



How to be your best ally self

A roadmap for modern leadership

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Foreword

Our recent [joint research study](#) in cooperation with Women Leaders in Data and AI (WLDA) and Revelio Labs highlights the gender gap of women in the critically strategic field of Data, Analytics and AI. This gap in the US based workforce serves to reduce the diversity and the full potential of technological innovation overall.

For progress to occur there are many levers to improve the representation of women. Foundational to progress is the role of the Ally. The [Center for Creative Leadership](#) defines Allyship as the actions, behaviors and practices that leaders take to support, amplify and advocate for others. In its broadest sense Allyship is applicable far beyond gender.

While the context for Allyship in this document applies to helping Women in Data, Analytics and AI Careers, the ideas and practices are applicable more broadly.

A key challenge to building allyship in an organization centers on the fact potential allies (often male leaders), are frequently filled with a desire to help but are unsure how and when to meaningfully support women in this field. This point of view document helps to frame Allyship and provide a starter kit of ideas relating the actions, behaviors and practices that will make a difference to grow this community and ensure the Data, Analytics and AI workforce is as diverse, innovative as possible.



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Educate yourself

Begin your journey

Gender diversity and equality are central to creating inclusive spaces where innovation thrives and perspectives from all backgrounds are valued. This guide explores key strategies and actions that can be taken to support and uplift women and other diverse groups in their professional endeavors.

Educate yourself on the barriers and challenges women face

- ✓ Examine the shape of the workforce – understand the facts and the extent of the problem
- ✓ Measure and track representation using data to guide action
- ✓ Understand the challenges women face (lack of sponsorship, harassment, bias)
- ✓ Actively seek out and learn about the different experiences and perspectives of women with intersectional backgrounds: including women of color, LGBTQ+ or women with disabilities



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Amplify the voices and contributions of women

Increase visibility



- ✓ Invite and encourage women to speak at events as moderators and panelists.
- ✓ Rotate speakers to share the spotlight from “the usual few.”
- ✓ Intentionally invite more women to higher-level events; encourage other leaders to identify women who should be invited to events and meetings where they will gain visibility, grow their network, and be seen as candidates for future leadership roles.



Celebrate achievement



- ✓ Highlight their achievements and innovation and spread the word through multiple channels to ensure their work is publicly recognized and provide examples for the organization to see women as innovators/leaders in Data, Analytics and AI.
- ✓ Nominate deserving innovators or operational excellence for internal or external awards.



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Advocate for more representation by supporting initiatives to promote gender diversity

Lean in to promote women

- ✓ Be mindful of the representation of women when doing compensation planning and promotion decisions.
- ✓ Encourage women to reach for new opportunities, even if they do not think they have all the qualifications.
- ✓ Advocate for women to receive the same stretch opportunities afforded to their male colleagues. Evaluate the resources they might need to set them up for success.
- ✓ Be intentional during calibration sessions and mindful of unconscious bias that may impact ratings.



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Advocate for more representation by supporting initiatives to promote gender diversity

Encourage sponsorship & networking

- ✓ Promote mentoring by actively connecting experienced women/allies at various levels.
- ✓ Join ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) as an ally and amplify their voice with your time, listening and leadership.
- ✓ Actively participate or co-sponsor networking events - consider co-hosting with women's ERG and other ERGs to build awareness and address intersectionality.
- ✓ Role model and encourage other allies to join and support these efforts.

Connect to resources

- ✓ Connect women with training and leadership courses.
- ✓ Consider scholarships to encourage up-and-coming talent and recruit from a broader range of educational institutions.
- ✓ Advocate for benefits that enable women (and all members of the workforce who are caregivers) to fully contribute to the organization: schedule flexibility, dependent care resources, transit subsidies, mental health resources, lactation accommodations, etc.



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Challenge bias visibly in front of you and look for bias where you might not have previously looked

Be vocal and visible in your support



- ✓ Check problematic behaviors when they occur by openly condemning sexist, offensive or harmful comments. Try to provide feedback as close to real-time as possible mindful not to alienate individuals.

Bring women into the conversation



- ✓ Look for opportunities to pull women into the foreground in conversation – regardless of level. Try to balance voices in the room.

Question the data



- ✓ If you work with Data – challenge if your data sets have inherent bias in them. Learn how to do this and show others



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Foster a culture of inclusion and Psychological Safety

As an Ally, your actions often influence / establish / reinforce the culture of a group or organization. While the definition of culture is complex, here are some pragmatic ways you can role model inclusivity:

- ✓ Continue to listen to and learn from stories and experiences of others
- ✓ Keep up with the latest research and survey results on women in the workplace, women in leadership, and data, analytics and AI
- ✓ Look for opportunities to celebrate differences and similarities
- ✓ Create an environment where women can feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of negative consequences
- ✓ Share personal stories to demonstrate vulnerability and empathy (e.g., medical journey, work-life balance, when you felt unwelcome)
- ✓ Avoid intentional sidebar chats that are exclusionary to the other participants in a meeting.
- ✓ Openly share underlying logic relating to decisions and remain transparent



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Showing-Up is sometimes all you need to do

While verbal support is crucial, actions and behavior speak louder than words. Just “showing-up” can be a powerful way you show support:

- ✓ Be present in dialogue but don't feel like you always need to comment. Listening and gaining perspective can be powerful
- ✓ Allyship is not a title but a verb. It is a continuous journey of learning, listening and leveraging one's influence to create a more equitable and inclusive environment
- ✓ Don't let fear of saying the wrong thing stop you from getting involved. Mistakes will happen, own them, learn from them to become a better ally



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