



A CURATED RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared by
CENTER FOR WOMEN AND BUSINESS AT BENTLEY UNIVERSITY

Men as Allies: Engaging Men to Advance Women in the Workplace



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About the Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business (CWB)

Advancing women and workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The CWB provides thought leadership and training on critical diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. CWB facilitators lead hundreds of sessions with businesses worldwide, providing knowledge and tools to foster inclusive organizations.

Our dynamic programs focusing on workplace inclusion range from strategic sessions for senior leaders to hands-on workshops for emerging professionals. Topics include:

- Corporate Culture, Unconscious Bias, and Inclusive Leadership
- Allyship, including Men in Partnership to Advance Women
- Building Confidence and Overcoming Unseen Barriers
- The Role of Courageous Conversations
- Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks
- Talent Pipeline Issues from Entry Level to the Boardroom
- The Impact of Intersectionality
- Authentic Leadership and Team Development
- Effective Negotiations
- Workplace Flex and Parental Leave
- Taking Employee Resource Groups to the Next Level
- Developing Diversity and Inclusion Metrics
- The Multigenerational Workforce—Issues and Impacts



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In recent years, an increased understanding of the powerful impact of male allies at work *and at home* has led many organizations to recognize men as allies as a critical component of their diversity and inclusion efforts. Based on an extensive literature review and synthesis of current research and media coverage, the Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business (CWB) at Bentley University has compiled this report to explore the growth and development of male allies in today's workplace and provide guidance on how to successfully launch a men as allies initiative.

The first section of the report addresses:

- What do men think about the challenges facing women and why?
- How does corporate culture influence the dynamic for men who want to help?
- What prevents many men from taking action?
- What do experts say it takes to ignite change in attitudes and action on the part of men in power?

The final section of the report is prescriptive and incorporates knowledge gained through a CWB-moderated executive discussion with our corporate partners. It includes:

- A step-by-step process to establish a male allies initiative.
- Practical tips that all male allies can use to actively support women in the workplace.
- Advice for women on how to engage and support male allies.

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“Indeed, gender mainstreaming is an idea whose time has come—for men.”¹

—Michael S. Kimmel, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University and Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities

MEN AS ALLIES: WHAT’S ALL THE BUZZ?

The notion of *men as allies* is not new. Michael Kimmel wrote the quote above more than a decade ago. In fact, we can trace the roots of the concept to the men’s movements of the 1970s and the work of experts like Kimmel and his contemporaries, Bill Proudman and Michael Welp, founders of the consulting firm White Men as Full Diversity Partners. These thought leaders have been researching, writing, and speaking on this and related issues for several decades. Even as far back as the 1800s, at the historic Seneca Falls women’s conference, 40 men, including Frederick Douglass, were present to support women.

Flash forward to today, and the concept of men as allies has become a focal point of gender diversity initiatives, gaining ground in our corporate and societal lexicon. Indeed, our extensive research and literature review revealed an abundance of prescriptive articles instructing men (primarily white) on how to become allies to women and other minorities.

What’s Fueling the Trend?

Shifting public opinion is likely playing a role in the increased focus on male allies. People took notice as actress Emma Watson addressed the United Nations in 2014, urging men to join the feminist movement under the banner #HeForShe. Former President Obama garnered attention when he proclaimed he was a feminist, and soon other male public figures and male celebrities followed suit.

The men as allies trend is certainly also fueled by changes in the business world and our increasingly divisive political and social climate.^{2&3} These days, hyperbolic media and politics are exacerbating rifts in gender equality. In business, the diversity challenges of the tech industry and the booming sharing economy are bringing to the forefront the profound need for enlightened male allies.⁴

Take for example the alleged sexist corporate culture at Uber and the “Male Allies Plenary Panel” at the 2014 Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing.⁵ The panel, featuring “well-meaning, intelligent” male executives from Facebook, Google, and Microsoft, attracted harsh criticism for its myopic conversation and advice.^{6,7,8} The best way for women to deal with workplace discrimination, the male executives said, was for them to “work harder” and “speak up.”⁹

Meanwhile, research by some of the world’s most influential institutions, including the World Bank, Goldman Sachs, the International Monetary Fund, Ernst & Young, the World Economic Forum, McKinsey & Company, and others, has clearly demonstrated that women’s full economic participation leads to greater competitiveness.¹⁰ In an uncertain political, business and social atmosphere, many corporate leaders are opening their eyes to shifting public opinion and embracing the increasingly strong business case for gender equity—and the impact they can have as male allies. As Robert Zoellick, former director of the World Bank, said, “Gender equality is the right thing to do. And it is also smart economics.”¹¹

“Visionary men have long been public champions and behind the scenes dealmakers for the cause of women’s inclusion. Today we need them more than ever.”¹²

—Ambassador Melanne Verveer and Kim Azzarelli, Chair of Cornell Law School’s Avon Global Center for Women and Justice

More Work To Do

Despite the growth in understanding and support from male colleagues, anecdotal evidence indicates that a significant need for greater awareness and action still exists. McKinsey's *Women in the Workplace* report notes, "Although company commitment to gender parity is at an all-time high, companies do not consistently put their commitment into practice, and many employees are not on board."¹³

This is also supported by research. The 2014 Pershing Harris Poll found that younger men were less open to accepting women leaders than older men were;¹⁴ and a 2014 Harvard Business School (HBS) survey of MBA graduates showed that three-quarters of millennial women anticipated their career would be at least as important as their partners', while half of the men expected that their own careers would take priority. Likewise, less than half of the women MBA graduates believed they would handle most of the child care, while two-thirds of their male peers believed their wives would do so.¹⁵

Many experts predicted that millennial men would naturally become allies for women in business, ushering in a new era of enlightened interpersonal relations. The current body of research should dispel any notion that millennial men see women as equals. The HBS MBA survey concluded, "Indeed, this information raises a serious concern that unless something is done soon to change millennial men's attitudes toward women, these men ascending to the C-suite may hinder — rather than advance — current efforts to reduce the discriminatory effects of gender bias."¹⁶ Supporting this thesis, a 2016 study conducted by McKinsey and LeanIn.Org concluded that at our current pace "it will take more than 100 years for the upper reaches of U.S. corporations to achieve gender parity."¹⁷

What is a Male Ally?

The documentary *Code: Debugging the Gender Gap* describes a male ally as "...a man who will advocate for women even when there are no women in the room."¹⁸

Male allies are men who associate with, cooperate with, and support women. However, this basic definition does not begin to describe the complexities inherent in the term. "Allies listen, co-create opportunity, and build a personal brand for accountability and trust. For us men, we aren't allies to women because we aspire to be, or because we say we are," says consultant Chuck Shelton. "We're allies only when specific women are willing to say to us and others, 'Here's an example of how you are collaborating with me, supporting me, making and keeping promises, and receiving from me in a two-way relationship....'"¹⁹

Male allies come in many forms, but perhaps it is best not to put the focus on what male allies are, but instead on what they can *do*. A 2016 Fairygodboss and Artemis survey highlighted ways in which men have been allies to advancing women's inclusion at work. [See Table 1]

Table 1: Ways I Have Been an Ally

Privately advocated for equality, inclusion and diversity	53%
Publicly advocated for equality, inclusion and diversity	41%
Met with women in your workplace to discuss equality, inclusion and diversity	29%
Identified cases of inequality or lack of diversity and worked to fix them	20%
I have NOT acted as an ally	21%

Source: Fairygodboss and Artemis Connection. "Men in the Workplace: An in-depth exploration of what men think of gender diversity in the workplace." Slide presentation, 20 September 2016. Page 32.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF GENDER BALANCE?

It is clear from a multitude of sources, improving gender representation in the workplace benefits everyone—it is good for our workplace culture, our professional development, our society, our personal lives, and the financial bottom line. But these gains are only attainable with the cooperation and support of our male colleagues, mentors, and sponsors.

Men as allies expert Michael Kimmel explains, “We cannot fully empower women and girls without also engaging men and boys, and when we do, we find out that gender equality is a good thing for men as well as women.”²⁰ Because the majority of senior leaders in today’s business world are still men, they are in the best position to influence cultural and organizational change.²¹

Business Value

Many organizations have failed to think strategically about women as a business opportunity, and how that strategy could possibly be the solution to some of their most pressing business problems.²² However, it is well established that talented women leaders change the work environment for the better, delivering improved financial results, retention and productivity, and deepening the talent pool.²³ When it comes to the business case, the proof is in the numbers.

On a macro level, a recent report from McKinsey Global Institute estimated that \$12 trillion could be added to global growth by advancing gender equality.²⁴ Even at the individual company level, we

see a correlation between financial performance and female leadership. A landmark and much-quoted report from Credit Suisse Research Institute found that companies with women directors outperformed those without women directors in average growth, price/book-value multiples, and return on equity.²⁵ Many CEOs are taking these stats to heart. Sebastien Bazin, CEO of Accor, is committed to closing the pay gap in his company, doubling the share of women in COO roles by 2020 and tripling the share of women on the executive committee by 2018. He also pledged to get 50,000 male employees (60% of the company) to commit to be HeForShe champions for gender equality.²⁶

Other numbers that make the case for gender balance include:

- Women in the U.S. influence nearly 75% of purchasing decisions, and globally control over \$29 trillion in consumer spending.²⁷ Raising women’s employment levels would increase GDP by 5% in the U.S. and more in other countries.²⁸
- Thomson Reuters reported that average stock prices of gender-diverse corporate boards outperformed those with no women.²⁹ Catalyst reported a 26% difference in return on invested capital (ROIC) between the top quartile companies (with 19-44% women board members) and bottom quartile companies (with no women directors).³⁰
- Fortune 500 companies with gender-balance consistently outperform those that don’t. They navigate economic downturns better and at a greater rate.³¹

“Success today, whether in business or in our communities, requires cultural dexterity – the ability to work effectively with people who are different from ourselves. To build that skill we must understand the lens through which we view the world. For white men, that means acknowledging that we have a race and a gender. It also means recognizing that we can contribute to advancing diversity in our organizations.”³²

–Bob Moritz, Global Chairman, PwC

Cultural, Social and Personal Value

There is large body of research demonstrating the positive impact on workplace culture of supporting and advancing women. Building understanding, respect, and stronger relationships between male and female colleagues will improve working lives, outputs, access to sponsorship, and women's career advancement.³³ However, committing to gender equality means men must actively engage to change workplace culture.³⁴

Men are often not aware of the personal benefits of gender equality, such as freedom to share financial responsibilities with a female spouse or partner, more rewarding intimate relationships with women, freedom to be more involved with children, freedom from limiting masculine gender norms, and better psychological and physical health.³⁵

THE STARTING POINT: WHAT DO MEN THINK?

Research demonstrates unequivocally that the key to “getting men on board” is awareness. Men must first recognize their biases and be open to attitude change. But before beginning that journey, both men and women must understand what men are thinking.

What Bias?

Men tend to act as individuals, believing they are not influenced by any group or culture. The hard work for most men is recognizing and acknowledging that the dominant culture in most organizations is a (white) male culture, and that this culture affects everyone's behavior, even our leaders'. To use an analogy suggested by Bill Proudman, men are like fish in a fishbowl. Because they never have to leave, they never see the water that surrounds them. They must make a conscious effort to see the culture around them—the water in the fishbowl.³⁶

Michael Kimmel explains that “Without confronting men's sense of entitlement, we won't see why so many men resist gender equality.”³⁷ For many men, “gender equality is a zero-sum game.” They believe that if women win, men will lose.^{38&39} If more women advance into higher-level jobs and gain more power and influence, then men will lose jobs and have less power and influence. This myth leads men to fear gender diversity efforts and avoid serving as allies.

Not My Problem

A study, conducted by Creative Coaching consultant Karen Barr, interviewed 25 senior male business leaders over nine months and found that many men did not believe gender diversity was a business critical issue. “There was a lack of understanding on the impact of women on your ROI, or your numbers.” Some truly disbelieved figures Barr quoted from well-respected, current studies conducted by McKinsey, Catalyst, the Rebey Institute, and the Grattan Institute. “They wanted...to see the results themselves.” Furthermore, they didn't accept the issue of women's leadership as their responsibility.⁴⁰

The Fairygodboss/Artemis survey found that most men interviewed didn't perceive gender bias to be a major issue in the workplace. Only 33% believed there was gender bias at work and only 10% believed their own workplaces harbored any kind of gender bias.⁴¹

It's worth noting that women's perceptions of fairness in the workplace differs from men's. According to the McKinsey/LeanIn.Org study, a majority of women believed they were subtly disadvantaged in daily interactions at work and questioned workplace fairness.⁴² A Cambridge University study reported that 43% of women aged 28-40 felt that opportunities to progress were not equal between men and women.⁴³

Awkward and Unsure

Men who do embrace gender equity as their responsibility understand the need for a shift in workplace culture, but many do not know how to go about making it happen.⁴⁴ When men do recognize a gender issue at work and want to help, they admit to feeling uncomfortable. The sentiment of men in the Fairygodboss/Artemis study was "...it's kind of awkward" or "I might say the wrong thing." Only 41% of men surveyed said they had publicly advocated for a woman; 21% said they have not advocated or acted as an ally.⁴⁵

PwC Global Chairman Bob Moritz described this hesitancy: "When the topic of diversity comes up, white men often feel labeled 'the bad guys.' We can be so worried about saying the wrong thing that sometimes we default to saying nothing instead. But that is a mistake."⁴⁶

Work/Life Imbalance

Men see inclusion and work/life balance as the biggest challenge women face in the workplace, followed by childcare and mentorship, this according to the Fairygodboss/Artemis report. At the same time and in contradiction, men see the lack of flexible work options for women as the least important problem.⁴⁷ [See Figure 1] A 2013 Pew Survey found that men placed nearly equal—and high—value on "being a good parent" (91% of men; 94% of women) and "having success in marriage" (83% of men; 84% of women).⁴⁸ A short mental leap tells us that this data supports the need for men to help women. If women are to "lean in" to attain these goals, they need men to help at work and at home.



Source: Fairygodboss and Artemis Connection. "Men in the Workplace: An in-depth exploration of what men think of gender diversity in the workplace." Slide presentation, 20 September 2016. Page 28.

The Intention Gap

University of Cambridge research, confirmed by the McKinsey/LeanIn.Org study, identified a gap between intention and implementation. The research showed that “It is not easy to change the established, if unwritten, rules of the way power is wielded in the workplace.”⁴⁹ More than 75% of CEOs included gender equality in their top ten business priorities, but gender outcomes across the largest companies are not changing. Research indicates that corporate America promotes men at 30% higher rates than women during their early career stages and that entry-level women are significantly more likely than men to have spent five or more years in the same role.⁵⁰ The data suggests we fall short in translating top-level commitment into a truly inclusive work environment.

The Good News

When it comes to what men think, there is also positive news. Many sources point to the fact that men generally have good intentions. About 70% of men in the University of Cambridge study believed that a more equal society between men and women would be better for the economy. Many of the problems women report, the study suggests, are caused by unconscious behaviors.⁵¹ These days, says Deborah Spar, president of Barnard College, most men “are firmly committed to advancing the careers of women around them. They want their wives to succeed; they want their daughters to succeed; they want their female friends to succeed; they want to reap the rewards of investing in the trajectories of female employees and co-workers. The problem is that they just don’t know how.”⁵²

“When male leaders show that advocating for and sponsoring women is important, the culture and dynamics shift.”⁵³

—Robert Pantano, Senior Vice President,
Cardinal Health

WHAT IGNITES ATTITUDE CHANGE? MOVING FROM THOUGHTS TO ACTION

In order to gain genuine support for women, we know we need to help increase men’s awareness of gender bias. Indeed, Catalyst research demonstrates that the greater men’s awareness of gender bias is, the more likely they are to feel it is important to achieve gender equality. But how do we get there, especially when research also tells us that men might be prone to negative views – even worse than inaction – before they gain knowledge through D&I training or other programs?^{54&55}

Go Personal and Professional

Studies show that a combination of personal and professional experiences can profoundly affect men’s thinking about gender diversity in the workplace. Research on men as allies in the tech industry conducted by the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) found that “men described various motivations for becoming advocates, including having a minority experience themselves; relationships with their wives, daughters, and mothers; having had female bosses, mentors, or colleagues; attending workshops on bias; and witnessing bias in action.”⁵⁶ It is clear that we must help men define and clarify their personal motivations.

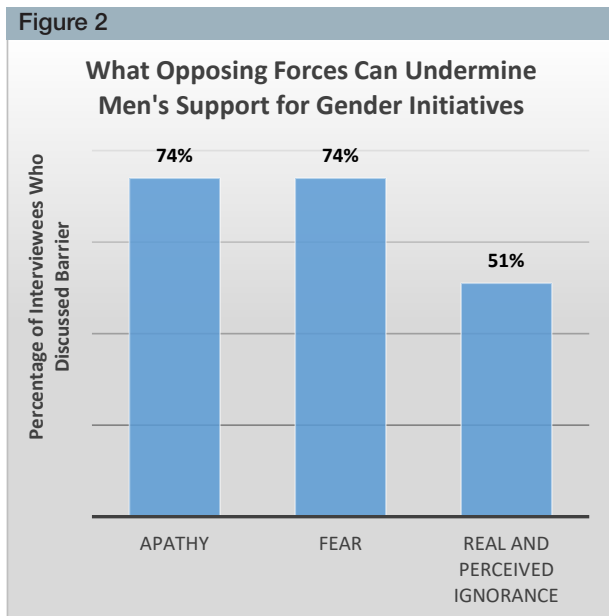
Define Self-Interest

Data indicates that for men to get the greatest impact from training initiatives, they must see such programs as relevant to their jobs. This means bottom line motivators are important, but perhaps surprisingly, so are values like social responsibility. Catalyst research shows that men’s interest in training is linked to a belief that they will develop skills that can help improve the communities in which they operate.⁵⁷ And those who display a strong sense of fairness are significantly more likely to become male advocates for gender equity.⁵⁸

Consultant Chuck Shelton adds that a “competitive spirit can also fuel many men’s willingness to consider the opportunities of being an ally.” He calls it the “Sustainable Collaborative Advantage: when you are known as a man who collaborates well with women, they will choose to work with you.”⁵⁹

Recognize Barriers

It is not easy for many men—even believers—to speak up and act on behalf of women. It is often easier to institute employee resource groups and training programs than it is to make personal behavioral changes. According to Catalyst and NCWIT research, there are many factors discouraging men from taking action as allies.⁶⁰ [See Figure 2] These include apathy, fear, lack of leadership support, lack of time, and a belief that the problem is too daunting. Men also cite lack of clear rationale and lack of consistency. Another deterrent is the notion that “we’ve made progress and we are done.” This can be related to fatigue; advocates often become discouraged when progress feels too slow. Good diversity training and men as allies initiatives can address these issues.



Source: Prime, Jeanine and Moss-Racusin. Engaging Men in Gender Initiatives: What Change Agents Need to Know. Catalyst, 2009. Page 14.

Provide Good Training

Creating and implementing effective men as allies training initiatives requires thoughtful planning. Here's some expert advice:

■ Ensure a Sense of Inclusion

Any effective male allies training will first make sure men feel included in the discussion. Some companies have focused solely on women to fix the gender problem, unwittingly alienating men. Yet if men feel part of the diversity workforce—especially white men—they will be more engaged. It's important to note that 2016 Gallup research suggests that disengaged employees cost the U.S. more than \$450 billion each year in lost productivity.⁶¹

Jorge Quezada, chief diversity officer of Kraft Group, says when he sees men buy-in, it can be like a lightbulb going off. “In the inclusion courses we teach at Kraft, the big ‘aha’ moment for us is when men have said, ‘Oh, thank you, we are finally part of the conversation!’ That has been really exciting when they realize they are not being told what to do, but are being invited to be part of the solution.”⁶²

It is also important to be clear that men are not invited to join the discussion just so they can be blamed for gender inequity problems.

■ Identify Male Privilege

Help men better understand the potentially confining aspects of masculine norms. (Take it like a man. Be a man’s man.)⁶³ Men might not realize that these can suppress their willingness to acknowledge and act to correct gender bias. Catalyst’s research showed that the more men were willing to defy some masculine norms, the higher their awareness of gender bias became. Help men learn what it means to have male privilege.⁶⁴

■ Appeal to a Sense of Fair Play

Although awareness of gender bias is crucial, it is a sense of fair play that ultimately distinguishes whether or not men champion gender equality or not.⁶⁵ The moral imperative to act fairly to all is a reason men in the tech industry cited as to why they supported diversity efforts. They see it as “the right thing to do.” According to the NCWIT study, 38% had been convinced by moral reasons to bring more gender diversity into the field of computing.⁶⁶ Heightening men’s sense of fair play and engaging them in solution-building can be powerful strategies.

■ Tell Stories

Research shows that personal stories increase empathy, and might increase awareness in a male colleague who has trouble understanding the struggles women or minorities face at work. A woman interviewed for the University of Cambridge report shared this: “It was a surprise to me how male dominated the workplace was. Designed by men, for men, with a dominant male culture and set of values.” And a man in the same study: “I have seen women make comments or suggestions in meetings and them being glossed over until a man says exactly the same thing and then everyone says ‘oh yes, good idea.’”⁶⁷

■ Use Social Proof

If a man feels like everyone else at work is supporting women, then he is more likely to support women as well. Influential managers can play a critical role here.⁶⁸ Sharing examples of what other prominent companies and CEOs are

doing to advance gender equity can also serve as social proof. Warren Buffett has fought to bring women onto the board of Berkshire Hathaway—there are now three. Buffett believes women are key to America’s prosperity and wants to continue promoting women’s leadership in business so that men immediately consider females as qualified candidates for top positions, without having to be prompted.⁶⁹

■ Make the Business Case

As multiple resources confirm, the most persuasive arguments for men to support diversity are business case arguments. Since we know many male employees must first overcome zero-sum thinking, it is important to demonstrate how gender diversity is better for everyone, not just women. Diversity helps companies reach out to new customer bases, improves and deepens the talent pool, and fosters a greater diversity of ideas and innovation.^{70&71}

In *Why Women*, Jeffrey Halter points to the fact that “Most companies fail to put an economic value on women’s leadership.”⁷² Yet, McKinsey’s *Diversity Matters* study found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.⁷³ And, a Peterson Institute for Global Economics survey of 22,000 firms globally found that increasing the number of women in the C-suite from 0% to 30% results in a one percentage point increase in net margin. This translates to a 15% increase in profitability for a typical firm.⁷⁴

“When it comes to ensuring that women have the best chances of advancing in corporate leadership, our entire organizational structure and culture should support the idea that women in leadership are the expectation rather than the exception. In order to thrive, companies need the leadership of talented, intelligent women, and those women truly deserve opportunities to lead.”⁷⁵

—Michael Simonds, President and Chief Executive Officer, Unum US

Create a Culture to Support Male Allies

We've noted previously that in workplace culture there is often a gap between intention and implementation of change. Here are a few simple, high-level recommendations to create a supportive culture for your male advocacy work.

- Get the facts about your company – men's attitudes, women's, and the differences in what they say. What's happening at the middle manager level?
- Have honest conversations – men need to ask their female colleagues and especially their female direct reports about the barriers they face at work and home.
- Lead and hold people accountable – leaders must drive the culture, creating an inclusive workplace and holding managers accountable via metrics.
- Train managers – research shows that front-line managers have a significant impact,⁷⁶ yet require resources and support to effect change.

“In order to convince your organization to embrace a culture of truly inclusive leadership, it's crucial to couple a deep understanding of the big picture with whichever company-specific cases will bring these issues closer to home. That's when the hard work begins: putting effective programs in place to support the new culture, ensuring that unconscious bias is properly understood and consistently rooted out, and holding senior leaders accountable for real, measureable progress. Good leaders don't just talk about inclusive leadership. They get results.”⁷⁷

–Jim Turley, Retired Chairman & CEO, Ernst & Young and Honorary Director and Former Chair of Catalyst's Board of Directors

HOW TO LAUNCH A MEN AS ALLIES INITIATIVE

This section provides a simple, step-by-step process to establish a men as allies program in a way that allows you to reap benefits immediately. Those who already have a program in place will find the information useful as a diagnostic tool to update or enhance what you are already doing.

Before You Begin

Prior to launching a program, be sure there is a shared understanding of why male allies are critical to advancing gender diversity. The rationale is based on two realities:

First, the majority of senior executives continue to be men. Male allies in the C-suite are in a position to make gender diversity a priority; they can set policies, establish accountability, and act as role models.

At the same time *all men who work with women* impact the day-to-day experience of female employees and affect how women shape their career trajectories. As workplace allies, men can advocate and amplify. They can actively engage in recognizing and eliminating bias and ensure women are valued, supported, and promoted.

Step 1: Define the Concepts

Start by helping men understand the concepts of diversity, inclusion, and men as allies as they are defined by your organization.

- Explain that diversity and inclusion (D&I) is valued and desired within your organization, and that it involves ALL of us—this includes men, with all their differences and similarities.
- Keep defining and revisiting the term “male ally.” Our research and work with corporate partners confirms that many men and women lack an understanding of the term, especially in the context of the workplace.

D&I DEFINED...

Diversity means all the ways we differ. Some of these differences we are born with and cannot change. Anything that makes us unique is part of this definition of diversity. A corporate partner adds that diversity is “managing and leveraging the power of collective difference.”⁷⁸

Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection—where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business value.⁷⁹

A male ally understands and values gender diversity and is actively engaged in eliminating inequities.⁸⁰ He will, “...advocate for women even when there are no women in the room.”⁸¹

Step 2: Listen to Learn

Explore the attitudes of your male employees.

Several of our corporate partners recommend that you gauge the level of awareness and interest of male employees by holding listening sessions or asking them to complete a survey.

To ensure participation and create dialogue, some companies engage an experienced consultant to design and execute the sessions. One executive's company used senior leaders to issue the invitation to the sessions and offered a financial incentive to boost attendance.

As you begin listening, make sure participants feel safe and welcome.

Listening sessions should include only men and be confidential.

- Acknowledge all feelings and statements. Be sure men understand, “we are *not* here to do things ‘to’ men but ‘with’ men.” There is no blame.
- Acknowledge differences between men—racial, stylistic, generational, sexual orientation, age, beliefs, work roles, disability.

Determine whether the men in your organization are “lagging, learning, or leading.”

- “Lagging” men avoid feedback, doubt the D&I business case, and are not open to change.
- “Learning” men are trying to diversify talent, are uncomfortable with inequity, are inarticulate on the business case, but are open to learning more.
- “Leading” men create diverse teams, link gender equity to revenue, and identify as allies. These “leading” men will be good choices to help you launch and lead your men as allies endeavors.⁸²

Listening questions include:

- Who are we as a company?
- What do we value?
- Why is gender diversity important?
- What problems are associated with advancing women? What benefits?
- Why are you here in this listening session or taking this survey?
- What did you think or feel when you heard about this effort?
- Do you think apathy is a barrier to gender equity?
- Do you think fear is a barrier?
- What other barriers prevent men from engaging in gender initiatives?
- What can this organization do to help alleviate men's fears and encourage engagement?

Insightful comments our corporate partners have heard in listening sessions:

- “There is more and better problem solving now on teams than in the past. You can't get these diverse perspectives without diversity.”
- “I see stress for women talking about maternity leave and raising a family and wondering if it will affect their careers.”
- “This session encourages me. It engages all of us in the process. I've been an ally outside the company, and I see how important it is internally in creating change.”
- “A lot should be applauded, but we need to root out things that hurt women, even small behaviors.”
- “We need employees who understand the needs of diverse customers.”

Concerns our corporate partners have heard in listening sessions:

- “I have been trained as a man to think that I am the problem.”
- “I keep my head down. No matter what I say it could be misunderstood.”
- “If I make a comment they will see me as ‘the old white guy’. I might say something wrong, so I don’t bring my full self to work.”
- “I worry I will be offensive. Sometimes I can’t get my point across because I am being so careful.”
- “It could be career limiting to make a mistake.”
- “Merit will be compromised. We’re lowering our standards to accept more women at higher levels who are not qualified.”

Requests for support our corporate partners have heard in listening sessions:

- “I work now in a department with 75 percent women. I have tried to leave the personal at the door, but that’s not possible with them. How do I adapt to their style?”
- “This session is an opportunity for me to learn about what I don’t know.”
- “How do I learn to open my eyes? One of the women reporting to me said: ‘I was scared to death’ when speaking up in an all male environment. I never thought about that.”
- “I want to expand my own views, and understand where the company is going.”
- “My heart is there, the brain just needs to follow. I don’t know how.”
- “I want to know more about how the (inclusion) work being done is related to business results.”

Step 3: Educate to Create Awareness

Use what you’ve learned through your listening exercises to inform and build awareness.

- For men who are “lagging” or “learning,” offer foundational elements to progress, which may include unconscious bias training, diversity awareness discussions, or dissemination of basic information. All of these approaches will yield results as you move along the continuum to a mature initiative. [See Page 7 for details on training.]
- Answer the common arguments and questions from your findings. Share research, data and statistics to make your case. The business case for gender equity, which is well documented, is the strongest and most persuasive with resistant or apathetic men.
- Explain what’s in it for employees—career opportunity, stronger teams, and better business results.

Invite all employees – men and women – to learn more about the men as allies effort.

Ask employees to sign up for emails or newsletters and get notified of forums or events. One of our business partners proudly reported that 1,000 employees utilized a new website focused on the male allies issue in the first week it was launched. Their website provides employees access to resources and dialogue on the topic.

Step 4: Address Barriers to Action

As you move forward from listening and education toward action, understand that you might encounter an intention gap.

Men might want to take action but not know how. Most employees understand how to operate across business lines, but few have knowledge on how to work successfully across ethnic and gender lines. The onus will be on you to equip men with tools and training and enable them to take action.

Fear will likely be another factor men face as they decide whether or not to take action.

Many men will need help in overcoming the fallacy that gender equality is a zero-sum game – believing that if they help women get ahead, their own chances of advancement will decrease. Research demonstrates that this notion is not true.⁸³ Share this compelling information with reluctant men.

Step 5: Move Male Allies to Action

Determine where you can provide support to men who are ready to learn more and take actionable steps.

- As you progress in engaging more male allies, use listening sessions to identify opportunities and positive findings you can build upon. Find ways to share stories and help men build confidence as allies. One corporate partner offered a men as allies summit for men to learn and share specific actions they could take.
- Consider launching an independent male ally employee resource group (ERG) to engage more men and drive change. While men could join a women's ERG, a separate male ally group fosters a greater sense of ownership. The group can work in close partnership with women's ERGs.⁸⁴

- Utilize the expertise of consultants specializing in men as allies programs. They can help shape a program to the unique culture of your company and lead programs for employees at all levels. They can also provide an outside perspective to senior leadership.⁸⁵

Step 6: Stay the Course

Recognize where you are as a company on the issue of gender equality and men as allies, and be true to that.

If your employees aren't ready for significant changes, adjust your strategy or tempo, and try to meet your male employees "where they are." Try to strike a balance between acknowledging the feelings of men who are reluctant while professionally and respectfully challenging resistant attitudes.

Drive incremental success by repeating and reinforcing messages.

- Create a feedback loop to listen to men's concerns and provide opportunities for men to talk to each other and to women.
- Make sure the information you disseminate is easily digestible and understandable. A CWB corporate partner achieves this by sending all employees short monthly emails and videos on the topic, effectively and efficiently reinforcing gender balance concepts and positive action.

Remember that although change in attitude and culture can move slowly, it doesn't have to be daunting.

Smaller organizations can falsely conclude that they lack the resources to make progress when they observe major initiatives that larger employers are undertaking. Despite fewer resources, smaller entities can be more nimble, enabling them to make targeted, effective changes.

As you make progress, be mindful that some men may always be reluctant to embrace your organization's values around gender diversity and inclusion.

Acknowledge this difference of opinion, but explain that for the sake of their future at your company and their careers in general, these men must respect the company's values. This puts the onus on such individuals to critically examine whether they belong in your organization and what they might encounter in a different one. After some exploration, they might conclude that successful businesses everywhere are committed to authentic gender balance, and that it is in their self-interest to personally evolve on the issue.

Assess Your Readiness

Liberty Mutual has developed a simple but effective exercise to engage employees in a discussion on the status of men as allies and gender diversity. [See Figure 3] It can be utilized at various stages in your progression, based on the unique needs of your own workplace. Ideally, a company would use it during its planning phase and when its work has matured.

Exercises such as these provide effective qualitative feedback, and utilizing them at varying stages provides both a benchmark and a measure of progress.

Figure 3 - Assess Your Readiness

Application Exercise

1. **Draw a continuum** on your paper. **Label** both ends as below.

No focus on engaging men/
Gender blindness/
Win/lose

Men are engaged in the change/
Gender equity as competitive advantage/
Attracting and advancing women key priority

2. **Mark** where you feel your company is currently.

3. **Answer** the following with a partner:

- Successes you are seeing with engaging men and gender collaboration
- Challenges you are seeing
- Potential next steps

TWENTY PRACTICAL THINGS MEN CAN DO TO ADVANCE WOMEN AT WORK

If you are male and want to be an ally to women, there are many practical steps you can take—starting today. Some are simple; others might require more effort. Even incremental changes in individual behavior can contribute to advances for women. Your actions also have the potential to make a discernable difference in your personal life, your work environment, and your company’s overall success.

1. Recruit women.

In doing so, recognize that some of the best candidates might not come to you. Men apply for jobs when they meet 60 percent of the hiring criteria, while women wait until they meet all of them.⁸⁶ Seek out female candidates via LinkedIn, through references and internships, and by making sure hiring committees put women and other diverse candidates on the slate. Some organizations use text analysis applications, such as Textio, to help human resources create descriptions that resonate with women.

2. Actively promote women.

Be specific with women about what it takes to get ahead. Encourage women to apply for jobs with more responsibility, even though they might not currently meet all requirements. Research demonstrates that women get promoted based on their accomplishments, while men get promoted based on potential.⁸⁷ A McKinsey/LeanIn.Org report also shows that men get promoted at a greater rate than women in the first few years of their careers.⁸⁸

3. Provide constructive criticism.

Sometimes men in power are uncomfortable providing negative feedback to female colleagues or employees. The result is that women don’t get the feedback they need to advance their professional development. Be honest and fair, just as you would with your male counterparts.⁸⁹

4. Evaluate performance fairly.

Make sure everyone on your team is aware of gender bias in performance reviews. Research demonstrates that male performance is often overestimated compared to female performance, and gender-blind studies show that removing gender from performance-based evaluations improves women’s chances of success.⁹⁰

Additional data suggests that if a woman is competent, she does not seem nice enough, but if a woman is described as really nice, she is considered incompetent.⁹¹ This bias often surfaces in performance reviews. Challenge this “likeability penalty” and think carefully about your own perceptions of female coworkers.

5. Correct unconscious bias.

In the past, evidence of unconscious bias was often anecdotal, but we now have solid data to demonstrate that no one is immune: all of us are biased. Unconscious bias training is crucial to helping men realize that they aren’t alone, and they aren’t the “bad guys.” Many companies now maintain that unconscious bias training is an essential step in the process of developing an authentic male allies program. Facebook has open-sourced its unconscious bias work. You can also access a free Google Video on Unconscious Bias - [Making the Unconscious Conscious](#).

6. Share the housework at home and the office.

It's well documented that working women are more tired than men because they still carry the bulk of domestic responsibility. For women to succeed, they need an equal division of labor at home, ranging from childcare to household chores.⁹² Likewise, women take on more tedious chores at the office than men do, and as Sheryl Sandberg puts it, "The person taking diligent notes in the meeting almost never makes the killer point."⁹³

Don't assign women duties like note taking at meetings, organizing office parties or training new hires. Even better, raise your own hand to take these jobs, and serve as an authentic role model for other men.⁹⁴

7. If you have workplace flex benefits and parental leave, use them.

By using your flex benefits, you empower women to do the same. And, we can't achieve gender parity if women are the only ones taking child-care leave.⁹⁵ As Liza Mundy writes in *The Atlantic*, "The true beneficiaries of paternity leave are women."⁹⁶ [See the CWB *The Value of Workplace Flex: Options, Benefits, and Success Stories* report for details.]

8. Model alternative work-life strategies.

Set aside time to tend to personal matters. This helps "detoxify" the flexibilities afforded to working mothers and others who need flex. Work to establish grassroots understanding of day-to-day practicalities that require flex time. Challenge the notion that ideal employees are those who have no commitments outside work.

9. Be a mentor.

Women often seek out other women as mentors. But research shows that women who also have male mentors get more promotions and make more money. As a mentor, you can give general advice, but also specifics, such as negotiation advice.⁹⁷

Actively seek out women to mentor. Identify a woman who has made a strong positive impression on you and consider what you see as this woman's particular strengths and talents and what you know about her experience, career goals and ambitions. Explain how you want to help her and why. Be clear. Ask open-ended questions, listen attentively to her answers, and try to see things through her eyes. Be sure your conclusions are based on hard facts, not on what you assume to be true.⁹⁸

And if you are in a position to do so, take it to the next step and actively sponsor a woman. As managers and influencers, sponsors also provide advice and support but have the ability to create tangible opportunity for the other individual and have a vested interest in the protégé's success.⁹⁹

10. Take a female colleague to lunch.

Casual social interaction can provide the foundation for professional relationships. Debora Spar, former president of Barnard College, notes the subtle problems young women confront because their male colleagues are actually fearful that being seen with them will constitute a violation of policy or propriety. The result is that women miss out on the opportunity to form important connections.¹⁰⁰

11. Listen to women's stories...and share them.

Stories are an easy way to digest information and feel empathy. Male advocates in technical workplaces identify listening to their female colleagues' and bosses' stories about their work experience as a key driver to becoming advocates.¹⁰¹

The power of story-telling belies its simplicity: research demonstrates the power of personal stories in transforming attitudes and behavior. "Storytelling is linked with authenticity in leaders...In storytelling, they can personalize diversity and make it their own, and talk about their experiences....The value of the stories they tell is about inspiration, not only in that they believe diversity can happen, but that they can prove, with their own experience, that it worked."¹⁰²

12. Raise the number and visibility of female leaders.

Research shows us that one of the reasons women's aspirations dwindle early in their career path is that they don't see female role models ahead of them in the pipeline.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, data supports women's views. While women enter the workplace in equal numbers as men, their representation decreases step-by-step throughout the career pipeline and falls to about 19 percent by the time they reach the C-suite.¹⁰⁴

13. Establish accountability metrics.

Support and encourage genuine male advocacy and reward it. Some companies require managers to set personal diversity and inclusion goals as part of their reviews and tie them to compensation. Accountability produces results. One company found that its turnover decreased from 24 to 15 percent after establishing an intentional, accountable culture of inclusivity.

14. Make gender discussions less risky.

Raise diversity topics in meetings, including information in newsletters and professional development, asking female colleagues how to handle situations you are unsure of. By doing so, you will both actively support the women you work with and help transform your workplace culture, minimizing the awkwardness men report feeling toward open advocacy.¹⁰⁵

15. Learn not to "maninterrupt."

Research tells us that men interrupt women in conversation far more often than they interrupt other men. Likewise, women get less credit for their contributions than men.

Yale professor Victoria L. Brescoll's study found that women not only speak less often than men in meetings, but when male executives speak more than their peers they are rewarded with 10 percent higher competence ratings. When female executives speak more than their peers, both men and women give them 14 percent *lower* ratings.¹⁰⁶

Progressive workplaces and their like-minded male employees recognize this phenomenon as a common micro-aggression and are working to correct it, largely by modeling different behaviors. The obvious example for men to employ is simply listening more than talking, but a more active tactic is to visibly solicit ideas and questions from women at meetings, and then to affirm them.

16. Be an advocate.

Seek ways for female employees to be better seen, heard and recognized. If a female colleague gets interrupted in a meeting, interject and say you'd like to hear her finish. If you manage a team, ask women to present and lead projects. Have her back when she's not in the room, and call out micro-inequities and unconscious bias when you see them.¹⁰⁷ Invite other men to events that support women, and talk to them to raise awareness about why gender diversity is important.¹⁰⁸

17. Call out injustices, even if they don't impact you.

Being an ally means noticing injustices you don't feel or experience. And once you notice injustice, act. Silence about injustice is interpreted, or misinterpreted, as support for the status quo, says Jeff Barth, program director of Catalyst's *Men Advocating Real Change* program. If a man makes a sexist joke, a male advocate can simply say, "That comment unfairly stereotypes women and I don't think that's okay."¹⁰⁹

18. Experience being a minority.

Through simulations your company might conduct as part of diversity training and by holding honest discussions with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, walk in others' shoes. Seek out occasions where you are the minority member of the group, get engaged, and reflect on how it feels to be "the only."¹¹⁰

19. Join a Lean In Circle.

Lean In Circles are peer groups that meet routinely to gain knowledge collaboratively, helping men and women support each other as they navigate career and personal life. There are currently more than 32,000 Circles worldwide. Consider joining a Circle or, if you can't find one to join, consider starting your own in partnership with female colleagues. To learn more go to leanincircles.org.

20. Publicly pledge your support.

Formally and publicly accept responsibility to help end sexism in the workplace. Join or spearhead formal men as allies programs, pledge to the U.N.'s HeforShe Movement at heforshe.org, or join Catalyst's Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) at onthemarc.org.

“Male champions’ have learned that gender inclusiveness means involving both men and women in advancing women’s leadership...any solutions that involve only 50% of the human population are likely to have limited success.”¹¹¹

—Anna Marie Valerio, President, Executive Leadership Strategies
and Katina Sawyer, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Villanova University

ACTIONS WOMEN CAN TAKE TO ENGAGE AND SUPPORT MALE ALLIES

Regardless of intent, it is not easy for many men to speak up and act on behalf of women. As a woman, you can play a significant role in bringing men into the conversation and supporting their efforts as male allies. You can be an ally to your male allies.

Initiate the conversation using WIIFM (what's in it for men).

The most persuasive arguments for men to support diversity reflect the business case. Share data and research that show how diversity improves productivity and financial returns. Talk about the relevance of gender diversity to their own jobs and tap into men's sense of fairness and social responsibility. [See Page 8]

Also, men care about the women in their lives—friends, spouses and especially daughters. Relate gender diversity to both personal and professional experiences. [See Page 6]

Share your story.

Share the challenges you have faced as well as your strengths, passions and career game plan. Research suggests that stories stick in our brains 20 times more easily than facts and figures.¹¹² Stories build understanding and increase empathy.

Have courageous conversations to address real or perceived hurdles.

When you experience or witness bias, initiate a dialogue to address your concerns. Creating awareness is critical to initiating positive change. At the same time, clearly articulate opportunities you are looking for and ask for honest feedback to help you advance.

Open women's business networks to include men.

You will promote inclusion by inviting men to be part of the conversation about gender equity. This will not only build awareness among male participants and create allies but also bring a diverse perspective to the group.

Actively support and mentor both women and men.

When you amplify other women's voices and call out bias, you act as a role model for others to do the same. As a mentor and sponsor to women, you increase their visibility and value in the organization. As a mentor to men, you help them address their own biases or fears. And as a mentor to younger men, you help prepare the pipeline in a different way. [See *CWB Mentorship, Sponsorship, and Networks: The Power and Value of Professional Connections* report for insights on mentorship.]

Be an ally to your male allies.

Affirm the work and impact of your allies, and share good stories related to your collaborative efforts. Promote the concept of a male-allies initiative in your company, which can work to engage more men and drive change.

Men as Allies: Fundamental to Change

Corporate commitment to all workplace diversity – gender included – has become widely recognized as a business imperative and is increasingly ingrained in workplace culture. As leaders explore solutions to diversity challenges, fostering men as allies initiatives is often included as a key component.

When men at all levels of the organization understand and value gender diversity, they are empowered to advocate and support women and work towards gender equity. The resulting gender partnership benefits all employees –men *and* women are valued, supported, and promoted based on their unique strengths and capabilities. And, in turn, the company benefits from diverse perspectives that catalyze innovation and positively impact the bottom line.



“Fellow males, get on board. The closer that America comes to fully employing the talents of *all* its citizens, the greater its output of goods and services will be. We've seen what can be accomplished when we use 50% of our human capacity. If you visualize what 100% can do, you'll join me as an unbridled optimist about America's future.”¹¹³

–Warren Buffett, Investor and Philanthropist

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- ⁹ Cavanaugh
- ¹⁰ Verveer and Azzarelli
- ¹¹ Zoellick
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- ¹³ Lean In and McKinsey 2016, P 18
- ¹⁴ Pershing, P10
- ¹⁵ Kramer and Harris
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- ¹⁸ Cavanaugh
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- ²⁰ Kimmel, “Empowering Women”
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- ²² Halter, P9
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- ²⁸ Ellingrud et al., In Brief iv-v
- ²⁹ Thomson Reuters
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- ³³ Univ. of Cambridge, P 5
- ³⁴ Univ. of Cambridge, P 5
- ³⁵ Prime and Moss-Racusin, P21
- ³⁶ Proudman
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- ³⁹ Univ. of Cambridge, P6
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- ⁴² Lean In and McKinsey 2016, P11
- ⁴³ Univ. of Cambridge, P6
- ⁴⁴ Preistly
- ⁴⁵ Fairygodboss and Artemis, P32
- ⁴⁶ Moritz
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- ⁴⁸ Kimmel, “Men's Voices”
- ⁴⁹ Univ. of Cambridge, P4
- ⁵⁰ Lean In and McKinsey 2016, P6
- ⁵¹ Univ. of Cambridge, P8&10
- ⁵² Spar
- ⁵³ Bowers, P2
- ⁵⁴ Prime and Moss-Racusin, P5&15
- ⁵⁵ Catalyst, “Actions Men Can Take,” P2
- ⁵⁶ Ashcroft, P9
- ⁵⁷ Prime et al., P4

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⁶⁰ Ashcroft, P15

⁶¹ Gallup, P19

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⁸⁴ Forté, P 5

⁸⁵ Examples of D&I consultants/programs that focus on men as allies: [Greatheart Consulting](#) and [Catalyst Men Advocating Reach Change \(MARC\)](#) programs.

⁸⁶ Noel

⁸⁷ Lean In and McKinsey 2015, P 23

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⁹⁰ LeanIn.Org

⁹¹ Catalyst, "The Double-Bind Dilemma," P 19

⁹² Davis

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⁹⁴ Rosato

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¹⁰⁰ Spar

¹⁰¹ NCWIT

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¹⁰⁴ Lean In and McKinsey 2016, P 5

¹⁰⁵ Fairygodboss and Artemis, P 4

¹⁰⁶ Create & Cultivate

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