



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.

Much like integrating new technologies into our workday, introducing new ideas is a process. Getting entire teams comfortable with new software is bound to produce questions, mistakes, and maybe even confrontations. But if you know your team will be better for it? You stick with it no matter how sharp the learning curve is.

The same is true for being an ally and supporting gender equality in the workplace. Werner Jansen would likely agree: While the process has not been easy, his instinct and values have helped him navigate DE&I efforts at Diversey, where the 55-year-old leads the European team of Supply Chain Business Partners. As the father to a daughter studying at university and the father of a son with a mild intellectual disability, the Dutchman has had to confront his own biases in private as well as at work. But his propensity for equal opportunity and fairness always shines through: Jansen acts as an umpire for the Dutch national hockey association.



Werner Jansen
Leader Supply Chain
Business Partners



Tell us about your history of activism and allyship.

I think over the years, this inclination grew naturally, mainly because it “just makes sense”. Having a daughter and also a son with a mild intellectual disability made me more aware of biases. The real turning point was the initiation of a DE&I program in our organization some years ago. I was interested in the topic, joined meetings of the Dutch chapter, and then was asked to chair that chapter as a co-lead to a female lead.

I did so from 2014 to 2017 and organized and joined many events and discussions on the topic of gender equality in my role. In 2017, we agreed that I would take the lead for this chapter, to show that it is not just women's responsibility. The program changed in nature after some time, but my interest and advocacy remained. Currently, I am part of Diversey's LEAD Core Team, so I am continuously supporting the cause.

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

As co-lead and then leader of our Dutch chapter previously, I helped organize events to create awareness and show public support for women. Being a man in that chapter, I regularly had discussions with fellow men to make them aware of unconscious bias and to ask for their support in creating more gender balance. I have championed the women of my team, helping them become more self-confident and visible within the organization. In addition to that, I have privately supported my wife's career, although I must honestly admit that we never fully and equally shared responsibilities until circumstances made that a must.

Lastly, I consider it critical to give transparency to potential gender pay gaps. We can only improve reality if we know it.

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

I speak up! I try to start a discussion about the background of the behavior and remarks and then try to make people aware of what about it is inappropriate. Where possible, I speak up while the women affected are still around to support them publicly and to give the other person the chance to apologize and see the response. In doing so, I have to accept that sometimes male colleagues don't consider me a "real man" or express their opinions about me in a way that I won't be repeating here. But simply put, my values are more important than what they think of me.

Which changes need to be made overarchingly?

I think companies need to be more open with the stats and numbers on gender balance in their organization. Men are usually more amenable to numbers and these facts can help convince the ones that are not part of the movement. At the same time, it creates an atmosphere of vulnerability and transparency which allows women to speak up more easily. Also, HR policies need to be updated to remove the risks of bias, and most importantly senior management in companies needs to model inclusive behavior.

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

Observe men's nonverbal signals when people are speaking about the topic of gender equality or topics that are related. If they don't speak up (yet), they will most likely show their opinion nonverbally. Ask them about it, and also ask about how they feel themselves. My experience is that in a lot of cases, men can feel the same as women while also struggling with bias.

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

Take an unconscious bias test and training. No matter how much you think you have already dealt with your biases, you will be surprised... Most importantly: speak up when you see inappropriate behavior towards women and do that preferably while women are around. It will show them that you are an ally and safe space, and in turn will give you more opportunities to support them. It's also useful to join an organization like LEAD to learn more in in-person meetings or online.