



LEAD NETWORK
SUPPLY CHAIN
CHAPTER

EQUALITY – because there is no equality without allies

Allyship is powerful. As we have seen over the last few years, showing up and speaking up for social justice issues can greatly affect the momentum of debates around change. While it's an important stance to take in public and private conversations, allyship in the workplace can be an especially effective tool for reform and create lasting advancement for co-workers and companies alike. Therefore, LEAD Network Europe's Supply Chain Chapter has launched a series of conversations specifically around male allyship in the workplace: **EQUALITY**.

As many firms advance in their Diversity and Inclusion efforts, male advocacy and allyship programs are becoming a cornerstone for inclusion. Representing these efforts today is **Alvaro Alonso**, General Manager for Eastern Europe at **Beiersdorf**. The 51-year-old has spent his professional life in companies within the sector of Consumer Packaged Goods. Starting out at Unilever in Madrid, he first moved to Carrefour and cosmetics marketer Farlabo before committing to Beiersdorf in 2011.

Since then, he has facilitated the company's biggest merger to date – and made it a point to lead through inclusion. His commitment to equality has been evident even before these successes: Alonso has been involved with different NGOs since his days at university. After taking part in our #MaleAdvocacy panel in June, he was happy to talk about his insights on the gender pay gap, problematic behavior, and fair leadership.

Tell us about your history of activism and allyship.

I have always considered myself an ally for equality, having spent years supporting people with disabilities and widening my scope to poverty as well as racial and gender equality in the past five years. Moving my family of six from Spain to Mexico, the US, and Austria, I have supported different projects across the globe in the past. Thankfully, Beiersdorf has a very strong determination to achieve full gender equality and I consider myself on the front lines of this effort.



Alvaro Alonso

General Manager - Eastern Europe

Beiersdorf



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

First and foremost, I've always made sure to create very balanced teams. At this point, my management team is at an equal 50/50. I have also been involved in mentoring several talented women. I support conversations and employee resource groups to understand what else we can do to support women. As a result, I firmly believe in balancing your personal and professional lives and appreciate that our company supports this with concrete action like flexible hours, home office days, or encouraging parental leave even where they are not legally mandatory yet.

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?

Inappropriate behaviors are unacceptable toward women or toward anyone. Even when we talk about microaggressions, we need to immediately acknowledge and stop them. In more severe cases, they need to be addressed immediately via full investigations and any actions necessary to stop or correct them. Absolutely no compromises here.

Which changes need to be made on a bigger scale?

Beyond opinions and feelings, the facts prove that things simply have not been fair so far. This needs to be acknowledged across the board, and with this, we need to accept the challenge to take action and implement mechanisms to avoid this in the future.

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

I know there are many men out there that are willing to help, and many more who will be happy to join the movement when they are invited to it. I think it's important not to make this a debate of men versus women, of winners and losers. On the contrary: Let's make men part of the solution and not the problem and we will all be winners.

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

The main barrier I see to allyship is accepting the reality, a situation that we are co-responsible for. That's not easy. But we don't need to protect ourselves or feel guilty about the dynamics of the past. We are here today and all we must do is be fair and treat people equally. We are the ones in the privileged position, so let's pull from our side.