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Here is the link to the entire Journal article:

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/men-learn-how-to-be-allies-without-fear-to-female-colleagues-1522849814>



## **Men Learn How to Be ‘Allies,’ Without Fear, to Female Colleagues**

*Navigating the rules of office engagement in the #MeToo era, males seek guidance on mentoring women without crossing a line; avoiding ‘man-terruptions and ‘bro-propriations’*

*By John Simons*

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## **Being a male ally in the era of #MeToo takes some practice.**

Jeremy Sussman, a Google product manager, recently told a young woman sitting beside him, “I’ve noticed your work and you’re very good.”

The visibly uneasy Mr. Sussman, who is 49, continued to explain that he has mentored other women in the past. “And if you want to have that kind of conversation, I’m willing to do it,” he said.

The woman responded positively, but Alope Desai, a 24-year-old software developer on Google’s Docs team, interrupted the conversation. “I don’t know,” Mr. Desai said. “I got a little date-y vibe from it.”

The exchange was part of a training exercise at last week’s Male Ally Summit, where 90 men, predominantly from the tech industry, gathered for a day of workshops, panel discussions and role-playing sessions at an event space in New York. The conference, organized by the nonprofit women’s organization AnitaB.Org, was designed to help men who want to serve as mentors and advocates for female co-workers but also want guidance in navigating the supercharged atmosphere some workplaces have become for male-female working relationships.

#MeToo has a lot of men watching their step—but not always in ways that are helpful to women. After a number of powerful men lost their jobs over sexual-misconduct allegations, many others—unsure of how to engage with women at work—are responding by distancing themselves from female colleagues. They are sidestepping one-on-one meetings, ducking out of after-work drinks and, in some cases, leaving women out of the day-to-day interactions that build professional relationships and further careers.

Nearly half of male managers said they were uncomfortable joining a woman in a common work activity, such as mentoring, working alone or socializing together, according to a recent survey of about 3,000 employed adults from LeanIn.Org, a nonprofit organization that aims to support women’s careers. And 55% of American men said the increased focus on sexual harassment and assault has made it harder for them to

know how to interact with women at work, according to a new Pew Research Center Poll of more than 6,000 adults.

Men like the 90 gathered at the Male Ally Summit in New York say they are doubling down on their commitment to help women advance by coaching them and calling out biases. Most attendees said they found out about the event through friends or co-workers. Many said they were expensing the \$250 admission fee for the event to their employers.

The conference's keynote speakers were Brad Johnson and David Smith, co-authors of "Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women," published by Routledge in 2016. They said instead of pulling away from female co-workers, men should actively pursue more equality at the office.

"What that means is more coffees, more dinners, more mentorship," Mr. Johnson said, adding that men need to find a way to offer help without simply opening with "I'd like to be your mentor." Any offer of mentorship should always be accompanied by a concrete observation about the potential mentee's work performance, he said.

The two authors noted that women receive less mentoring when men wait for those relationships to form in an organic way and now some men are reticent to extend the offer.

"They truly are scared that they're going to say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing, but some men are using this as an excuse," said Mr. Smith.



Panel discussion as part of a conference, organized by the nonprofit women’s organization AnitaB.Org, designed to help men who want to serve as mentors and advocates for female coworkers but also want guidance in navigating workplace dynamics. PHOTO: BRIANA ELLEDGE

Kyle Fritz, a software development engineer at Audible, said he isn’t comfortable assuming the mantle of male ally just yet. He has been training as a manager with a team of four men and one woman at the Amazon Inc.-owned audio entertainment company for six months. In that time, he says he has been putting male allyship into practice, mostly by employing calculated strategies to involve women more.

Early on, Mr. Fritz noticed a pattern in his team’s unstructured brainstorming sessions: “The guys would get animated, snatching pens out of each other’s hands to write on the whiteboard,” he said. Meanwhile, the team’s only female, who has more experience than the men, would withdraw.

To give her more of a voice, Mr. Fritz ditched the whiteboard, which created a dynamic where men jockeyed for position, and now holds meetings around a table.

Jamy Barton, a senior director of program management at Audible—and one of about 20 women in attendance—said she simply wants colleagues who want the best people in the room to get the best results.

“I just want someone who has my back, listens to me communicate in my own way,” she said.

In meetings, male allies can help women guard against two common occurrences—“bro-propriations,” or instances where a man takes credit for restating an idea previously raised by a woman in the same meeting, and “man-terruptions,” which is just what it sounds like, said Karen Catlin, a former vice president of engineering at Adobe Systems Inc., who now helps technology firms find ways to attract and retain more women.

Her suggestion: Pipe up and say something like, “I see you agree with a point Ana made earlier in the meeting” or, “I’d like to hear Emma finish her thought.”

Daniel Wong, a 24-year-old consultant for Microsoft Corp. based in Phoenix, helps companies implement the software giant’s Azure cloud computing service. Lately, he said, he has been coaching a female co-worker on ways to establish credibility with clients who doubt her expertise.

“That kind of thing never happens to me,” Mr. Wong said.

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