

HOW TO BE AN ALLY IN THE WORKPLACE

“Allyship is not an identity—it is a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people. Allyship is not self-defined—our work and our efforts must be recognized by the people we seek to ally ourselves with.”

- British Columbia Teachers' Federation

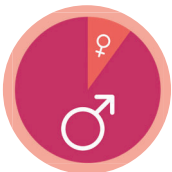
DEFINITION

Ally

/ælaɪ/ noun

An ally is someone who is not a member of an underrepresented group but who takes action to support that group.

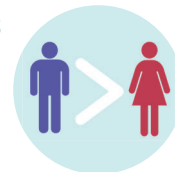
FAST FACTS



Men continue to hold over 90% of C-level executive roles.



Women were only 43 of the 538 named executive officers among Canada's 100 largest publicly traded corporations in 2020, down from 53 in 2019.



Academic scientists who evaluated identical résumés belonging either to “John” or “Jennifer” perceived Jennifer as less competent.

“Becoming a leader involves much more than being put in a leadership role, acquiring new skills, and adapting one’s style to the requirements of that role. It involves a fundamental identity shift. Organizations inadvertently undermine this process when they advise women to proactively seek leadership roles without also addressing policies and practices that communicate a mismatch between how women are seen and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders.”

-Herminia Ibarra, Robin J. Ely, Deborah M. Kolb

There is a huge need for women and other underrepresented groups to be sponsored by leaders in their organizations in order to advance to leadership.

Using your privilege to promote others in your organization helps open doors and bring more diversity, which in turn improves governance and innovation.

READ MORE 

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WHAT IS ALLYSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE?

“An ally is someone who is willing to take action in support of another person to remove external barriers that impede that person from contributing their skills and talents in the workplace or community.” - Jenny Okonkwo, founder of Black Female Accountants Network

ALLIES UTILIZE THEIR CREDIBILITY

- Wield your privilege in the workplace
- Recommend people for stretch assignments and learning opportunities
- Advocate for more women, people of colour, and members of other underrepresented groups – as managers, speakers, panelists, and more!
- Invite members of underrepresented groups to speak at meetings, write for newsletters, and take on other visible roles
- Create a leadership training program that interweaves diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Create a code of conduct for meetings and any other shared forms of communication (E-mail, chat, etc.)

EVERYDAY TIPS FOR ALLIES

Try these phrases when in a meeting, while moderating a panel, or moderating a chat channel within your workplace

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

“I don’t see it the way you do.
I see it as _____.”

“We don’t agree on _____
but we can agree on _____.”

OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE

“Have you ever considered _____?”

FIND COMMON GROUND

SEEK CLARITY

“Tell me more about _____.”

PLUS, CONSIDER THIS:

- Credit transgender people with their current name
- Speak the names of people and recommend them when they’re not in the room
- Use your position of privilege to endorse and shout out others

THE 7 TYPES OF ALLIES

THE SPONSOR

- When an ally takes on the role of the Sponsor, they vocally support the work of colleagues from underrepresented groups in all contexts, but specifically in situations that will help boost those colleagues' standing and reputations.



THE CHAMPION

- Champions willingly defer to colleagues from underrepresented groups in meetings and in visible, industry-wide events and conferences, sending meaningful messages to large audiences.



THE AMPLIFIER

- When an ally takes on the role of the Amplifier, that ally works to ensure that marginalized voices are both heard and respected. This type of allyship can take many forms, but is focused on representation within communication.



THE ADVOCATE

- When an ally takes on the role of the Advocate, that ally uses their power and influence to bring peers from underrepresented groups into highly exclusive circles.



Which one will you be?

THE SCHOLAR

- When an ally takes on the role of the Scholar, that ally seeks to learn as much as possible about the challenges and prejudices faced by colleagues from marginalized groups.



THE UPSTANDER

- The Upstander is someone who sees wrongdoing and acts to combat it. This person pushes back on offensive comments or jokes, even if no one within earshot might be offended or hurt.



THE CONFIDANT

- When an ally takes on the role of the Confidant, that ally creates a safe space for members of underrepresented groups to express their fears, frustrations, and needs.



You don't have to do it all at once – start with a single act and begin a ripple effect!



MORE RESOURCES

SOURCES

- “Being Antiracist,” National Museum of African American History and Culture, May 7, 2021, <http://i.sfu.ca/coodld>
- “The 7 Types of Allies” from *Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces* by Karen Catlin
- “Women in Management (Quick Take),” Catalyst.org, Aug 11, 2020, www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-management/
- “Are You Biased Against Women Leaders?,” AAUW, Feb 10, 2016, www3.aauw.org/article/implicit-association-test/
- Herminia Ibarra et al., “Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers,” Harvard Business Review, Sept 2013, <http://i.sfu.ca/rYJkOT>
- Better Allies, “Be An Upstander With These Phrases, and Other Actions for Allies,” Code Like A Girl, May 21, 2021, <http://i.sfu.ca/yorgcN>
- Kevin Kruse, “5 Simple Ways to Be a Better Ally at Work,” Forbes, Oct 26, 2020, <http://i.sfu.ca/TiaCjQ>
- “What does Allyship Entail?,” Canadian College of Health Leaders, <http://i.sfu.ca/DxscsG>
- “New Analysis Provides Clues to ‘Glass Ceiling’; Tools to Shatter It,” United Nations Development Programme, 2020, <http://i.sfu.ca/QHflho>
- “The Business Case for Gender Diversity,” WWEST, 2014, <http://i.sfu.ca/gsjPiy>
- “Advocacy and Issues,” BCTF, <https://www.bctf.ca/advocacy-issues/social-issues>

FURTHER READING

- *Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces* by Karen Catlin
- *5 Ally Actions*, a free weekly newsletter by Karen Catlin. Subscribe at betterallies.com
- *The Savvy Ally: A Guide for Becoming a Skilled LGBTQ+ Advocate* by Jeannie Gainsburg
- *Good Guys: How Men Can Be Better Allies for Women in the Workplace* by David G. Smith and W. Brad Johnson
- [Sponsors vs. Mentors white paper](#) by WWEST and Jo Miller

ABOUT WWEST

Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology (WWEST) is the operating name for the 2015-2021 NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering (CWSE), BC and Yukon Region. Our mission is to engage industry, the community and students to increase the awareness and participation of women and other under-represented groups in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields of study and careers. WWEST works regionally and, in conjunction with the other CWSE Chairs, nationally on policy, research, advocacy, facilitation, and pilot programs that support women in science and engineering.

Chairholder: Dr. Lesley Shannon

Dr. Lesley Shannon P.Eng is a Professor and Chair for the Computer Engineering Option in the School of Engineering Science at Simon Fraser University. Dr. Shannon studies computer systems design. She works in a rapidly growing field that combines custom computing hardware and software to design and implement application-specific computer systems for applications in a wide range of areas including robotics, machine learning, aerospace and biomedical systems, multimedia applications, and cloud computing.

ABOUT KAREN CATLIN

Karen Catlin is a leadership coach and an acclaimed author and speaker on inclusive workplaces. After spending twenty-five years building software products and serving as a vice president of engineering at Macromedia and Adobe, she witnessed a sharp decline in the number of women working in tech. Frustrated but galvanized, she knew it was time to switch gears.

Today, Karen coaches women to be stronger leaders and men to be better allies for members of all underrepresented groups. Karen’s coaching offerings include tactics for increasing visibility, being more strategic, managing stakeholders, negotiation, and cultivating ally skills.

To help more people cultivate ally skills, Karen wrote *Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces*. She also published a companion guidebook, *The Better Allies™ Approach to Hiring*, with best practices to recruit and hire people from underrepresented groups.

Learn more about Karen and her projects at karencatlin.com and betterallies.com