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Allyship - The Key To Unlocking The Power Of Diversity

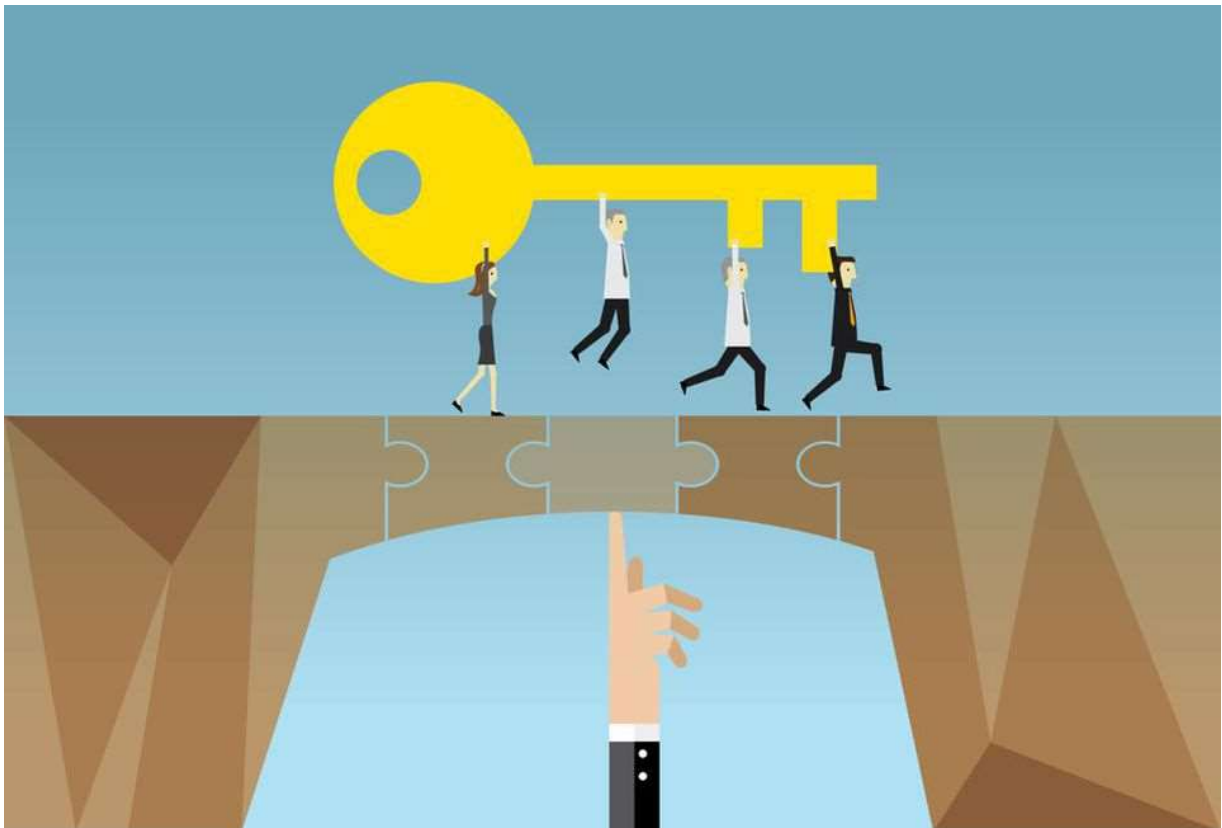


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Diversity & Inclusion

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It is no secret that the tech industry has reshaped how society lives – from ordering weekly groceries online, recording fitness goals, revolutionizing healthcare and everything in between. Technology is intrinsic to almost every single thing people do. With this in mind, the industry creating these ground-breaking solutions must represent the society which uses it so readily - currently, it does not.



Bridging the gap in technology GETTY

Representation in technology

In a [report](#) released by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2016, it was outlined that white people are represented in industry at a higher rate in the tech sector's executive category than the rest of the private sector, at 83%—more than 15% higher than their representation in the professional category, which includes jobs like computer programming. Other groups are represented at significantly lower rates in the executive category than in the professional category, including African Americans (2% to 5.3%), Hispanics (3.1% to 5.3%), and Asian Americans (10.6% to 19.5%). Additionally, if we focus on gender, [less than 7% of tech professionals](#) in Europe are female.

The representation of those in [intersectional](#) communities is even lower. For example, between 2007 and 2015 [there has been a 13% decrease](#) in the number of black women professionals. Even though white women are now substantially more successful in reaching the executive level than all minority men or women, white men are still 47% more likely than white women to be executives.

To have the most successful and well-rounded tech industry, representation of marginalized groups in industry must improve. To invoke this change, the majority must help, support and advocate for the minority. If engaged correctly, allies hold the power and the key to stimulate positive change.

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What is an ally?

An ally is any person that actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.

Everyone has the ability to be an ally as privilege is **intersectional** - white women can be actionable allies to people of color, men can be allies to women, cis people can be allies to members of the LGBTQI+ community, able-bodied people can be allies to those with different abilities, economically privileged people can be allies to those who are not and so on.

What is allyship?

Allyship is:

- a lifelong process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals and/or groups of people.
- not self-defined—work and efforts must be recognized by those you are seeking to ally with.
- an opportunity to grow and learn about ourselves, whilst building confidence in others.

Becoming actionable allies

To be allies, words and action must be in sync. Words without actions are detrimental and work against changing the culture in technology.

To be a true ally, you should:

- Lift others up by advocating,
- Share growth opportunities with others,
- Not view venting as a personal attack,
- Recognize systematic inequalities and realize impact of **micro-aggressions**,
- Believe underrepresented people's experiences, and

- Most importantly – listen, support, self-reflect & change.

Small actions, big impact

Allyship is a continual investment of time in supporting others, holding ourselves accountable when mistakes are made, apologizing and being prepared to rework the approach towards allyship as needs change.



Diverse teams have the ability to make full-bodied solutions for society GETTY

Through personal actions, a more inclusive environment can be fostered by:

- Becoming a sponsor – champion someone from an underrepresented community to support career growth and increase company retention. **Being a sponsor is different to being a mentor** – sponsoring is being actively involved in aiding someone’s career progression, mentoring is providing advice.
- Calling out inappropriate behavior – People in privileged positions have the ability to call out unacceptable behavior towards underrepresented people and be heard. Underrepresented people

may not be comfortable raising issues due to a fear of backlash or risk of jeopardizing professional relationships.

- Tasking all employees with getting involved with diversity and inclusion related tasks – **embracing diversity & fostering an environment of inclusion is good for business**. Everyone should be involved. Do not assign this daunting task to underrepresented people only.
- Using inclusive language – Be aware of gendered terms, and use language which embraces all walks of people. For example, **using “partner”** instead of gendered terms such as “girl/boyfriend” or “husband/wife” to be more inclusive of those in the LGBTQI+ community.
- Rolling out unconscious bias training regularly – Understand that unconscious, unchecked bias cannot and will not be fixed after one unconscious bias training session. This is a growing process and continued challenging of ourselves and peers must happen to aid growth and learning in this space.
- Trying different recruitment methods – To attract and retain different kinds of people, use different recruitment methods. Partner with organisations which actively push for equality in that space, be present at conferences, and reach out to underrepresented people for their honest feedback on where they would look for roles – listen to the people you are trying to reach.
- Recognizing privilege and use it to amplify underrepresented voices – Understanding and **recognizing privilege** can be a daunting and uncomfortable task. Having uncomfortable conversations with yourself, understanding the systematic and societal issues which may have played in your favor is eye opening and allows you to use this privilege to amplify those who do not have it.

- Following an array of voices – Learning and growth will not happen without being challenged. Follow different people and listen to them. Challenge yourself to cross-examine your bias after learning from different voices.

In conclusion, a true ally must regularly listen to those around them, adapt their thinking, rework what they believe to be correct & become comfortable being uncomfortable.

It can be a unique and challenging journey becoming and remaining an ally, but certainly one worth taking.

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