



LEAD NETWORK
SUPPLY CHAIN
CHAPTER

EQUALITY – because there is no equality without allies

When it comes to allyship, there are many ways to help the cause. To facilitate efficient change, however, one parameter is key: knowing who you are talking to. Empathetic communication will always lead the way to greater understanding, both for allies and those who are willing to learn. Part of our way of open communication is this series about male allyship in the workplace: **EQUALITY**.

For the second iteration of this series, we spoke with **Hugo García Gil**, Global Category Lead at **Cargill**. Starting his career as a construction engineer, the Spaniard has worked for companies like Nestlé, Philip Morris International, and Bosch. As global director of strategic sourcing for maintenance and technical services, he is used to communicating at a highly technical level with people of various backgrounds. The proud father of two girls and a boy is continuously evolving his understanding of effective communication.

In doing so, allyship has become integral to his professional life. García Gil naturally gravitates towards advocacy: He has done volunteer work in challenging regions, acts as a mentor on Cargill's Latino and Hispanic council, and is an active member of the company's DEI council. Most recently, the Madrilenian has completed education on the topic of unconscious bias.

Tell us about your history of activism and allyship.

Being married to a female engineer and as a father of two girls, nephew of three aunts, grandson of two working grandmothers, and the proud son of a working mother, I witnessed many complex situations. Situations that both my mother and wife, as well as other women close to me, have had to experience simply because they are female. Coming from this background, I've always made my business decisions with that in mind.



Carlos Hugo García Gil
Global Category Lead



Which steps have you taken throughout your career to support women?

I have been active in this space for many years. My first steps happened almost 20 years ago while I was working for Nestlé in Switzerland and was offered a volunteering opportunity. I jumped at the chance to work with an external organization that supports female entrepreneurs in less favorable socio-economic situations.

Within my current organization, Cargill, I decided to make a paradigm shift from “words” to “actions” about three years ago. With the intent to learn along the way and the support and advocacy of my management, I have ventured into and become more involved in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) space. On one hand by participating in discussions and then embarking into a more active role as a representative of our Regional Diversity Councils; and on the other hand by supporting my global procurement organization with a DEI strategy and activation plan aligned with Cargill’s established DEI goals.

How do you react when you see inappropriate behavior towards women?

I definitely act, however, my response depends on the context and situation. I believe the educational part plays a very important role. I am generally well-intended and optimistic by nature, so I tend to believe that people who demonstrate inappropriate behavior don’t do so because of ill intentions, but merely because of a lack of awareness and education in this area. Thus, I believe the role of men advocating for change to foster equality and inclusivity mainly lies in helping others to be educated. It’s about nurturing the right behavior with compassion and without insult. In my experience, putting someone on the spot rarely produces the desired results. Therefore, I try to take the path of education in these situations – after all, I have been on this journey of learning and discovery myself. It is a deep, intriguing, and complex topic.

Which changes need to be made overarchingly?

I believe the first thing to focus on is the foundations. Many people think they know everything about gender equity, inclusion, and diversity in general. However, in practice, these are complex and sensitive topics that require a deep understanding of numerous dimensions. For this reason, I believe we need to make sure we bring along most of the people around us through continuous education and by creating awareness.

Let me share an example: Several years ago, I was asked to volunteer in a complex environment – at least it was to me. I was sent to an impoverished village with a rather limited concept of economics. When I arrived, I realized quickly that my task was much more ground-level than I had anticipated; and that my plans for education around economics would have to be replaced by education around basic hygiene.

To me, the DEI space works similarly. We need to take a step back and bring everyone along on the journey through foundational education, and then we can progress to the next maturity level. I believe that in DEI and especially in gender equity, people tend to shy away from being an ally not because they have ill intentions, but mostly because they may not have adequate knowledge or the right tools to act.

At times (depending on the language barrier) we can get lost in the more complex DEI vocabulary, which results in people staying on the sidelines. They hesitate to speak up and act if they do not know the most accurate or appropriate DEI term. If people are afraid of disappointing others, they freeze and don't speak out at all. But if we can manage to lean into positive intentions while focusing less on the perfect language, we could have more allies on this journey.

What advice do you have for women looking to identify a male ally in their organization?

It is my observation that prior to Covid-19, people were talking less about their interests and were not necessarily open to engaging beyond professional topics at work. In that regard, the pandemic has helped facilitate conversations. People now tend to talk, share, and express much more than before. Therefore, this is a good moment to understand who amongst us has the appetite for becoming an ally. We need to keep our eyes and ears open, as well as be intuitive in understanding who is an ally from the individual's narrative and behavior towards others, then organically approach the individual. Most people would be pleased to lend their advocacy when being approached with "I think you would be a great ally for women".

What advice would you give men on how to become an ally?

The first thing you need to know is your true motivation for becoming an ally. As a man, I look at my peers and do not see a single person who doesn't have a reason to act as an ally. You could be married to a woman, you may have daughters or you have friends/relatives around you who are female or you are your mother's son. This is reason enough to become an ally.

Once you have identified your motivators, look around in your organization or in your community for role models to learn from and grow. I am extremely proud of working at Cargill, as I have always received support to be intentional with this work. However, I am aware that in many other organizations there may be limitations because of cultural backgrounds, due to the size of the company, etc. In those instances, it helps to engage with external professional organizations like LEAD, which can support you in your journey to allyship. In any case, you can always become an ally through your actions, self-awareness, and behavior in your day-to-day activities. By talking to and involving other men, which I truly think all men could do more of, we will create a better and more inclusive world.