

Building a Workplace for Everyone

*from In the Company of Men: How Women Can Succeed in a World
Built Without Them*

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The list below is intended to be a launch point for those of you who are earnestly seeking ways to improve your workplace - and the world around you - for everyone. And the suggestions are in no way limited to how you work with women; they should apply to all of your interactions.

I welcome your additions to this list, as well as your thoughts on their efficacy.

1 Open more doors into more powerful rooms.
Find opportunities at your organizations to bring talented women into the rooms with the big tables where the big decisions are made.

Require your talent pipeline to be diverse.

2 Seek to fill your organization with the best and brightest, without regard to their demographics. Evaluate how well your employee referral program is toward achieving this.
(Most are best at bringing in more of the same.)

Offer promotions and assignments to those you think “can’t” because of family obligations.

3 Don’t create a narrative for your workforce based on your own preferences and assumptions. Evaluate their performance without considering their constraints as you perceive them.

Company sponsored Happy Hours aren’t always Happy.

4 Are you hosting events that are extremely difficult for some of your employees? Are they opting out and missing out, or feeling pressure to attend? Consider everyone when you plan out of office events.

Share stories.

5 Aubrey Blanche, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion at Atlassian, says, “asking for a narrative instead of criticism can diffuse tension, prevent disagreement, and promote mutual understanding.” Build trust and pull toward the center.

6 Fund the affinity groups.
Offer bonuses to the leaders who step up to run the various affinity programs in your organization. Allow budget for programming, speakers, offsite events, and incentives.

7 Tap the unofficial leaders.
Every organization has them. The people who don't want to be line managers, but who the rest of the team turns to for insight, guidance, mentorship, advice. Utilize them informally to create change.

8 Call out obnoxious behavior.
Not just the blatant harassment. The small, seemingly innocuous comments about a coworker's sexuality, shape, partner, fuckability, whatever. Do not tolerate it, do not laugh at it, do not encourage it. The more allies who do this, the better the workplace will become for all of us.

9 Listen. And believe.
When women say they've been harassed or assaulted, listen to them. Believe them.

10 Defend.
When others talk about harassment, stand up for the victim. Assume they are telling the truth, and encourage those around you to do the same. Office gossip is vicious and damning.

11 Focus on the work.
You don't have to like working with everyone. None of us are capable of that. But when you speak of coworkers, focus on the quality of their work. Don't make it personal.

Be on high alert at events.

12

Mixing clients, conferences, and booze, frequently brings out some pretty awful behavior. Instead of being the one consuming all the cocktails, be aware of situations your coworkers may find themselves in and unable to easily escape. Your interruption and redirect can be incredibly helpful.

Teach good sex (and consent).

13

Don't shy away from teaching your kids about the biology of sex. Talk with your partner(s) about their bodies, encourage them to know their boundaries and their preferences, and how and when to say yes or no. Good, healthy, satisfying sex starts with good, healthy communication.

Strive for a safe place.

14

I've worked with colleagues going through divorce, death, coming out, and other massive life events. By not encouraging gossip, by fostering a workplace that supports everyone regardless of life stage, you will engender stronger loyalty and happier colleagues.

Quit assigning narratives.

15

Take people at face value. Don't assume you know where they're at just because you might have known someone in their situation, or you maybe once breezed by a similar place. Let them tell you who they are, and what they can do.

Hire on value, not previous salary history.

16

It's now illegal in some states to ask an applicant's previous salary history, but even if it's still legal where you are, establish the budget for the position and hire based on the applicant's value to your organization relative to the assigned budget.

17 Consider factors outside of work when an employee's patterns change.

When a punctual employee is frequently late, consider what might have changed at home. Provide a way for that employee to share confidentially the challenge they're having without fear of being judged, gossiped about, or fired.

18 Stop working outside of work.

Please. If there is one thing we can all do to bless each other in the 21st century, it's this. If you're a team leader, don't send emails after 7 p.m. or before 7 a.m. And never on weekends, unless it's truly critical. If you're afraid you'll lose the thought, save it as a draft and send it Monday morning. Protect the private lives of your employees. Allow them to step off.

19 Know your legislators.

Make sure the people writing the laws for your town, your state, your country are considering the consequences for all of us when they do. Get involved, know the positions of each candidate and each incumbent, and support those who support the widest representation of their electorate. Laws regarding Paid Leave and Minimum Wage impact everyone, not just your employees.

20 Review your employee referral program.

I realize it saves you time and money but is it really creating the workforce you want? Or is it just bringing in people who look and behave like your current employees? If you want to build a diverse workforce, you need to evaluate how you build your talent pipeline.

21 **Reimburse for childcare when you host after hours events.**
Not everyone can attend the after work happy hour, the client dinner, the team bonding exercise outside of work hours. Offer to reimburse your team for childcare so they can attend.

22 **Require lactation rooms at all office locations and at event sites.**
This likely only affects a small percentage of your workers or event attendees, but not only is it greatly appreciated, it also makes a powerful statement about your values as an organization.

23 **Examine your own biases.**
Not publicly. No one wants to see that. But honestly peel back your deeply rooted biases against certain people. Seek to understand from where they come, and if the recipient has truly earned your negative response. Most often, they haven't.

24 **Acknowledge that your silence perpetuates inequality.**
Saying nothing isn't being safe or politically correct, it implies consent or support. When you say nothing, whatever bad behavior is on display gets a pass, and will continue. Change comes when people speak up and out. Be that kind of advocate.

25 **Provide free feminine hygiene products.**
Add it to your office operating budget. Imagine having to plan for, carry, pay tax on, and remember toilet paper every time you paid a visit? Accommodate all of your employees. Menstruating is miserable enough, making it less so is just the right thing to do.

26

Attend and participate in Workplace Affinity Programs.

If your employer hosts events or programs for Women, LGBTQ, minorities, or ethnicities, participate in them and bring your teammates. The more people contributing to these conversations from a place of learning, the stronger the team becomes.

27

Create opportunities.

When you have a key client meeting, invite the person who is critical to the project but who never gets invited to the meeting. Bring them in. Coach them beforehand, give them ownership of part of the agenda, let them shine. You don't need to control everything.

28

Criticize and compliment equally.

Be just as critical of a woman's performance as you would a man's. Ignore gender when assessing an employee. Be factual, specific, and honest.

29

Wield your power.

Al Davis, legendary coach and owner of the Oakland Raiders, twice refused to allow the team to play in segregated cities. Marc Benioff, CEO of Salesforce, threatened to close their Indiana offices when in 2015 Governor Mike Pence signed a law allowing businesses to refuse customers based on religious beliefs. Pence changed the law.

30

Abandon the meritocracy.

The model is broken. Burn down your evaluation criteria and processes and start anew. Not everyone succeeds across the same set of metrics, but everyone can be successful. Discover deeper ways of evaluating and rewarding your employees.

Be professionally generous.

31

One of the best managers I ever had deflected every team achievement back to the team. He would follow the company-wide emails with a note to our team, our VPs, and his leadership outlining the contributions of each person on the team. It bred loyalty, cohesion, success, and pride. Do it.

Breed a culture of candor.

32

Allow your teams to share their ideas on what's broken, and how to best fix it. Ennoble them to own the solutions. Assign a budget every year toward these initiatives. Reward those who step up, even if they fail.

Advocate for benefits that don't directly benefit you.

33

Everyone wins when every employee feels valued and appreciated. Even if you don't need to take paid family leave, encourage your employer to offer it if it benefits others around you.

Let people enjoy their time off.

34

This goes with not sending emails on the weekends. But seriously, I worked at a firm that congratulated women who made quota while on maternity leave. Don't be that company. Let your employees enjoy their newborns, their well-earned rest. And if they do make quota? Be cognizant of the message you send to other women in the way you speak of it.

Hear the mansplaining and the maninterrupting.

35

Don't ignore when a man runs over the end of a woman's sentence, or finishes it for her. If she doesn't, stop him and ask her to finish. Look him in the eye and control the room. He probably doesn't realize he's doing it, but he will after that.

36 **Move from mentoring to intentional sponsorship.**
Learnings tend to go in one direction when mentoring. Be a sponsor. Take in as much as you send out. Sponsoring requires advocacy and identifying opportunities. Discover and share.

37 **Canvass regularly your employees.**
Take the temperature of your organization. Don't assume you know. Corporate dynamics change frequently and imperceptibly overnight. Be open to feedback, and committed to evolution.

38 **Make meetings and events accessible to all.**
According to Sheri Byrne-Haber, a Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC), meeting and event planners can do much better planning around accessibility. She encourages everyone to consider the safety of all attendees. Is there an accessible entry and exit for everyone? Are there captions for video presentations, and interpreters for speakers? Broaden your idea of the experience for every attendee and commit to being wholly inclusive.

39 **End your unpaid internship program.**
Keep hiring the interns, but pay them. Unpaid internships exclude a lot of talent that cannot afford not to be paid during summers. Pay them fairly for the work they perform.

40 **Creatively uncover potential and promise.**
Reach beyond your core pipeline and identify potential. Invest in problem solvers. Seek criticism from successful people. None of it is personal, and it will make you better.

41

Check in with the front lines.

No matter your role in the company, know what happens on the front lines with your customers. Know how those employees are doing. What brings them satisfaction and breeds loyalty. This is essential to your success, and so many executives miss it.

42

Speak of the WE.

Another attribute of strong, generous leaders is they never speak of ME. They talk about WE, the team, the achievement of the group as a whole. It is never about them, individually.

43

Ignore the Human Resources department.

I don't really mean that. But do not rely on your HR department to be the voice of your employees. They are not. Realize that if you are an executive, chances are your HR department isn't passing on bad news to you. In all seriousness, HR protects you. Employees are never honest with HR. Get in the trenches and listen to your teams.

44

Accept that not everyone wants the same things.

Some of your coworkers are perfectly happy where they are. Climbing the ladder isn't a goal for everyone. It doesn't make them less ambitious, less committed, less anything. It probably makes them great at their current job, and an excellent source for ideas on how to improve it.

45

Reward initiative.

When someone takes a chance, breaks a rule for the better, creates an out of the box customer solution - even if it wasn't approved or isn't exactly perfect - reward the bold step forward. If your team hits just a third of these attempts, imagine where you'll be at the end of the year.

46 **Cameras OFF is fine.**
Listen, not everyone is camera ready every day. And not everyone wants their clients and colleagues in their homes every day. Let your team attend meetings with cameras off - and don't call it out. If it becomes a default, address it privately. See #17 above.

47 **Promote the professionally generous.**
Make it known that your organization only promotes into leadership those who actively, publicly, and intentionally are professionally generous. When this becomes a measurable path to leadership, others will adapt and soon your entire organization will adjust.

48 **Rather than "reply all" pick up the phone.**
More email with more ccs and bccs or more blasts on the Slack channels has never solved a problem, and often creates new ones or exacerbates the existing ones. When you're on the 3rd or 4th volley, ditch the platforms and reach out personally to the other side.

49 **Scan every room for whose expertise is missing.**
Look around and consider who is your target for the output from the meeting. If it's a buyer, does the room represent all buyers? And lived experience is expertise.

50 **Remain flexible.**
Try not to enter discussions knowing your desired outcome. When arriving at a decision, allow alternative voices. Consider that those voices may have a completely different but equally valid point of view.

51 **Enshrine forever your Work From Home policies.**
Make sure those policies work for everyone by canvassing your organization. Be open to new work models and remote work with reasonable management structures in place.

52 **Accept challenges.**

Allow your teams to challenge the status quo. Learn from them how to improve and adjust. Challenge back but collegially, not putatively.

53 **Evaluate the path to leadership.**

Good leaders don't always make good managers, and good managers are not always good leaders. What are the metrics used to elevate your employees into leadership roles? Consider whether or not your current path is truly open to all, or just a few with visibility.

Don't make ZOOM the default.

54 Meet with your team in person, over the phone, take a walk, find a way to connect more deeply - particularly when it's 1:1. Zoom meetings force participants to stay still, sitting, staring. Not the natural habitat for most of us. Switch it up and invite your team to suggest alternatives.

55 **Seek and sponsor those who do not look like you.**

It's likely that those who could most benefit from sponsorship are those who do not share your background or lived experience. Use this as an opportunity to learn from each other and broaden your perspectives.

56 **Seek and sponsor those who do not pray like you.**

See #55.

57 **Seek and sponsor those who do not love like you.**

See #55.

58 **Seek and sponsor those who do not think like you.**
See #55, but also, challenge your own hard set ideas and allow new ones in. Be malleable.

59 **Model generosity and fairness.**
When people see authentic generosity and fairness applied across an enterprise, they model it.

Be Stuart and Laura.

60 You don't have to be the lone member of the First Club. Find and foster that alliance. Make each other better, stronger, smarter. Build a friendship that will grow and broker other good things in each direction. Challenge each other to keep that bar high.

Be Cindy.

61 Sit in the places that make other people squirm. Question assumptions and conventions. Ask people to question theirs. And have great (or better) sex!

Be Janna and Jessica.

62 Find people who complement your skill set and share your passion. Team with them to make change. Create new models that solve problems up and down stream.

Be Kerry.

63 Find a way to speak with strength on behalf of others who will never be around the tables you inhabit. Be their advocate, their sponsor, their voice.

64 **Be Maria and Stacy.**
Get in the fight when you see or experience injustice. Rally your advocates and make enough noise to spark positive institutional change. Raise your voice for those who can't or won't.

65 **Be Connie and Woody.**
Make mentorship a core value in your interactions with every coworker. Look for unique talents and find ways to capitalize on them, both for the employee benefit and for your organization. Don't rely on traditional career paths, or assume that people know where they can truly excel.

66 **Be Alyza.**
Consider ways in which a tweak, or an overhaul, to your business model can lift others. It may be your suppliers, it may be your customers, it may be both. Allow yourself to step back and reevaluate at least once a year.

67 **Be Arlan and Susan.**
Take risks on promising ideas for which the greater market may not be ready. Smart people will succeed, and your investment in them will pay off. Recreate your own model for what wins.

68 **Be your own Amy.**
Allow yourself to truly love yourself. Train your mind to quiet the negativity from within. Hear the kind and sincere things other people say about you. Be generous with your praise and perception of what's beautiful about others, and yourself.

The more you exhibit these behaviors, the more others will model you. The more inclusive your organization, the more other organizations will adapt.

Let us know how effective these are for you. Tell us what's changing, and what's working. And if you have additional ideas to add here, please send them to us!