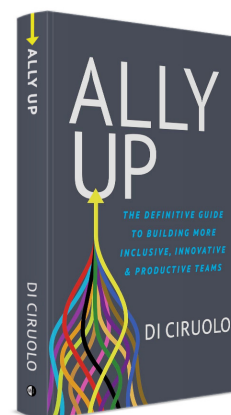


Ally Up

The Definitive Guide to Building More Inclusive, Innovative, and Productive Teams

by **Di Ciruolo**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Companies everywhere say that they're making efforts to become more inclusive, but what exactly does that mean? Are they going far enough in their efforts to make workplaces more inclusive, innovative and productive by introducing ideas and perspectives in a more representative way?

In *Ally Up*, you'll learn how to turn diversity, equity, and inclusion into more than just buzzwords. With 85% of corporate executives and board members in the U.S. being comprised of white men, diversity in corporate leadership and throughout companies everywhere has never been more important or relevant.

So, are new corporate policies enough? Not quite. They're missing allyship, which will allow leaders to understand systems of inequality in the workplace and promote more inclusive and higher-performing teams.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to create a work culture that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion and acts on those values every day.
- How to be more inclusive with your hiring practices, including attracting the right candidates, onboarding, and building teams.
- How to put diversity, equity, and inclusion into practice into your everyday work life.
- How to lead by example when it comes to DEI efforts and start before you're an 'expert'.

Introduction

We can all be allies in the workplace. But to do so, we must first commit to standing up for others and speaking out, even when it's uncomfortable for us to do so. It's about being open, honest, and transparent in each of our relationships with others. It's about working together to achieve a common goal of acceptance and equality so everyone can thrive together in a truly collaborative and inclusive workplace.

We must all have a willingness to lead uncomfortable conversations to make the world a better place. It's time to take action and do the hard work it will take to become an ally for a more diverse, equal, and inclusive workforce.

Creating a Culture That Promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many large companies want to be seen making diversity and inclusion a priority, so they hire someone to solve all their internal and systematic problems, while granting them no power to make change.

This is one example of how a company with good 'diversity' policies can have no real allyship. You can have the absolute best diversity officer in the business instituting the best practices, but without a culture that promotes allyship, you've solved nothing. Without allyship, nothing changes. Without a willingness to change and learn and do better, everything stays the same.

As the research and stories in the following sections reveal, we're still a long way from creating cultures that promote true diversity, equity, and inclusion, no matter what their branding and marketing tells you.

Diversity Values are Devalued

It's time for those of us who are not from marginalized group to step up, step forward, and participate in making the changes that need to be made in tech and other STEM fields. The dependence on creating ERGs without committing to systemic improvements has stifled the tech industry because it displays a false sense of progress.

Women make up 57% of the U.S. workforce as a whole, but only 26% of the technical workforce. Black, Latina, and Native American women make up 16% of the U.S. workforce and hold only 4% of tech jobs. Meanwhile, only 10% of tech executives are women.

To transform these metrics, we'll need to go well beyond token changes or lip service to take real action in bringing equity and allyship to the workforce, especially in the tech sector. But what does that real action look like, and how can we go beyond those token changes that are so easy to fall into over real change?

The Working-Over of Working Moms

Did you know that statistically, mothers and fathers are actually more productive than childless employees? But women see a 4% decrease in pay per child born or adopted compared to a 6% jump in income for dads. This is often known as the 'fatherhood bonus.' Dads need to talk to other dads about prioritizing time with kids, regardless of the parent's gender. Get there, dads; your partners need you at the frontlines. Please. Women are drowning in work as they struggle to get equal pay while providing for their families and making time to be mothers.

Meanwhile, there's a huge divide between how employees think the COVID-19 pandemic will affect inclusion and how company leaders think the pandemic will affect inclusion. We need to bring these two visions into line.

How Employers Can Build More Inclusive Work Cultures

Psychological safety is the number one predictor of success in the workplace. For DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), this means examining your current teams. Are they inclusive? If a candidate walks into your office, are they seeing themselves represented? Are they talking to employees who can answer their questions about how someone like them can expect to be treated? Do you have non-gendered bathrooms?

ERGs are a good starting point, but they only work if the buck doesn't stop with the group. Senior leaders need information to address noninclusive practices happening under their watch.

Building Communities for Social Justice

Social media is the second hardest place to teach social justice issues. The first is in the workplace. People often come into social media conversations ready to fight, as they find themselves 'waking up' to systemic racism for the first time and wanting someone to blame.

Let your diverse team members lead on these issues, and support them with all the passion in your heart. Self-educate.

tion is absolutely critical to allyship and effective advocacy. Political values have less to do with who supported social justice initiatives in the group than you might think.

If you even lightly suggest people examine their own biases when they use racist or misogynistic tropes to talk about people they don't like who share those identities, you will likely receive aggression in return. Even people who call themselves allies have work to do on their self-education and social justice understanding.

Hiring with Inclusivity

Who can speak about racism? And when, and with what authority, is white supremacist thinking keeping people oppressed? Oppressed groups have been fighting for their human rights for generations, and if they had the power to free themselves, they already would have. They don't, and we know that. People who benefit from these systems need to do the work to dismantle these systems, because our voices are louder by the nature of these systems of inequity. You don't have to know everything, you just need to start making it a priority to understand and learn. To continue your education in allyship, you need to surround yourself with diverse teams, allow them equity in their career endeavors, and support their growth with inclusive policies and practices on the job.

Attracting the Right Candidates

Improve your job descriptions. Use welcoming language, be genuine, and be better than other companies hiring for the same position. Enable diverse and multidisciplinary teams working on algorithms and AI systems.

Promote a culture of ethics and responsibility related to AI. Practice responsible dataset development for your AI model, and establish policies and practices that enable responsible algorithm development. Establish corporate governance for responsible AI and end-to-end internal policies to mitigate bias.

We have a skewed perspective on the 'best possible candidate' based on the systems that we don't see. Systems that shut people out wholesale to the detriment of companies seeking exactly the skills and experience these people have. Let people decide for themselves what's important, and show more ways for folks to bring their most authentic selves to work and build community with other coworkers who share their interests.

Onboarding

Onboarding and orientation are not the same thing. The HR Department does the onboarding for 36% of companies, and a pleasant onboarding experience makes 69% of employees more likely to stay with a company.

You should have policies and practices surrounding your onboarding that can take a new employee from off the street to insider. They shouldn't vary wildly based on managers. Keep onboarding throughout the first year. Onboard people in the context of their whole lives. If they need help finding schools for their kids, places to worship, or places that cater to dietary restrictions, you can promote inclusion by supporting them as whole people outside of their work duties.

Building Teams and Tracking Performance

Hire for great teams, not just stars. Studies across multiple industries prove stars are only stars on their home team. Build teams for charismatic interactions within and without the team for success; psychological safety is a crucial factor in successful teams. Personality tests like DiSC are great tools, as long as there's room made for cultural diversity and individual differences that a lot of times these tests don't account for.

Some conflict can actually be productive when managed by an effective leader and not just swept under the rug. If you need to use NDAs, make sure that their impact is to protect trade secrets and not to silence employees who are being victimized or oppressed. Use data to track performance, not biases and assumptions. Recognize how much biases may already be impacting the career trajectory of marginalized team members, and manage against that.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Work

Women and people of color are graduating from top universities at greater numbers than men for the first time in history. Women make up more than half of the U.S. population and yet fluctuate on average between holding 5-6% of the CEO positions. And to be clear, every one of these CEOs is a white woman. What's happening here?

Whether the bias is intentional or not, the following sections are all about why you shouldn't let the harmful narrative of a 'pipeline' impacting hiring sway you from your allyship goals.

Handling Day-to-Day Operations

Quotas aren't always effective. They can lead to people

engaging in their worst impulses. The goal should be truly representative workplaces, not just hitting quotas. Don't only try to hire more diverse workforces to prove you care about diversity. Work on the inclusiveness of your culture so the people you hire don't immediately have terrible experiences with you and leave.

No amount of performative allyship will positively impact a toxic workplace. Do the real work, or expect that nothing will change and watch it go badly for your bottom line. Bias has an enormous impact. As little as a 1% bias against women can lead to the skewed representation we see at the top of companies today.

Trusting Team Members

Survey your team by holding focus groups. Use your inclusion team to track your progress, and share with everyone your findings and plans to do better. Every time you need to correct someone on your team, you need to praise them five times as often. Praise should be as specific and public as possible. There are a lot of great benefits to practicing call-ins in the workplace.

In the U.S., only 36% of employees have trust in their employers. This is a profoundly concerning trend, considering that trust is the backbone of any successful organization—successful in the traditional sense of company growth and bottom line, but also successful in terms of creating a culture of ethics and equity.

The first key to building trust is establishing common ground and common goals. Lack of trust comes from one party believing that the interests of another party are not aligned with their own, even if they are presented as being

one and the same. If you can build alignment in your goals, not only for the business success of your company but for its moral success as well, you'll begin to build real and powerful trust. Trust is crucial to team success.

Leading by Example

Spotting a diamond in the rough when it comes to talent is a skill you will need to develop, especially if you are a start-up and want to win the war for talent. Building a strong and inclusive culture will attract members of URGs and help you build a more diverse and talented pipeline.

Millennials are 50% of the workforce, and care more about the company's values than compensation. There is no leadership 'how-to' for never messing up on issues of diversity and inclusion. You can fail with authenticity and model how to do better and still be considered an awesome leader. Use your hiring committee as hiring consultants and make informed decisions on hiring. Stop hiring strictly from your network.

Conclusion

You can fight for equality. You don't have to wait for permission. You don't have to wait until everything else is perfect. You can get started while you're in progress. You don't have to change everything all at once, you can change one thing every day, every week, every month and still be in the fight for equality. Don't go slowly out of fear of messing up.

Build the world you want to live in. Build bridges and longer tables, not walls and VIP lists.



Di Ciruolo has a degree in Anthropology from Georgia State University. She is a white-Hispanic, queer woman living in Boston, Massachusetts where she graduated from the foster care system as a young adult. After aging out of the foster care system, Di struggled to find stability, spending time homeless in Atlanta, Georgia. She now owns a consulting business teaching inclusion and advocacy in the workplace, with classes available at diciruolo.com. She is the Head of Inclusion at Jambb in Boston. She volunteers on several inclusion projects especially expanding access to tech education for children in foster care and is a space-maker and semi-reluctant public speaker.

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