

The Ally Advantage: Why Male Leadership is the Key to Unlocking Corporate Potential

Gender equality is now a critical business imperative rather than just a “women’s issue”. Truly innovative and high-performing organizations depend on the active participation of male allies, whose effectiveness is one of the most vital factors in women’s career success.

As an expert organization with deep know-how in this field, Aj Ty v IT works with companies to bridge the gender gap in tech and leadership. Drawing on global best practices and research, we have compiled the five most essential questions managers ask when looking to implement male allyship programs within their organizations.

WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY MEAN TO BE A “MALE ALLY” IN A PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT?

A male ally is defined as a member of an advantaged group who is committed to building supportive relationships with women, minimizing sexism in their own behavior, and understanding the social privilege conferred by their gender. Allyship is not a passive state or a self-proclaimed title; it is an ongoing process of advocacy and action. Effective allies recognize that women’s rights are human rights and take responsibility for questioning power dynamics within their workplace.

IS THERE A CLEAR “BUSINESS CASE” FOR MALE ALLYSHIP, OR IS IT JUST ABOUT CULTURE?

The impact on the bottom line is substantial. Organizations with greater leadership diversity are 70% more likely to capture new markets and are significantly more innovative and higher performing. Specifically, companies in the top 25% for gender diversity on executive teams are 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability. Furthermore, a culture of allyship is a talent retention tool; employees in inclusive environments are 50% less likely to leave and 75% less likely to take sick days.

WHAT IS THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORING AND SPONSORING?

Many managers believe they are supporting women when they are only providing one form of help. Mentorship involves direct support: giving advice, feedback, and coaching to help a mentee develop their skills. Sponsorship, however, is externally facing advocacy. A sponsor acts as a “brand manager” or “publicist,” using their own social capital and influence to sway an audience in

favor of their protégé. Sponsors nominate women for high-visibility projects, publicly defend them during evaluations, and stake their own reputation on the protégé’s future success. While mentorship is helpful, sponsorship is the “halo effect” that actually shatters glass ceilings.

WHAT PRACTICAL ACTIONS CAN A MANAGER TAKE TODAY TO START BEING AN ALLY?

Allyship is often built through small, daily interactions that promote cultural change. Managers can start with these immediate steps:

- **Listen with curiosity:** Book monthly meetings with women on your team specifically to discuss the challenges they face and how you can support them.
- **Amplify voices:** If a woman’s idea is overlooked in a meeting, repeat it and ensure she receives the credit.
- **Interrupt bias:** Call out inappropriate behavior in the moment, such as when a male colleague interrupts a female peer.
- **Audit the workload:** Ensure that “non-promotable” tasks (like taking notes or organizing events) are distributed evenly and not automatically assigned to women.
- **Be a “Bias Interrupter”:** Look at recruitment and promotion processes to identify where hidden biases might be hindering female talent.

WHAT DO MEN GAIN PERSONALLY FROM BECOMING ACTIVE ALLIES?

Gender equality is a win-win, not a zero-sum game. By challenging rigid patriarchal norms, men improve their own mental health, wellbeing, and life expectancy. Ultimately, being an ally cultivates essential inclusive leadership skills, including emotional intelligence and active listening, which lead to higher job satisfaction and greater career opportunities.

Moving Toward Authentic Action

The transition from “silent allyship” to authentic action requires courage and a willingness to lean into discomfort. Performative gestures—like posting on social media without taking internal action—can actually demoralize staff and hurt your brand.

Aj Ty v IT is here to provide the expert guidance, tools, and training modules your organization needs to turn these insights into a sustainable strategy. By investing in male allyship, you are not just supporting women; you are building a more resilient, profitable, and human-centric future for your entire company.

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Petra is the founder and CEO of Aj Ty v IT, an NGO supporting women in IT since 2012. She chairs the DiversIT Charter Working Group at the European Council of Professional Informatics Societies and is a board member of the American Chamber of Commerce Slovakia. Recognized as Female Role Model of the Year 2018 by CESA and a Women in TECH Inclusion Award 2020 laureate, she inspires girls and women to pursue careers in tech. In 2023, she was named among the TOP100 Women in Europe Social Enterprises. Her organization has trained over 60,000 women, increasing female participation in IT from 3% to 17%. Petra holds a PhD from the University of Economics in Bratislava and studied at Université Pierre Mendès France and Institut des Études Politiques Paris, advocating for women’s education and inclusion in technology.

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