



Make the Most of Your Allyship

Five ways to become an effective ally and inspire change in your organization and community



Several cultural events and social justice movements in recent years have provided opportunities to support marginalized communities in their effort to spark positive change. As a society, we always have the power to stand up for the rights of others and help advance certain social conditions. Those who do have become known as “allies” – defined as¹ members of the community who strive to drive systemic improvements to workplace policies, practices, and culture. In today’s business landscape where consumers and associates increasingly see diversity, equity, and inclusion as a must-have, it’s more important than ever to support the initiatives that mean the most to you.

Serving as an ally is a fluid process, one that requires flexibility and a willingness to learn, understand, and act courageously. Outlined below are five steps to help you become an effective ally.

“ Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone. ”

– George Dei



1.

DO YOUR RESEARCH



Sparkling positive change of any sort begins with education. Until you gain a strong understanding of what – and who – you are supporting, it will be difficult to be an ally and effectively advocate for the causes you believe in. A truly impactful ally understands that learning and understanding others is a lifelong commitment.

Start by doing your homework. Take the time to read, listen, watch, and deepen your understanding of the issues you stand for. Focus on learning what has been done before, what has worked in the past, and what still needs to change moving forward. Podcasts, television clips, books, newspaper clippings, and YouTube videos offer plenty of learning opportunities.



LISTEN AND EMPATHIZE

2.

Empathy is the ability to value someone else's position and struggles as if they were your own, even if you haven't been there yourself. Empathy is required to be an effective ally – when you empathize, you're able to put yourself in somebody else's shoes and see things from their point of view.

A key component of empathy is listening. Speaking, and listening closely, to those affected by an issue you support can be a very valuable experience; when you do so, you're able to gain an in-depth understanding of the struggles and obstacles they've faced. Remember to ask permission first before you comment, question, or share, and always ask your questions with humility and a learning mindset.

Always ask your questions with humility and a learning mindset

3.

EXPAND YOUR COMFORT ZONE



If there's one golden rule when it comes to sparking positive change in any area of life it may be this – you have to get comfortable being uncomfortable. Supporting an issue in the capacity of an ally can be uncomfortable at times because you're pushing yourself to feel life from a different perspective that you're not accustomed to. The fear of confrontation or saying something unintentionally demeaning can terrorize people and prevent them from confronting societal issues in a constructive manner.

It's important to recognize that being an ally takes courage and true change has never been accomplished without it. You have to be willing to make mistakes and push yourself out of your comfort zone. A few tips to help you do this include:

- Support the issues that you are most passionate about
- Remind yourself that change requires courage
- When you speak, be intentional and direct about what you're saying
- Encourage more frequent discussions and create safe, non-judgmental spaces for open and transparent conversations

4.

TAKE ACTION

It's not enough to talk the talk – being an effective ally requires real, tangible action. Taking action means consistently performing acts that help promote a more inclusive environment. Whether it's participating in a community rally, speaking out against derogatory statements, or advocating for underrepresented groups – meaningful change is created by performing repeatedly precise actions over a long period of time. As you act, keep these points in mind:



Every time you act to promote a specific issue or cause, you're building trust, consistency, and accountability with marginalized individuals or groups of people.



Try to make sure that your work and efforts are recognized by those you are aligning with. This is how you create momentum.



If you see something, say something. Keep an eye out for inappropriate remarks and actions and take a stand against them when the right opportunity arises.



5.

ACCEPT FEEDBACK



After you've taken meaningful action, it's always good to seek feedback. When you deliberately listen to and accept valuable feedback – good and bad – from groups you're aligning with, you're able to make adjustments that can help you make your next move with even more impact. Feedback is all about improvement – don't shy away from it.

Moreover, it's important to establish trusting relationships with the marginalized groups you are trying to align with, and seeking their feedback is a critical step to gaining that trust. Even when you're surprised or frustrated by the feedback you hear, show that you value honesty. Often, negative feedback is even more valuable than positive feedback because it will accelerate your progression as an ally.

Becoming an effective ally isn't easy – it takes effort, perseverance, and a willingness to expand. But nothing is more rewarding than sparking meaningful change that will have a lasting impact in your organization and community. The most effective allies are willing to try, fail, and get back at it because they recognize that we all have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to support change.

**Now is the time
to make a mark.**



¹Syracuse University. 8 ways to be a (better) ally.

Securities offered through Cambridge Investment Research, Inc., a broker-dealer, member FINRA/SIPC, and investment advisory services offered through Cambridge Investment Research Advisors, Inc., a Registered Investment Adviser. Both are wholly-owned subsidiaries of Cambridge Investment Group, Inc. V.CIR.0523-1639

