

HBA & GenderWorks Release Male Ally Series Plus: Time for Reflection and Pause

February 26, 2021

We're excited to share our [recently released series of articles based on GenderWorks' research partnership with the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association \(HBA\)](#). Lisa interviewed the HBA's Honorable Mentor award winners - aka male ally executives - from the past 20 years to explore how men can be effective allies for women in the workplace.

This series can be found on our newly created [Resource tab](#) on the GenderWorks website along with numerous videos, white papers, articles and tools that you can access.

For many of us, the pandemic has been a fierce motivator to step back and reflect on both our professional and personal lives. As a result, Lisa and I have decided to pause the GenderWorks newsletter and external outreach.

While Lisa generally pens the newsletters, this month I wanted to share my reflections on our decision to pause and on being involved with GenderWorks over the last two years. So here goes...



DEI Work Is Not for the Faint of Heart

With a long history of leading software development teams and managing many aspects of diversity in doing so – as well as a being a white male executive – I was excited to work with Lisa as an advisor and colleague in launching GenderWorks.

I deeply believe in GenderWorks' core goals and vision. As a reminder, we started this business to expedite diversity progress by proactively engaging, coaching and equipping men to become allies for gender (and other types) of diversity.

As straight-forward and wonderful as that may sound, it has been far more complex than I would have imagined. It's been an education for me in the difficulty of doing this type of work. Let me give you a window into what I've seen and learned.

In discussions with prospects, we are frequently challenged with "***diversity is not just about gender***", so in response ... we couldn't agree more! We see diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as disrupting the obstacles to the equitable distribution of opportunities and building inclusive cultures for everyone, not just women.

That said, we decided to focus on *gender* diversity for several well-considered reasons.

- Men continue to represent the vast majority of leaders, comprising about 80% of all executives and representing the majority of even first-line managers. The type of change we seek to influence is not possible without their involvement.
- We know based on conversations with male allies that the females in their lives strongly motivated these men to *want to support gender equality*. These connections are in line with what neuroscience tells us, that feeling empathy motivates us to want to help.
- Every leader has had a close connection with a woman (his mother, sister, wife, daughter, close friend...), yet that may not be true of relationships with other diverse groups.
- For the reasons above, we see gender as a powerful portal through which to engage both men's hearts and minds with regard to DEI. We believe this helps male leaders and managers see diversity with fresh eyes and makes supporting diverse employees *of all kinds* more relevant, important and doable.

Despite companies messaging they want to strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion, we've encountered many points of resistance to the idea of proactively coaching and equipping men. They have included:

- Women not wanting men's involvement to dilute their hard-won efforts at building networks of women to support one another. They see women's solidarity as the way forward.
- Internal HR and diversity practitioners not believing men in their organizations would spend the time or effort to focus on gender (or diversity more broadly) because it's not a priority for them.
- Men privately telling us they would benefit from coaching and they want to better understand their role in supporting women's career growth. However, we learned that many men don't feel comfortable asking HR to spend money earmarked for diversity on helping them.
- Being repeatedly told by HR and business leaders that their current focus of DEI work is on race. We agree a focus on race is critically important. And, we believe proactively engaging white men is foundational for race work.

Of course, the pandemic hasn't helped much, especially since the complexity of this work, and the importance of building comfort and trust, benefit from in-person interactions, particularly in the early stages when relationships are developing.

There's Freedom as a Part of Empty Nesting

Simplification has always been an important guiding value for Lisa and me. Now that we're empty nesters, we've decided to downsize and we're putting our family home - where our sons grew up - on the market. We no longer have living parents, but we certainly have many of their 'treasures'; ones that were too sentimentally charged to process at the time of their passing.

Before we move, we've decided to give a gift to ourselves - and to our children - by creating space and time to sort and organize the many threads of our lives (documents, photos, financial records, our children's things, and the list goes on).

So, that's the basis for our decision...the complexity of the GenderWorks business in the time of Covid and our desire to downsize intentionally, have led us to gift ourselves with time to pause until the U.S. moves toward greater normality as the vaccines do their work.

GenderWorks' Resources

As we teased above, we've created a section on the GenderWorks website that is a [repository of the many resources we've created](#) over the last nearly two years. To provide a sampling of what you can find, it includes resources like our white paper,

Men, Gender Equality and Fear: It's Time for a New Approach, our *Neuroscience series* exploring how our brain contributes to and can help minimize biases, our *Compendium of Business Case Research and 5 Strategies for Engaging Men as Gender Diversity Partners* plus many more.

Enjoy!

Thank you to our avid readers and clients! While we are stepping back from our newsletter and other outreach, we're still available for consults, project work and to answer any questions about our male ally consulting and coaching.

Email info@GenderWorks.com.

Best,
Bryan and Lisa





GenderWorks works with male leaders and managers, moving them from confusion to clarity and from frustration to success in their efforts to retain and develop women at their companies. We engage with men, deepening their understanding of gender at work and equipping them to enable women to flourish professionally.

GenderWorks.com

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- * male ally workshops
- * small group & individual coaching for men
- * development of male ally groups
- * gender partnership workshops (women & men)

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