



WOMEN IN BUSINESS

What it really takes for men to champion gender equality

**Male bosses need to step up and speak out for equality.
Time's up for those who don't.**

by Richard Robinson

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Work is no longer fit for purpose for its workers. This is because the thing we know as "work" was created architecturally, systemically and organisationally by men for men. Men came to work, and while they were there men with white collars made the decisions, and men with blue collars did as they were told.

This reality still exists in many companies today because no allowances, architecturally, systemically or organisationally, have been made for the

people now at the epicentre of the workplace, and more often than not these people are women.

As the roles, numbers and seniority of women in the workplace grows, so too does the noise coming from some men, as gender parity starts to be seen as a threat to long-held paradigms of workplace normalcy. Invitations from Sheryl Sandberg for men to lean in together and champion a more equal workplace are heard by some as an attack on the positions men have struggled hard to achieve since the dawn of "Work".

It's an unconfident time for many, and one in which global movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp, or Gillette's volte-face We Believe, have left some men questioning if it's their place to have a voice, or how to engage, say and do the right thing, for fear of misspeaking or being misinterpreted even when the intent is honourable.

As one of Management Today and the Women's Business Council's male Agents of Change and a judge for this year's campaign, I'm asked regularly where to begin, and my advice is always consistent. You've got to believe, deep down, and without the aid of a spreadsheet, that challenging gender inequality and championing women in your workplace is good for you, good for your people, and good for your business. You've got to want to do it, not because you've been asked to by your line-manager or HR director, but because you know it's the right thing to do for your women and men, and that time is up on how you previously may have worked or behaved if you want your business to thrive.

To quote from Collaborating with Men, the University of Cambridge's ground-breaking 2016 study into changing workplace culture to be more inclusive for women: "Men are the missing ingredient in achieving equality for women in the workplace. Increasing the numbers of women means engaging men to make workplace culture more inclusive".

My own approach has been to continually seek out mentors who interrogate and challenge every one of my unconscious biases long before I'm able to recognise I have them. These relationships have enabled me to use a technique that Dr Jill Armstrong, Bye-Fellow at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, calls "Just Ask": facilitated, safe space meetings where discussions on workplace culture can be held without fear of judgement.

As we look forward to International Women's Day, I asked six women whose counsel I find invaluable to give their advice to how to make 2019 the year every man can become his very own male Agent of Change.



Dame Cilla Snowball, chair, Women's Business Council

We need to move beyond nominal buy in and warm words and see results. Change will come from the top and every leader will play a crucial role. Our three asks of every male leader are: to support the Hampton-Alexander 2020 goals of ensuring women make up 33% of boards at a senior executive level; to sponsor 1-3 women in your own organisation to secure an executive role by 2020; to be an active and visible change agent. Showcase and celebrate the men who are driving equality.

Recommended reading for all men: Bloody Brilliant Women. The Pioneers, Revolutionaries and Geniuses Your History Teacher Forgot to Mention by Cathy Newman

@Cilla_Snowball



Jan Gooding, chair, Stonewall

Always know the inclusion agenda includes you too. There is no "blue team" versus "pink team". Wear the t-shirt and get ready to take action, no matter how small or every-day it might feel, because when you do, it all adds up.

Here are six things to get you started:

- Champion women to present at every opportunity. Invite women who don't speak up to contribute, and always ensure everyone knows who did the work.
- Demand balanced candidate lists for interviews, never assume anything about a woman's ambition, and always pay women the salary they deserve.
- Help your colleagues build their network by introducing them to people who will help them get the job done.
- Proactively ask men to organise the Christmas party, team meetings, social events and more. Be comfortable asking anyone to take on the "housekeeping" roles in the workplace.
- Enter reciprocal mentoring arrangements with women to share experiences and ask for feedback.
- Become a role model by taking your personal and family life seriously. Notice how much you talk about sport and, if you become a Dad, take proper parental leave.

Recommended reading for all men: The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood

@Jan_Gooding



Christine Armstrong, author, The Mother of all Jobs

The best supporters do the same things whether they are men or women. They collaborate and build ideas. They know their own strengths and weaknesses and admit vulnerabilities. They ask good questions and listen. They encourage others when they might be tempted to hide. They support without jumping into saviour mode - nodding when you push back against someone aggressive and only stepping in if it escalates. They don't shout or dominate, talk over or 'reframe' points as you're speaking. They don't assume they know the best answer. They see the best in others and deal with the

other stuff. They never invade your personal space. They laugh often and generously about the bizarre and bonkers stuff that happens in life.

Recommended reading for all men: The Mother of all Jobs by Christine Armstrong

@CArmstrongLDN



Cindy Gallop, founder, Make Love Not Porn

Do these two things, and everything else you need to do will naturally follow.

First, listen to women. Because you don't. Every day we are maninterrupted, mansplained to, talked over, ignored, patronised, condescended to, not heard. For once, listen. Really listen. Stop talking over us and listen.

Second, believe women.

Recommended viewing for all men: Make love not porn. TED2009. Cindy Gallop

@cindygallop



Jo Bostock MBE, founder, Women's Sports Trust

I see the strongest male engagement when men feel part of it, know they have a stake in the process and the opportunity to influence it. This means moving towards something that you're invested in, something more powerful and motivating than compliance or just "behaving better". Here are some simple ways to start your journey:

- Believe that gender equity and fairness is about you too. Move beyond being a "male ally" who simply helps women out and become the leader/colleague/human being who uses his influence to shape a better workplace, society and home.
- Recognise your spheres of influence and use them. Challenge every accepted norm that can give you an unfair advantage including recruitment, promotion, who gets to go to a meeting or pitch to a client and use your position to do the right thing. For example, always refuse to sit on panels where no women are present.
- Know that inclusion isn't about other people doing things. Take personal responsibility for making change happen.
- Know when to shut up and use your influence to turn up the volume or opinions of the women around you. Know when to speak up and take the platform, but equally know when to get out of the way and create space for female voices to be heard.
- Challenge what success looks like. Move beyond lazy comments of "I promote on merit" and interrogate what merit means and what merit looks like.
- Do the small stuff - and do it because you want to not because they've been told to. Run a meeting where airtime gets shared, bother to take an interest in what I'm doing, drop me an informal note of thanks, congratulations or support when it's needed. Make it one of your values to treat all people fairly all of the time.

Recommended reading for all men: Covering. The hidden assault on our civil rights by Kenji Yoshino

@Jobostock



Dr Jill Armstrong, author, Collaborating with Men

Many men are supportive of equality of opportunity at work, but fewer are actively involved in working to achieve this. Several things stand in the way. Men (and many women) often aren't aware that women find it more challenging to progress in their careers due to the effects of commonplace workplace behaviours that negatively affect women's careers more than men's. These are complex issues and we are working with men alongside women to identify how changing behaviour can help. Here are three ways you can too:

- Use language in performance reviews that will never be subject to misinterpretation. For example, coach men and women to give and receive feedback to foster mutual understanding and inclusivity.
- Proactively offer shared parental leave and flexible working to men who are stereotypically not expected to be the parent with primary responsibility.
- Ask the men on your team, as least as often as you ask the women, to do the relationship management, team building and corporate good citizenship tasks that are important, but not necessarily the tasks that automatically lead to profile-building promotion.

Recommended reading for all men: Four days to change by Michael Welp

@MECCambridge

Are you pushing for gender equality in the workplace? Time to be recognised. Be part of our male Agents of Change power list here.

Richard Robinson is a managing partner at Econsultancy and a speaker at Management Today's Young Women in Business conference in London on 30th May.