



Engaging Allies in Diversity and Inclusion

DBP RESEARCH REQUEST

Case Studies

How Leading Companies Engage Allies

Accenture: Mental Health Allies Program



Accenture has a [Mental Health ally program](#) offering training and certification in allyship and advocacy. Accenture's US Disability employee resource group launched the Mental Health Allies program to create mental health awareness and provide support and resources to employees in a safe space.

Mental health allies are volunteer employees from across the company who are personally committed to supporting mental health awareness and education, and who are available to listen and provide open, honest, non-judgmental support. They serve as ambassadors and advocates and provide a go-to resource for employees looking for support or for information on mental health and the benefits and other resources available at Accenture.

Although allies are not trained psychologists, psychiatrists or therapists, they are educated and trained in mental health topics, and often have experienced a mental health condition themselves. In addition to a US-based chapter, the program operates chapters in seven countries globally, with plans to launch 19 additional global chapters in 2019.

Today, the Mental Health Allies program includes more than 6,000 members across 27 Accenture offices worldwide. Each one of the more than [1,200 allies](#) wears a special Mental Health Ally lanyard that identifies them as someone who is informed and approachable for anyone who wants to talk.

Weil: Upstander Initiative Engages and Rewards Allies



Weil recognized that diversity allies were needed to promote greater inclusion for all employee groups. In 2015, the firm launched Upstander@Weil to inspire managers and employees to stand up for inclusion in the workplace, community and at home.

The campaign expands the powerful "ally" concept within the LGBT community to a broader spectrum of groups, including people of color and women. Upstanders are allies, supporters and advocates for people and communities that share a different background or identity than one's own.

The kick-off event featured a video of Upstander@Weil across levels and offices, inspiring remarks from Executive Partner Barry Wolf, and a panel sharing how they actively support diversity. A diversity training workshop with over 20 sessions across eight offices, an action guide with over 50 upstander behaviors, and extensive online resources were developed to raise awareness and showcase concrete behaviors to be an Upstander@Weil.

The Andrea Bernstein Upstander@Weil award rewards and recognizes actions promoting diversity. To date, over 70 administrative staff and attorneys globally have received the Upstander@Weil award. The firm continues to expand on the Upstander@Weil initiative through diversity education programs and events.

Bank of America: Engaging Allies Through Intersectionality



Bank of America's Native American Professional Network (NAPN) is one of the company's fastest growing employee-led networks, and also its most diverse. Although the network is organized around the interests and needs of the Native American community, NAPN is led by an African American employee and the majority of NAPN leaders and members are from non-Native American majority groups.

The framework emphasizes the importance of intersectionality as a next step in breaking down diversity siloes. It enables both Native American and non-affinity employees to take on a leadership role, and engages employees across diversity dimensions as network members. Having diverse representation has allowed the group to address stigma and unconscious bias around Native American culture and brought those discussions to the forefront. The centralized, virtual structure has proven to be an effective framework for building shared goals, replicating best practices and sharing lessons learned.

In addition to seeking opportunities for cross-collaboration with other employee networks in the organization, NAPN successfully leverages the bench strength of leadership and members, the majority of which are non-Native American, to implement financial awareness and literacy initiatives to improve the economic mobility of Native American communities, provide training and education to develop the next generation of Native American leaders, and deliver a robust program of community outreach and volunteerism.

Today, 40 committed and influential NAPN leaders oversee the network's activities across the U.S, and membership has increased from 104 members in 2015 to more than 1,500 in 2018.

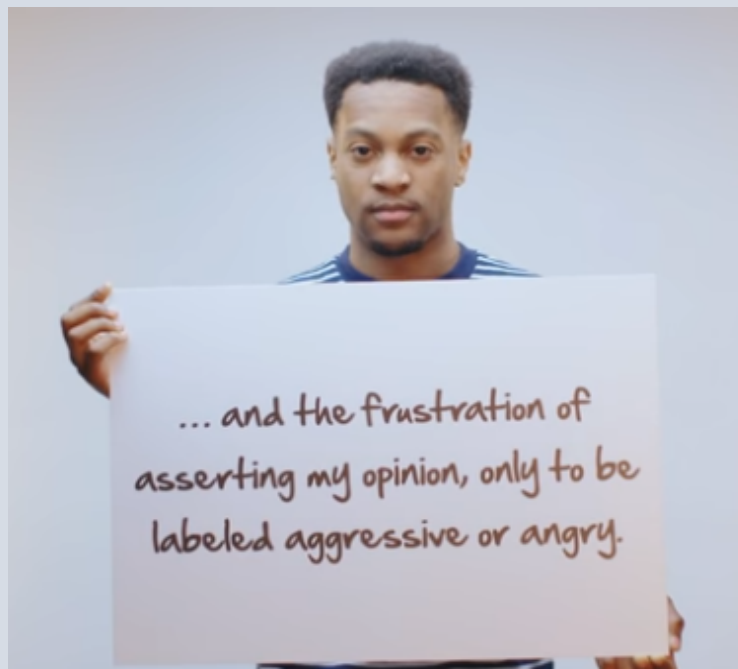
Accenture: Inclusion Starts with “I”



Accenture’s latest video, “Inclusion starts with ‘I,’” features real employees sharing their feelings about unfair ways they have been treated at work. The [initiative](#), which was developed through a series of employee-led workshops, hammers home the point that inclusion means creating an environment in which everyone feels valued and respected.

In the video, some employees talk about being mistaken for other ethnicities. Some young employees were tired of being dismissed as entitled or unengaged. Others worried that misconceptions about their disabilities would leave them behind at work. And some expressed resentment that their accomplishments, as majority culture white males, weren’t as celebrated as those of others.

The video was rolled out at the company’s annual learning conference for executive directors, with nary a dry eye in the 700 seat auditorium. After the video aired, Nate Boaz, the managing director in charge of talent strategy and learning, asked each employee to turn their own feelings into a specific commitment to be a better ally.



Senior leaders at Rockwell understood that to make sustainable change in diversity and inclusion efforts, the dominant group at the company - in this case white men - needed to be aware of the impact of their privilege, be engaged, and partner with women and underrepresented groups in a meaningful way.

A new Culture of Inclusion strategy was developed with three main elements: Awareness and Learning, Understanding and Removing Barriers and Creating Differentiation. The company partnered with White Men as Full Diversity Partners to increase awareness of the impact and value of differences and group dynamics, as well as the impact of privilege through experiential learning labs and summits.

Inclusion Change Teams were formed to address barriers to inclusion, with white male business leaders comprising the majority of these teams. Men also formed “Allies” groups to support women and women-based employee resource groups, as advocates and sponsors. Over 1,000 leaders and 4,000 employees have attended learning labs and summits.

The Culture of Inclusion approach has helped create a more inclusive and engaging work environment. Results demonstrate that this contributed to advancing women and people and people of color across the company. Between 2008 and 2016, women’s representation in the US increased from 12% to 22% among executives and from 14% to 23% among directors. People of color representation has increased from 11% to 17% among executives and from 10% to 17% among directors.

Five Ways to Get Men Involved



A study by [Boston Consulting Group](#) found that when men are engaged as allies in gender inclusion programs, **96% of organizations see progress** — compared to only **30% of organizations where men are not engaged**.

The study also found men tend to overestimate how well their company is doing in terms of gender issues. When asked whether their organization has made progress in gender diversity over the past one to three years, men were, on average, 12% more likely to say yes than women. Men also tend to overestimate their personal involvement in such efforts by an average of 17%. In some major markets—Australia and India, for example—men rate their involvement substantially higher than women do, by 20% or more.

SUPPORT FLEXIBLE-WORK POLICIES

Take advantage of flexible-work arrangements, such as part-time work and parental leave.

Actively support others who take advantage of such arrangements.

Source: BCG analysis.

MODEL THE RIGHT BEHAVIORS

Make no assumptions about the challenges and roles that women may want to take on.

Be mindful of the messages you send, and speak up if you see something amiss.

COMMUNICATE FAIRLY

In meetings, ensure that everybody has sufficient opportunities to speak.

In evaluations, focus feedback on actions rather than personality traits.

SPONSOR A HIGH-POTENTIAL WOMAN

Actively support a woman in your organization to advance and develop, advocating for her at key inflection points in her career, such as a promotion or a transfer.

GET INVOLVED WITH COMPANY-SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

Participate in women's initiatives within your organization: for example, attend a recruiting or affiliation event and support initiatives via social media.

Tips for Male Allies

First, just listen. Generous, world-class listening requires focus, sincerity, empathy, refusal to interrupt, and genuine valuing of both her experience and her willingness to share it with you.

Respect the space. Women's conferences and ERGs are one outgrowth of experiences of exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination. Large events and local resource groups have afforded women a powerful platform for sharing experiences, providing support, and strategizing equity initiatives. Tread respectfully into these spaces.

Remember, it's not about you. Ask women how you can amplify, not replace or usurp existing gender parity efforts. Refrain from taking center stage, speaking for women, or mansplaining how women should approach gender equity efforts.

Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Learning about the professional challenges of women may produce feelings of self-shame or self-blame that cause anxiety. The solution is more interaction and learning, not less.

Engage in supportive partnerships with women. The best cross-gender ally relationships are reciprocal, and mutually growth-enhancing. Share your social capital (influence, information, knowledge, and organizational resources) with women's groups but ask them — don't assume — how you can best support their efforts.

Remember the two parts to allyship. Keep in mind that committing to express as little sexism as possible in your interactions with women is the easy part of allyship. The hard part requires you to take informed action. Use your experience in women's events and initiatives to learn how you can best become a public ally for social justice around gender.

Resources for Engaging Men as Allies

The National Center for Women and IT (NCWIT) publishes a range of freely accessible, research-based resources on male advocates and allies, and on their role in promoting gender diversity in technology workplaces:

- [Male Advocates and Allies: Promoting Gender Diversity in Technology Workplaces](#)
- [The Tricky \(And Necessary\) Business Of Being A Male Advocate For Gender Equality](#)
- [Male Allies and Advocates:* Helping Create Inclusive & Highly Productive Technology Workplaces](#)
- [Top 10 Ways to Be a Male Advocate for Technical Women](#)
- [NCWIT Tips: 8 Ways to Increase Male Advocacy](#)
- [NCWIT Tips: 8 Ways to Identify Male Advocates](#)

Mercedes Benz: Competition Spurs Inclusion



Mercedes Benz (MB) launched two initiatives to foster an inclusive culture: MB Clubs and Business Resource Groups (BRGs). The company first surveyed employees to understand which clubs/BRGs they wanted in order to ensure the groups would be grass roots and sustainable. The D&I Team then connected interested employees and let them drive the groups, while providing ongoing structure, guidance, and oversight.

MB has over 20 MB Clubs around the country that encompass a variety of personal interests (sports, reading, photography, foreign languages, DIY projects, family outings, etc.). Members of the MB Clubs meet regularly to network with each other, have fun, and give back to the community. In order to drive more excitement, we had a Shark Tank-style competition called “Clash of the Clubs,” where clubs competed against each other for funding from the D&I Team for their club activities. **Each club had 5 minutes to present the case for how their club drives engagement and inclusion and were judged on content, delivery, and creativity.**

MBUSA has 5 Business Resource Groups (BRGs) and each BRG has 3 committees: Development, Business Impact, and Community. Although BRGs are not unusual, the mix of our BRGs is somewhat different, particularly as it relates to generational issues and secondary diversity dimensions: Driveher (Women), IGNITE (African American), Unity (LGBT & Allies), ERAS (Generational), and CONNECT (Communication style, work experience, function, and location).

SF Fed: ERGs Charged with Engaging Allies



Employee resource groups create an environment for employees to learn from those whose identities and cultural norms are different from their own. Even if an employee doesn't personally identify with a group, they can still show their support and participate by being an ally.

To address the opportunity and extend the company's efforts to promote inclusion, the San Francisco Fed designed an initiative focused specifically on the role of an ally and launched the new program at its annual ERG summit. The theme for the summit was "Be an Ally", and the company asked all of its ERGs to recruit new members that would be allies to their cause.

Below are five simple things the company suggests allies can do:

Ask. Get to know people. Ask other about their experiences and share your own.

Listen. Listen with empathy. Be open-minded and curious.

Learn. Learn about current issues that are important to the community or communities you support.

Show up. Show up and engage. One of the most powerful things an ally can do is to simply show up.

Speak up. Speak up and help amplify the voices and concerns of the groups you support.

Seek out Inclusive Literature and Films



Today, too many organizations still [miss the mark on gender equity efforts](#) by focusing gender initiatives solely on changing women — from the way they network to the way the lead.

[Individualistic approaches to solving gender inequities overlook systemic structural causes](#) and reinforce the perception that these are women’s issues — effectively telling men they don’t need to be involved. Without the avid support of men, often the most powerful stakeholders in most large corporations, significant progress toward ending gender disparities is unlikely.

What’s at stake? A [study by McKinsey](#) projects that in a “full potential” scenario in which women participate in the economy identically to men, \$28 trillion dollars (26%) would be added to the annual global GDP when compared to the current business-as-usual scenario.

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.

Source: [CEOAction](#)

Engaging White Men as Allies

Engaging white men as allies at all levels in the D&I effort is a business imperative. They make up most of today's business leaders and their buy-in is crucial to establishing D&I as a business priority and securing the resources and commitment needed to sustain the program.

In the White Men's Leadership Study, 70% of white male respondents and 60% of women and minority leaders were not clear whether diversity initiatives were intended to include white men. In the study, white male respondents identified 'exclusion' as the primary challenge they faced when attempting to incorporate D&I aspects into company goals and initiatives. As a result of this disconnect, there are few if any opportunities for white men to get involved on D&I committees for in employee resource groups.

A national study by the University of California at Santa Barbara found that diversity programs made many white men feel threatened, and many expressed concerns that diversity initiatives would undermine their role and accomplishments and diminish the opportunities that were available to them. D&I programs must communicate how the organization and all its members, including white males, stand to gain by a diverse workforce.

Engaging White Men as Allies

Because many white men don't understand where they fit in the diversity equation, they can view D&I efforts as a 'zero sum game' in which they ultimately stand to lose opportunities for advancement and promotion to other members of the workforce.

Multiple factors contribute to distancing white men from the D&I effort. These can include underlying bias and stereotypes, deep rooted belief systems, and an overall lack of cultural competency. In addition, many companies still don't have a clear view of the role white males play in the D&I effort or targeted strategies to engage them.

No business strategy can deliver real results if individuals in positions of power and key members of the workforce are disconnected from that strategy. And while white male support and championship of the D&I enterprise at the leadership level is critical, it's not enough. White males in mid-level positions of management and supervision also have a profound impact on corporate culture and play a significant role in ensuring equity in the workforce.

Seek out Inclusive Literature and Films

Movies like *Moonlight* are useful, as are documentaries like [How to Survive A Plague](#), about the 1980s AIDS crisis, and *Screaming Queens*, about a transgender rights protest once lost to history.

Books range from *I'm From Driftwood*, about growing up gay in a small town, and *The Elusive Embrace*, a memoir by *New Yorker* writer Daniel Mendehlson about being gay and a classicist, or the memoirs and novels of Edmund White about being a gay man in New York and Paris in the 1960s.

About mental illnesses, too, memoirs abound: *Marbles*, a graphic novel about manic depression; *Look Me In The Eye* by Jon Elder Robison, about life with Asperger's syndrome; *Memoirs of an ADHD Mind*, and many more.

Conclusion

Many traditionally majority employees assume that diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives are then not about them, or not something they need to pay attention to.

Companies need to find new ways to talk about D&I and make it more personal. This means broadening the definition of D&I and communicating to employees that it takes everyone to achieve meaningful change.

No matter how you identify, being an ally means honoring the unique experiences of others and championing respect in your own way.

Allyship affirms the experiences and perspectives of others and promotes open-sourcing problems by actively involving others in decision-making and problem solving.

Becoming a strong ally is rarely an overnight transformation, but a journey of learning, understanding and change. Support the journey without judgement and provide resources to help new and existing allies to thrive.