

Even if you happen to have all fifty of the above privileges, the intent here is not to make you feel guilty or ashamed. By contrast, the invitation is simply to be aware of your advantages and leverage them empathetically; beating yourself up about them is totally counterproductive.

That said, privilege is often a key ingredient in cultivating professional confidence: Confidence that you can leverage your network to get a new job, raise capital for a start-up, find a publisher for your book, or score a speaking engagement. Confidence that when you make a killer point at the meeting, others will pay attention. Confidence that people will direct questions to you if you're the expert in the room. Confidence that you're getting paid equitably. Confidence that other attendees at a networking social event will assume you're qualified to be there, and not part of the waitstaff. Confidence that people believe you landed your current role because of experience and potential, not solely because you're a woman or a person of color. The list goes on.

Because of my privilege, I know I've received many benefits over my career, and those benefits have empowered me with confidence. I feel ready to use my standing to help foster confidence in others now, and if you are also in a position to do so, I hope you'll join me.

Roles allies can play

It's up to people who hold positions of privilege to be active allies to those with less access, and take responsibility for making changes that will help others be successful. Active allies utilize their credibility to create a more inclusive work-place where everyone can thrive, and they find ways to make their privilege work for others.

And wielding privilege as an ally doesn't have to be hard. I've seen allies at all levels take action with simple, everyday efforts that made a difference. Often a big difference! Here are a few roles that allies can choose to play to support colleagues from underrepresented groups in beneficial ways.¹²

THE SPONSOR



I once worked for a software company that was acquired by a larger company. In the first few months following the acquisition, I noticed something interesting. My new manager, Digby Horner—who had been at the larger company for many years—said things in meetings along the lines of: “What I learned from Karen is the following...”

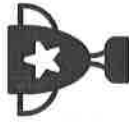
By doing this, Digby helped me build credibility with my new colleagues. He took action as an ally, using his position of privilege to sponsor me. His shout-outs made a difference, and definitely made me feel great.

When an ally takes on the role of the Sponsor, they vocally support the work of colleagues from underrepresented groups in all contexts, but specifically in situations that will help boost those colleagues' standing and reputations.

Other ways to act as a Sponsor:

- Talk about the expertise you see in others, especially during performance calibrations and promotion discussions.
- Recommend people for stretch assignments and learning opportunities.
- Share colleagues' career goals with influencers.

THE CHAMPION



In May 2015, Andrew Grill was a Global Managing Partner at IBM and a speaker at the Online Influence Conference. He was on a panel along with five other men when a female member of the audience posed the obvious question to the all-male lineup: “Where are the women?”

The moderator then asked the panelists to address the topic of gender diversity, and Andrew, after sharing some of his thoughts, quickly realized he wasn’t the best person to respond. In fact, none of the panelists were. He instead asked the woman who asked the question, Miranda Bishop, to take his place on the panel. By stepping aside, Andrew made a bold statement in support of gender diversity on stage and championed Miranda at the same time.¹³

Since then, the nonprofit organization GenderAvenger has created a pledge to reduce the frequency all-male panels at conferences and events. It reads, “I will not serve as a panelist at a public conference when there are no women on the panel.” Anyone can sign the pledge on their website, genderavenger.com.

When an ally takes on the role of the Champion, that ally acts similarly to the Sponsor, but does so in more public venues. Champions willingly defer to colleagues from underrepresented groups in meetings and in visible, industry-wide events and conferences, sending meaningful messages to large audiences.

Other ways to act as a Champion:

- Direct questions about specific or technical topics to employees with subject-matter expertise instead of answering them yourself.
- Advocate for more women, people of color, and members of other underrepresented groups as keynote speakers and panelists.
- If you are asked to keynote or serve in a similar public role and know someone from an underrepresented group who’d be an equally good fit (or better), recommend that person (after asking them first if they’d like to be put forward).

THE AMPLIFIER



In a Slack channel for female technical leaders, I met a data engineer who was working at a sixty-person start-up. One team inside the company had an unproductive meeting culture that was starting to feel truly toxic. Yelling and interrupting frequently took place at the team’s meetings, and women, in particular, felt they couldn’t voice their opinions without being shouted over.

One of this engineer’s colleagues decided to take action to ensure that the voices of those who weren’t shouting would be heard. She introduced communication guidelines for a weekly meeting, and saw an immediate improvement. The guidelines included assigning a meeting mediator (team members would take turns in this role), setting clear objectives and an agenda for every meeting, conducting a meeting evaluation

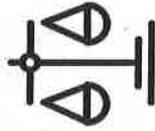
by every participant at the end of every meeting, and reminding the members to be respectful and practice active listening.

When an ally takes on the role of the Amplifier, that ally works to ensure that marginalized voices are both heard and respected. This type of allyship can take many forms, but is focused on representation within communication.

Other ways to act as an Amplifier:

- When someone proposes a good idea, repeat it and give them credit. For example: "I agree with Helen's recommendation for improving our net promoter score."
- Create a code of conduct for meetings and any shared communication medium including email, chat, Slack, and so forth.
- Invite members of underrepresented groups within your company to speak at staff meetings, write for company-wide newsletters, or take on other highly visible roles.

THE ADVOCATE



Shortly after she became CEO of YouTube, Susan Wojcicki spoke up about how tech industry titan Bill Campbell had advocated for her. In an article for *Vanity Fair*, she wrote:

I learned about an important invitation-only conference convening most of the top leaders in tech and media, yet my name was left off the guest list. Many of the invitees were my

peers, meaning that YouTube wouldn't be represented while deals were cut and plans were made. I started to question whether I even belonged at the conference. But rather than let it go, I turned to Bill, someone I knew had a lot of influence and could help fix the situation. He immediately recognized I had a rightful place at the event and within a day he worked his magic and I received my invitation.¹⁴

When an ally takes on the role of the Advocate, that ally uses their power and influence to bring peers from underrepresented groups into highly exclusive circles. The Advocate recognizes and addresses unjust omissions, holding their peers accountable for including qualified colleagues of all genders, races and ethnicities, abilities, ages, body shapes and sizes, religions, and sexual orientations.

Other ways to act as an Advocate:

- Look closely at the invite list for events, strategic planning meetings, dinners with key partners, and other career-building opportunities. If you see someone from a marginalized group missing, advocate for them to be invited.
- Offer to introduce colleagues from underrepresented groups to influential people in your network.
- Ask someone from an underrepresented group to be a coauthor or collaborator on a proposal or conference submission.

THE SCHOLAR



I'm a member of the Women's CLUB of Silicon Valley, a nonprofit leadership incubator for women. Many of our events are open to guests, who come to hear the speakers and participate in our workshops. Most guests are women, so it stood out when a male guest started attending our events. I asked one of my friends who he was, and she told me he was a former colleague who wanted to better understand the challenges women face in the workplace. He spent many evenings at our events, listening and absorbing information about the issues we discussed so he could be a better ally.

When an ally takes on the role of the Scholar, that ally seeks to learn as much as possible about the challenges and prejudices faced by colleagues from marginalized groups. It's important to note that Scholars never insert their own opinions, experiences, or ideas, but instead simply listen and learn. They also don't expect marginalized people to provide links to research proving that bias exists or to summaries of best practices. Scholars do their own research to seek out the relevant information.

Other ways to act as a Scholar:

- Investigate and read publications, podcasts, or social media by and about underrepresented groups within your industry.
- Ask coworkers from marginalized groups about their experience working at your company.
- If your company or industry has specific discussion groups or Slack channels for members of

underrepresented groups, ask if they'd be comfortable letting you sit in to observe. Asking is essential: Your presence may cause members to censor themselves, so be sure to check in before showing up.

THE UPSTANDER



I remember being impressed by Lisa, a white software engineer who stepped outside of her comfort zone to be an ally. When asked to name her "spirit animal" as part of a team-building exercise, Lisa spoke up. She wasn't comfortable taking part in an exercise that appropriated Native American spiritual traditions.

When an ally takes on the role of the Upstander, that ally acts as the *opposite* of a bystander. The Upstander is someone who sees wrongdoing and acts to combat it. This person pushes back on offensive comments or jokes, even if no one within earshot might be offended or hurt.

Other ways to act as an Upstander:

- Always speak up if you witness behavior or speech that is degrading or offensive. Explain your stance so everyone is clear about why you are raising the issue.
- In meetings, shut down off-topic questions that are asked only to test the presenter.
- Take action if you see anyone in your company being bullied or harassed. Simply insert yourself into a conversation with a comment like, "Hi! What are you folks discussing?" and then check in with the victim

privately. Ask if they are okay and if they want you to say something.

THE CONFIDANT



A couple of years ago, I spoke with Emily, a college-aged intern who told me about a one-on-one meeting with her mentor. When he asked what she wanted to do post-graduation, Emily emphasized that her top priority was to find an inclusive work environment. When he asked why, she shared her experience working at a previous internship. Her manager there wouldn't make eye contact with her, and he directed all technical questions about her project to her coding partner, a male intern. The mentor listened to Emily, incredulous at first but quickly believing her. Although he had heard rumors, before she shared this experience with him he hadn't truly believed things like this happened. By listening and believing, he both supported his mentee and validated her experience in the tech industry.

When an ally takes on the role of the Confidant, that ally creates a safe space for members of underrepresented groups to express their fears, frustrations, and needs. Simply listening to their stories and trusting that they're being truthful creates a protective layer of support.

Other ways to act as a Confidant:

- Believe others' experiences. Don't assume something couldn't happen just because you haven't personally experienced it.

- Listen and ask questions when someone describes an experience you haven't had. Don't jump in with your personal stories.
- If you are a manager, hold regular "office hours" and encourage all of your team members to speak with you about issues that are troubling them.

The perfectly imperfect ally

In this chapter, I've shared just a few examples of how people with privilege have acted as allies in specific roles. It's important to note that, while these people all chose to use their power to support others, they're humans and therefore not perfect. And they don't need to be. The best allies are willing to make mistakes and keep trying. They acknowledge when they're wrong or could do better, and correct their course. They resist getting defensive and insisting that they're already doing enough. They listen and learn. They iterate.

And there are many opportunities in every workplace to listen, learn, and take action as allies. It's something anyone can do. In the coming chapters, we'll explore how to spot situations where you can be a better ally, and everyday actions that will make a difference.

**Actions for Better Allies:
Understand Your Privilege and Use It for Good**

- An important part of allyship is being open to learning, improving, and taking action.
- Review the list of fifty potential privileges in the workplace that was included in this chapter. How many apply to you?
- Identify at least one way you can be a better ally, using the archetypes in this chapter.
- Understand that being an ally is a journey. We all make mistakes. Don't let that hold you back from taking action.

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