Guide To Growing Your Own Grassroots Allyship

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Karan Mehra
Senior Software Engineer
🐦 **@kmehra**

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Lifecycle

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Plant

Grow

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Why a grassroots approach?

- Empowers you to have **organizational impact**, no matter your role.
- You can **start small** and take your time, so you can make mistakes, learn, and grow.
- Requires little to **no paperwork** as it's not an official program.

What do you need to know before starting?

- **Not much** domain knowledge - you can learn as you go.
- It's enough to get people together to start a **dialogue** - leverage others' knowledge, hear what people want.

Who needs to be involved?

- **1-3** others are enough. Starting by yourself might get overwhelming.
- Have a **diverse team** right from the start; leverage different perspectives to create a stronger initiative.
- Good to start identifying **champions** early - HR partners, managers, people who have the same goals of inclusivity, but might not be involved in the same manner / amount - however, this is not a prerequisite, and you can identify them as you grow.

Where will this fit in your organization?

- Existing **ERGs** (Employee Resource Groups), if they exist
- If not, start within **your own team / department**

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Content

- Hold events of **various formats** to learn what works well for your organization:
  — **Kick-off event** where you share your plans and ask people for their inputs
  — Loosely structured **lunch & learn** discussions
  — 10-15 minute **TED Talk** on the subject, followed by group discussions
  — Presentations
  — Interactive workshops
- Research existing material **online** about allyship (see References for suggested places to start).
- Research the problem **in your organization**. Speak to people to find which of the industry issues exist in your workplace.
- Have your content **reviewed and piloted by a diverse group of colleagues** to gather feedback and ensure your training material is relevant and resonates well.
- Get your content **reviewed by HR** for language so you stay within your company's policy guidelines.
- **Iteratively refine** your content by gathering feedback following your events.
- **Statistics and data** in your training material helps set the ground truth.
- However, data alone doesn't address the human side of the problem. Give attendees space to share their **personal experiences**.

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Audience

- Use all your company's **communication channels** to reach out to people. Some examples are:
  — Chat rooms / Slack channels
  — Existing newsletters / start your own custom mailing list
  — Internal documentation on the company intranet
  — Word of mouth
- Even if you're trying to mobilize members of a specific majority group, we recommend **not limiting your audience** and opening the events to all. It is more impactful for colleagues to hear experiences across all differences.
- We've found that keeping group discussions **small** tends to engage a higher percentage of the attendees. We recommend having a small group of people in a conference room or similar setup. Events with 8-10 people worked well for us, but find what works for you.
- If you hold larger events, consider spreading out the attendees across several tables, with one facilitator at each table.

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Metrics

- Measure anything and everything you can. Some examples are:
  — Number and kind of **events** you've held.
  — How many people **attended**, and can you break them down in any meaningful way (e.g., how many were individual contributors vs. managers, which departments were they from, etc.)?
- Post-event **surveys** are crucial to learning how you're doing and if it's having any impact. Include a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, such as:
  — This session provided practical actions allies can take [rate from Strongly Disagree -> Strongly Agree]
  — What motivated you to attend this session?
  — What suggestions do you to improve this session?
- **Direct quotes** from attendees (with their permission) is a powerful way to demonstrate your impact.
- If you share articles via mailing lists, measure the number of **email opens** and **clicks on links**.
- **Share your numbers periodically** with stakeholders. This keeps them supporting you, maintains transparency, and helps you identify if you need help somewhere.

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- **Feedback** from your events in the previous phase.
- Proactively seek **inputs** from your colleagues via round table discussions.

Audience
- Ask **previous attendees** to spread the word to their networks. Grow out in a truly grassroots manner. This also gives them a way to be involved and help with advocacy.
- Find **managers** in the company that support your cause, ask them to send their teams to your events. Or ask if you can take your event to their teams.
- If there are **other ERGs** in the company, engage with them. Your allyship initiative can be applied to all groups, and serve as an impactful tool for their particular issues areas and goals.

Team
- Your own **events** are a great avenue to recruit new members for your team.
- Continue to have a **diverse group of employees** within your core team. It is crucial to have diverse perspectives and opinions at the table.

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References

- NCWIT [Allyship Toolkit](#)
  — A comprehensive guide that we'd recommend as a starting point. You can pick and choose the parts you want to focus on while starting out. It talks about being better allies to women, but the framework and action points provided can be applied for all forms of allyship.

- [@betterallies](#) on Twitter
  — Everyday actions to create inclusive, engaging workplaces, curated by [Karen Catlin](#).

- Rachana Bhide - "[The Person Factor](#)"
  — An industry researcher on allyship, Rachana's article talks about mobilizing allies by understanding them on an individual level. This also discusses allyship in the context of gender, but the principles apply to all forms of allyship.

- [A Guide to Using Pronouns and Other Gender-Inclusive Language in the Office](#)
  — One of the easiest ways to advocate (and practice) allyship is by educating people about inclusive language.

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