

Becoming a Change Agent

Part Three of our Inclusive Leadership in Action Webinar Series



 Simmons University
Institute for
Inclusive Leadership

**Inclusive
Leadership
in Action**
webinar series

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BECOMING AWARE

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BECOMING AN ALLY
AND UPSTANDER

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BECOMING A
CHANGE AGENT

Moderator Insights

from the desk of
ELISA VAN DAM
VP Allyship & Inclusion

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Sponsorship - A Key Step in Making Change for Equity

Our final session in the Inclusive Leadership in Action Webinar series focused on making change, and especially on sponsorship. It's clear from our discussion and the great questions asked by the audience that sponsorship is a key driver of change, and one that many people want to know more about.

Inclusive leaders sponsor people from underrepresented groups

The question most people have is, how do I get a sponsor? Panelist Susan Mackenty Brady shared her strong belief that "it's not up to any individual who is a member of an underrepresented group to lobby those in positions of power and privilege for attention, sponsorship, and access to power. I think that's our responsibility as leaders." I hope all inclusive leaders will take this as a call to action! Here are some suggestions to help you be a better sponsor:

- Get to know people. Ask questions like, "tell me what matters to you."
- Recognize that you can be a sponsor, even if you don't have hierarchical authority. You can be a powerful voice for a peer, or even for your manager, by shining a light on their accomplishments.
- Actively seek opportunities to sponsor people from underrepresented groups.

Setting yourself up to be sponsored

Susan then went on to share her recommendations on what you can do to put yourself in a position to be sponsored:

- 1 Deliver** on what you say you're going to do. Being great at your job and meeting your commitments are "table stakes" for anyone who wants to be sponsored.
- 2 Be clear on your strengths**, your contributions, and what you want. You need to be able to clearly articulate your value and your goals to potential sponsors.
- 3 Build your network.** Developing meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships is the best way to increase the likelihood that someone will act as a sponsor for you.

Myths about sponsorship

Our conversation also uncovered a number of myths about sponsorship, including:

- You have to be a senior leader to be a sponsor.
- The benefits are only for the person being sponsored.
- If I keep my head down and do good work, I will be recognized and rewarded.

Actions You Can Take

In addition to looking for opportunities to sponsor someone, here are some ideas of actions you can take to make change for equity:



From Susan MacKenty Brady

- Pick up a copy of the Inclusive Leader's Playbook, and use it to start a conversation about inclusive leadership with someone at work and/or at home.
- Examine where the barriers are and where the enablers are for increasing the number of women and people from other underrepresented groups in leadership positions.
- Think about how to come from a place of respect for yourself and for others so that you can be genuinely curious and courageous.
- Ask yourself:
 - How engaged and knowledgeable is my leadership team in fostering equity?
 - Who am I currently sponsoring? How can I sponsor more folks from underrepresented identities?
 - What policies/processes might impede equity for all, how can we shift them?
 - How does our culture support (or not) the ability of all people to perform at their best and to be uniquely seen and valued?

From Asha George



- Go find two people in your circle, whatever circle that is - in your neighborhood, in your work life, in your community or in your church or wherever it is - who aren't like you when it comes to gender, ethnicity, experiences, or any other social identity. Commit to spending just 30 minutes a month to mentor them.
- See if you can increase the number of seats on the team so that you can bring in more diverse leaders, rather than waiting for someone to leave.

From Dan Helfrich



- Assess where you get your information and from whom. Seek out more diverse voices and broaden your influences.
- Acknowledge that some people may fear that to increase diversity in leadership we need to create different standards for different identity groups. Communicate that that is not the case, and that the goal is to create equity, by dismantling the ways that our organizations deeply ingrained cultural norms and beliefs that inadvertently advantage some people and disadvantage others.

ELISA VAN DAM

VP Allyship & Inclusion

Elisa van Dam brings a wealth of experience in gender equity and inclusion to her role as head of the Allyship and Inclusion practice area.

Elisa works with organizations and individual leaders to increase their understanding and practice of inclusive leadership behaviors. In collaboration with other Institute Fellows, she creates and delivers research-based content and programming, based on our proprietary framework that demystifies the [Work of the Inclusive Leader™](#).

Elisa also maintains a private coaching practice, working with women on how to successfully navigate maternity leave. She is an IPEC Certified Professional Coach and holds an ICF (International Coach Federation), ACC certification. She is also a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach.

Elisa van Dam is the co-author of *The Inclusive Leader's Playbook: The Work of the Inclusive Leader*.

Truths about sponsorship

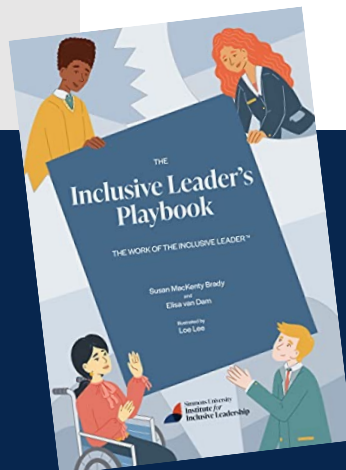
Although being in a senior leadership position gives you more access to conversations about promotions and other opportunities, you can act as a sponsor no matter where you sit in the organization. You can be a powerful voice for a peer, or even for your manager, by shining a light on their accomplishments and talking positively about them when they aren't in the room.

Sponsors can learn a lot from the people they sponsor, and building the relationships that lead to sponsorship can be a great way to learn more about what's really happening in the organization. In addition, when someone you sponsor does great things, there is a positive impact on your reputation as well as theirs.

Although hard work may sometimes be noticed and rewarded, most of the time it's up to us to make sure that our efforts are visible and appreciated. Find ways that are comfortable for you, whether that's sending your boss periodic updates on your accomplishments, or agreeing with your colleagues that you will amplify each other's accomplishments in group meetings, or having periodic skip level meetings to talk about your development.

This easy-to-use guide offers a wealth of tips and techniques for fostering a mindset of inclusion and creating a culture of equity in your organization. It will help you increase engagement, foster creativity and innovation, and benefit from all of the talent in your organization.

Available on Amazon.



SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

Institute for Inclusive Leadership

Our goal is to manifest equity in leadership in our lifetime by fostering gender parity and cultures of inclusion. We offer innovative research, events and leadership programming that empower inclusive leaders at all levels.

To learn more visit: www.inclusiveleadership.com