



To BCG's network around the world,

Happy International Women's Day. I always look forward to celebrating the incredible accomplishments of women on this day, but it's also an important moment to step back and consider whether we're doing enough to accelerate progress on gender equality and inclusion in the workplace—and how we can prevent setbacks, especially right now.

Business leaders can take practical steps to push progress within their organizations, and I've written to you about them in the past. But I recently sat down with my colleague Nan DasGupta, managing director and senior partner in our Toronto office, for [a great conversation](#) about the power of allyship to build more inclusive environments and keep women and other underrepresented groups in the workforce.

Women, particularly those who are caregivers, need allies (of any gender) more than ever. One of the many harmful side effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been its impact on women's progress in the workforce. The burden of caregiving, overseeing children's school days, and running a household has fallen disproportionately on women. And the impact is clear, as women have dropped out of the workforce by the millions since the pandemic began, an alarming four times the rate of men.

It's been encouraging to see the different ways some companies have offered flexibility in schedules and found other approaches to support caregivers. But enabling and nurturing a culture of allyship is also critical to sustaining long-term inclusivity. Allies in this context are people who directly advocate for those from underrepresented populations, actively questioning, rejecting, and combatting exclusion. They use their own power to uplift others.

Nan and her team have looked at the impact of allyship in studies conducted in several markets around the world and found consistent results. [A study done in Canada](#), for example, revealed that employees from underrepresented groups who have allies at work

are 1.6 times less likely to perceive obstacles in their day-to-day environment and twice as likely to say their workplace is bias-free.

While many of us may see ourselves as allies, we're likely not doing enough. It's so often a matter of empathy—reminding ourselves to work hard to understand and appreciate the experiences of others. On this International Women's Day, here are three questions to consider as you try to become a better ally:

- **How can I help remove obstacles for my underrepresented colleagues?** Speak up when you notice exclusionary behavior, such as people talking over a female colleague in a meeting. Notice when you start to overlook someone for a stretch assignment, just because you happen to know she has several young children at home.
- **How can I educate myself in order to become a better ally?** It's not up to women and members of other underrepresented groups to educate colleagues on the equity or inclusion challenges they face. Reach out to make time for group and one-on-one discussions with members of your team on key related topics on a regular basis.
- **What behaviors can I demonstrate publicly to foster an ally culture?** The more public we are with our allyship, the more we contribute to building a workplace culture where inclusive behaviors are the norm. Participate in events focused on different groups, for example, and share your impressions publicly afterwards.

At BCG, we've been on our own journey for many years to foster a culture of inclusivity and allyship, putting efforts in place to try to understand barriers and address inequities. We've amplified those efforts recently by focusing on enabling all our staff to become allies, including through ally networks and engagement series, and we continue to learn and adapt as we go. The more we show commitment to allyship culture from the top, the more employees step up.

Please take a look at my video with Nan, and other related insights, below.

Until next week,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rich", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rich Lesser  
Chief Executive Officer



## International Women's Day 2021: The Power of Allyship

BCG's CEO, Rich Lesser, and Nan DasGupta, leader of the firm's Women@BCG program in North America, discuss the challenges women face in the workforce and the actions we can take to make a difference.



## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Still Matter in a Pandemic

The current crisis may seem like an existential threat that supersedes all other objectives. But building a more inclusive workforce isn't a



## BCG's Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Success for every organization—including our own—hinges on the ability to elevate diversity of thought and experience, to challenge established mindsets, and to unlock

distraction—it's a critical part of the solution.

solutions that enable organizations to thrive.