

From the Ground Up: Cultivating Allyship for a More Inclusive Workplace

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Summary

Allyship is an ongoing, intentional practice that requires individuals to recognize systemic inequities and take action to foster inclusivity. In the workplace, allyship is particularly crucial for addressing barriers that disproportionately affect underrepresented groups. This session explores how active allyship can be cultivated within professional and scientific communities, offering participants a framework to move beyond passive support and into meaningful action.

Using the story of **Marie Tharp**, the pioneering geoscientist whose discoveries fundamentally altered the field of plate tectonics, this session examines how allies can amplify marginalized voices and challenge biases that often exclude valuable contributions. While initially dismissed due to her gender, Tharp's findings were later championed by colleagues who overcame their biases and used their influence to advance her work. Her story serves as a compelling case study for understanding the **four pillars of active allyship (Action, Learning, Listening, and Yes, and —ALLY)** and how these principles can be applied to contemporary workplace challenges.

These discussions will help participants understand how to recognize biases, identify moments to intervene, and develop strategies to advocate for colleagues facing systemic barriers.

Theory / Method / Workflow

This session is structured around an **experiential learning model**, integrating historical analysis, bias recognition, and hands-on engagement. The key components include:

- **Case Study Analysis:** A deep dive into Marie Tharp's contributions, the biases she faced, and how workplace allies helped shift industry perceptions.
- **Scenario Analysis:** The presentation will explore workplace scenarios, demonstrating how the ALLY principles can be applied to foster inclusion and create more equitable professional environments.
- **Cognitive Bias Exploration:** An introduction to **positionality and bias**, including affinity bias, gender bias, attribution bias, and more. These concepts will be explored through real-world examples to illustrate their impact in professional environments.

Results, Observations, Conclusions

A review of historical and contemporary workplace dynamics underscores a recurring pattern: systemic barriers persist when biases go unexamined, and inclusion only advances when individuals actively engage in allyship. The case of Marie Tharp demonstrates that even groundbreaking scientific contributions can be sidelined when workplace structures are not inclusive. However, her eventual recognition highlights the power of allyship when individuals challenge their biases and advocate for equitable representation.

Novel/Additive Information

This session uniquely connects **historical scientific discoveries** with **modern workplace allyship**, making the case that fostering inclusion is not just a social imperative but also a professional necessity for advancing innovation. By grounding allyship in a well-documented scientific case study, participants gain an evidence-based perspective on the transformative power of advocacy in both the past and present.

Additionally, the interactive nature of this session ensures that participants leave with **practical strategies**, rather than just theoretical knowledge, equipping them to drive meaningful change within their teams and organizations.

Acknowledgements

The presenters acknowledge the contributions of **Canadian Equality Consulting** and industry partners dedicated to advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion. Special recognition is given to the trailblazers in STEM whose advocacy and allyship have paved the way for greater inclusivity in geosciences.

References

- **"We Need Accomplices, Not Allies in the Fight for an Equitable Geoscience"**
 - *Author:* Jabari C. Jones
 - *Summary:* Discusses the challenges faced by Black geoscientists and the need for active involvement beyond traditional allyship to foster equity within geoscience.
 - *Link:* [AGU Publications](#)
- **"Helping Students Transfer Knowledge Into and Out of the Geoscience Classroom"**
 - *Author:* Mary E. Savina
 - *Summary:* Explores strategies for improving knowledge transfer in geoscience education, emphasizing metacognition and addressing misconceptions.
 - *Link:* SERC at Carleton College
- **"An Actionable Anti-Racism Plan for Geoscience Organizations"**
 - *Authors:* Kuheli Dutt et al.
 - *Summary:* Proposes a twenty-point plan for fostering inclusivity and accessibility in geoscience organizations by addressing systemic racism and promoting diversity.
 - *Link:* [PubMed Central](#)