employer(s) of the author(s).

Forbes CommunityVoice Connecting expert communities to the Forbes audience. What is This?

2,322 views | Aug 13, 2018, 07:30am

# Farther Together: The Importance Of Allies In Diversity And Inclusion



**Bernard Coleman III** Forbes Councils  
Forbes Coaches Council CommunityVoice ⓘ

POST WRITTEN BY

**Bernard Coleman**

**Uber's** Head of DI. Prior to Uber, Bernard led Hillary for America's DI as the 1st ever Chief Diversity and HR Officer in U.S. history.



Shutterstock



As the old adage goes, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Have you ever heard of [John Henry](#)? He is an African-American folk hero from the 1870s. [As the legend goes](#), “[Henry] worked as a 'steel-driving man' — a man tasked with hammering a steel drill into rock to make holes for explosives to blast the rock in constructing railroad tunnels ... John Henry's prowess as a steel-driver was measured in a one-man race against a steam-powered hammer, a race that John Henry prevailed only to tragically die in victory with hammer in hand as his heart gave out from stress.”

I guess old John Henry won. He took on the steam-powered hammer alone and now lives on in glory. They’ve erected statues to his feat and [penned songs](#) that live on forever.

But the reality is, John Henry died in the process. He proved his point, but he paid the ultimate price by dying from exhaustion. That’s called a [pyrrhic victory](#), when the win was too great a cost to have been worth it.

The life of a D&I practitioner can often feel pyrrhic as well. Countless hours, days and years are committed to advancing progress against a perpetual steam-powered hammer of opposition — opposition through indifference, ignorance, miseducation and obstruction. It’s fatiguing to do this work, and it often feels like you’re doing it alone.

According to Atlassian's 2018 State of Diversity and Inclusion [survey](#), “People are tired of talking about diversity and inclusion, frustrated by talk not turning into impactful action, and overwhelmed by the number of issues.”

It’s important to step back as a D&I practitioner, employee/business resource group leader and ally to recognize that you're *not* in it alone, and more importantly, that you should take time for yourself, as the fatigue can impact you as well.

There are a number of considerations and actions to take to make sure you don’t get burned out and/or disillusioned with the speed of progress.

- **Take care.** Often, those involved in D&I and general culture work are so engrossed in helping others that they fail to tend to their own needs. Guy Winch calls it “[emotional first aid](#).” For longevity in professions such as D&I, we need to take care of our emotional health. In the course of the day, D&I professionals hear, see and internalize stories, experiences and sentiments that over time can take a toll on emotional health. This can lead to burnout and cause significant diversity fatigue. Self-care is making sure that as much as you invest in your culture work, you should also invest in your well-being — that could mean getting more sleep, exercise, therapy, yoga, family time, time alone, with your pet, etc. Whatever you need to do to recharge, do it!

- **Embrace your community.** Lean on your community in collaboration, and recognize you won't have all the answers. Your community will lift you up. Most D&I folks and employee/business resource group leaders are working within their own companies trying to solve the world's most complex cultural issues, and it's refreshing to know you can reach out to others for support. You're not by yourself when faced with institutional obstacles, because the community is there. The D&I community is rich with ideas, playbooks of what worked/didn't work and most importantly, empathy. Teaming together and pulling from each other's collective knowledge base to advance progress is critical for driving forward.

- **Manage expectations.** It's essential to manage the expectations of stakeholders as well as your own. We very much live in an instantaneous, 30-minutes-or-less society. We are conditioned to think everything will happen in a matter of moments. But there is no easy button. When talking about culture shifts or organizational change, we are asking people to change their actions and behaviors. There is simply no timetable you can assign to people's development and receptiveness to change. Asking people to change and embrace the uncomfortable is challenging, so it's important to lay out what the intended outcomes might be and let people know that this work takes times to see year-over-year progress.

Also, manage your own expectations as a culture shifter. It's important to center on what you can impact, influence and change. Further give yourself the grace to



know that it won't happen overnight, but it can advance if you keep at it.

• **Build alliances.** In other words, cultivate allies. What is an ally? To be exact, an [ally](#) is a person or group who is associated with another or others for some common cause or purpose. This common purpose can certainly range the gamut, but it's generally mutually beneficial to all involved to get together for whatever the intended purpose. It's the old truism, "strength in numbers." The strength an individual derives grows with the number of others who join together. As most people know, it's much easier to do things together and to have an ally or allies to help with the heavy lifting, whether that lift is physical, emotional or conceptual. The support truly helps when you can't do it all alone. It just makes good common sense to work together and form alliances to achieve goals faster and more efficiently.

Imagine if John Henry had others who partnered with him to overcome the steam-powered hammer. The margin of victory could have been that much greater and the stakes not so grave. Build bridges, cultivate collaboration and most importantly, go farther together.



**Bernard Coleman III** Forbes Councils

Bernard is Uber's Head of D&I. Prior to Uber, he led Hillary for America's D&I as the 1st ever Chief Diversity & HR Officer in U.S. history.



**Forbes Coaches Council** CommunityVoice

Forbes Coaches Council is an invitation-only, fee-based organization comprised of leading business coaches and career coaches. Find out if you qualify at [forbescoachescouncil.com](https://forbescoachescouncil.com)... **Read More**

---

GENDER

# What Men Can Do to Be Better Mentors and Sponsors to Women

by [Rania H. Anderson](#) and [David G. Smith](#)

AUGUST 07, 2019



PIRANKA/GETTY IMAGES

Advocating for women's advancement at work is integral for improving financial results, gender balance, and diversity in our workplaces and leadership teams. Yet data from the Working Mother Research Institute finds that, while 48% of men say they have received detailed information on career paths to P&L jobs in the past 24 months, just 15% of women report the same. And, while 54% of men had a career discussion with a mentor or sponsor in the past 24 months, only 39% of women did.

Why? Because leaders, the majority of whom are male and white, don't adequately sponsor or mentor people who don't look like them. Recent research from the Center for Talent Innovation reported that a full 71% of executives have protégés whose gender and race match their own. That means that women and minorities don't benefit from sponsorship like their male colleagues do, and organizations lose out by not gaining the full potential of diverse talent.

Confusion about the #MeToo movement may have unintentionally exacerbated the situation. Two 2018 surveys by Lean In and Bloomberg Media found that, in the wake of those high-profile workplace sexual harassment and assault allegations, some men began to avoid professional work relationships with women. It was even a topic at the most recent World Economic Forum: senior male executives talked about avoiding one-on-one mentoring relationships as a risk management strategy.

This response is not productive. There are plenty of men who want to do what's best for their businesses and employees. We find that sponsorship and advocacy make the biggest difference.

Sponsors, by definition, use their position and power to achieve business objectives by advancing a protégé's career. They are not benevolent benefactors. They are influential leaders who intentionally invest in, and rely on, the skills and contributions of their protégés to achieve their own goals and their protégé's highest potential. A sponsor needs to know the skills and capabilities of their protégés, see their potential, and be able to orchestrate their advancement – but they don't have to show them how to play the instrument or encourage them to practice.

And while mentors may or may not have the same level of power as sponsors, they frequently have a great deal more influence than they actually use. We regularly see mentors who support their mentees privately but are reluctant to advocate for them.

If companies truly want to improve their financial results and diversity, they need to do a better job of developing sponsors for diverse talent at all levels of their organization. Leaders are regularly taught about strategic thinking, championing change, making financial decisions, and managing people, but they are not taught how to become sponsors or maximize their impact in the role. As a result, white men don't have the skills to advance women and people of color - even though they

unconsciously help other white men to do so. Rather than be frustrated by or blame male leaders, companies need to better enlist and equip them to excel. And men need to consistently implement what they learn.

All of this starts with understanding what the best sponsors do, and how they do it. Here are the eight key steps we've identified based on our experiences advising global leaders and companies.

**Identify high potential diverse talent.** Great sponsors purposefully look for people who bring different experiences and perspectives from their own and also have the results, potential, and ambition to make a larger contribution. If they can't identify someone on their own, they go out of their way to ask HR and other leaders to recommend candidates.

One of Rania's coaching clients, Stan, an executive director of a regional bank, is a great example of this type of sponsor. He recognized the potential in one of his employees, Beth. Even though she had no prior financial services experience when she joined the bank, she was great at developing client, community, and internal relationships, and Stan could see that, if she held a senior leadership role, she could make a broader contribution. He decided to sponsor her to fast-track her into a senior market role.

**Determine the best stretch role.** It is vital to identify high-visibility opportunities that could benefit from your protégés' perspectives, talents, and experiences – and in which they can excel. These should be roles or projects that, if executed successfully, will clearly benefit the business as well their career. The best opportunities to develop protégés are those that meet some of these conditions: involves profit and loss; high risk; strategic clients; strategic importance to the business; starting something new; or fixing a business problem.

Stan did this by recognizing that Beth's management skills would make a notable improvement in their market's retail division. Similarly, when Jay, an executive at a fast-growth financial services start-up, recognized that Lexi had the talent to achieve more significant results and advance, he assigned her several complex business challenges that required her to interact with senior leaders across the organization. After she successfully addressed them, she gained positive visibility.

**Position the role.** Stretch assignments can be challenging, so great mentors ensure that their protégés understand that the organization values and thinks highly of them. Many women want and appreciate this type of encouragement and may be reticent to take a challenging role without it. Protégés should be provided with context on the importance of new opportunities, what a sponsor believes they can accomplish, and how the sponsor and the company will support them. Have their manager and mentors encourage them to persist in spite of the obstacles they will inevitably encounter. In Stan's case, he talked to Beth about why he thought she'd excel in leading the retail banking group and what success in that role could mean for her in the future.

**Provide opportunities for development and support.** Sponsors must ensure that people in their organization invest time, expertise, resources, and budget to help give protégés the skills and experiences they need to be successful. This is where mentors and other advisors come in. As Beth demonstrated results, Stan arranged for her to have technical skill and leadership development experiences. Both Beth and Lexi were provided with executive leadership coaching.

It's also important to educate leaders who will work with a protégé about the challenges women, people of color and especially women of color, often encounter in the workplace. It's also worth exploring if a protégé can be connected with people in similar life and career stages or those who have had prior success navigating through personal and professional challenges.

**Pave the way.** Sponsors have a responsibility to introduce their protégés to influential and powerful people in their organization or industry, including clients, especially if they are crucial for success in their work. In Lexi's case, this meant having her travel internationally to meet with key partners and an important leadership role assignment on a transition team. She delivered stellar results. In both Beth's and Lexi's cases, their sponsor regularly communicated their results and advocated for them with other senior executives.

**Ensure protégés receive candid, performance-based feedback.** A 2006 McKinsey study found that women don't get the same type of direct, candid commentary on their performance as their male counterparts, and research shows that women consistently receive less feedback tied to business outcomes. Sponsors may or may not be the people who provide protégés with this. But they must make sure that protégés get clear performance assessments that include specific guidance to help improve results and promote advancement. For example, instead of feedback like "Be more

assertive,” an example of actionable feedback is: “When the client raised these types of objections, acknowledge their concerns but come back in with specific examples of other clients for whom these factors have not been an issue. This will help you close more business.”

**Help protégés persist.** No matter the stretch assignment, there will always be challenges and setbacks. Sponsors must make sure criticism, mistakes, failures, or naysayers don’t derail their protégés. That doesn’t mean sheltering them from adversity; it does mean ensuring that the organization is understanding and patient if everything doesn’t work out the first time. More often than not, success takes more than one assignment.

**Champion promotions and recognition.** Sponsors advocate for raises, promotions, and recognition to deserving protégés. As Beth delivered, Stan gave her additional responsibilities which have prepared her for a significant promotion. Lexi recently advanced into a senior leadership role. It took her excellent performance, advocating for herself, and Jay’s advocacy to the rest of his executive committee teammates.

Our experience and the data show that women receive less sponsorship and advocacy in mentorship than their male colleagues. This imbalance is one of the primary reasons they don’t advance at the same pace as men and why they leave their places of employment.

Leaders who take these steps will become better, more inclusive sponsors, which will improve their own results, the careers of protégés, and the organizations where they work. Gender balance in companies and on teams improves a host of outcomes including financial results, innovation, decision making, organizational commitment, retention and job satisfaction. And managers who identify and develop all high-potential talent are more successful and recognized for this approach.

Companies can encourage this kind of sponsorship by clearly defining the steps, behaviors and expectations for people in formal programs. They can deliberately address the mandate and process for advocacy and sponsorship of diverse talent in their employee development programs and performance assessments. And, finally, they hold senior managers accountable for sponsorship. It is not only good for women and people of color; it’s also good for business and for the sponsors.

---

Rania H. Anderson, is an international keynote speaker, author and executive business coach who transforms the way men and women work together. She is the author of *WE: Men, Women and the Decisive Formula for Winning at Work* and *Undeterred: The Six Success Habits of Women in Emerging Economies*.



---

David G. Smith, PhD, is a professor of sociology in the Department of National Security Affairs at the United States Naval War College. He is the co-author of *Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women*. His research focuses on gender, work, and family issues including dual career families, military families, women in the military, and retention of women.

---

---

 Reply

0  1 

▼ [Join The Conversation](#)

# Workplace Allies Serve as Ambassadors for Change

By [Kathy Gurchiek](#) March 1, 2019

People can serve as allies for co-workers through simple actions that will have lasting, beneficial effects on those co-workers' careers and, in the process, will create an inclusive work environment.

[Men play a pivotal role](#) in creating workplaces where male and female employees can succeed, according to Catalyst. The New York City-based global nonprofit helps organizations advance women in the workplace, and it encourages employers to engage men as champions and build inclusive cultures.

Many men would take more action to make their workplace inclusive if they knew what to do, according to the National Center for Women & Information Technology.

To teach them, [The Ohio State University has an Advocates and Allies for Equity initiative](#) to help advance the professional interests of female faculty and staff and employees in other underrepresented groups. The university is using the program to build a cross-campus network of male allies and introduce them to specific, practical actions to help men better support women at the university.

*[SHRM members-only toolkit: [Developing Employee Career Paths and Ladders](#)]*

And Catalyst created [Men Advocating for Real Change](#) (MARC) to encourage its male employees to improve gender equality in the workplace. Its 1 1/2-day, immersive MARC Leaders Workshop helps men lead diversity and inclusion efforts in the workplace.

In February, Chevron Corp. gave Catalyst a \$5 million grant to support the MARC initiative. The money will be used to roll out MARC Teams to its supporter companies—corporations, firms, associations, academic institutions and other organizations—to create grassroots support for gender equality around the world.

[Men also are more likely to support diversity when they are made aware that their behavior has made a difference](#), Columbia University research found. It suggests employers give men a specific role in gender-diversity efforts.

It's important, for example, for men to speak up if they notice female colleagues being judged differently from their male colleagues, according to Karen Catlin of San Mateo, Calif. She is the author of *Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces* (Karen Catlin Consulting, 2019) and has worked for 25 years in the tech



field.

She recalled talking with a man on her staff at Adobe who had a senior position open on his team. When she asked if he planned to promote his top employee—a woman—he said that, because she was the mother of young children, he didn't think she would want the travel associated with the job. When Catlin pointed out that the decision was the woman's to make, he offered his employee the job; she accepted and has excelled in the role.

Having men act as positive examples to other men is critical for fostering diversity and inclusion, according to 2017 research from Catalyst. Among its [tips to organizations](#): Visibly recognize men for solution-building so other men have role models to emulate.

## Anyone Can Be an Ally

[Women also can be powerful allies](#). Catlin cited herself—a self-described straight, white woman with no physical disabilities—as an example.

"As a woman, I'm definitely a member of an underrepresented group, [but] I can be an ally for someone in the LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer] community. I could be an advocate for a man of color, for someone with disabilities, for a man who has less education than myself."

Everyone can advocate for underrepresented people in small ways, according to Melinda Epler. She is founder and CEO of Change Catalyst, a firm in San Francisco that works with the tech industry to solve diversity and inclusion issues.

"Your gender, your race, your ethnicity, your religion, your disability, your sexual orientation, your class, your geography—all of these can give you more or fewer opportunities for success.

"That's where 'allyship' comes in. [Allyship is about understanding that imbalance in opportunity and working to correct it](#)," she said during her TEDTalk, "3 Ways to be a Better Ally in the Workplace."

Allies can open career doors, but they don't have to be able to directly promote others. They can serve as mentors or sponsors to people in underrepresented groups, as well as provide career nudges.

"Sometimes allies need to be sounding boards before they can become door openers," according to Catlin.

Beware, though, of acting like a knight in shining armor who rushes in to "save" a woman—or anyone in an underrepresented group—as if that person is weak or

helpless, she cautioned.

While well-meant, it can be off-putting. "Knights" help one person in one moment to overcome an inequity; allies serve as ambassadors for change. Catlin shared the following scenario as an example:

A member of a hiring committee discussing an employee of color says the candidate is not a good fit. A knight might speak up for the candidate and offer to assist him or her if that person is hired. An ally would suggest evaluating the hiring criteria to make sure it's objective before discounting a candidate.

An ally's role in gender equality is essential, said Shuchi Sharma, global head of gender equality and intelligence at SAP, a multinational software corporation based in Germany. And organizations can recognize allyship at every level and provide open forums for employees to learn, engage and practice inclusive behaviors. [SAP's Activating Men for Parity \(AMP\) program](#), for example, empowers a critical mass of male allies to be agents of change, she noted.

"It's important," Sharma said, "for employees to know that they can sponsor women, advocate on their behalf, introduce them to others within their network and open new doors for them."

© 2019 SHRM