

# Allies 'Come Out'

LGBT Allies Are Changing the Face  
of Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

AUGUST 2012





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# Introduction

## ALLIES ARE A HOTBED OF POTENTIAL JUST WAITING TO BE TAPPED.

We are living in a time when non-LGBT-identified public figures in media, music and business are proactively stepping forward to indicate their support of LGBT rights. The popular *It Gets Better* campaign, and the growing national conversation around bullying, highlight the power of allies on behalf of not only LGBT-identified kids but also anyone who is being marginalized and unfairly treated because they don't conform to expected gender or other norms. The involvement of allies has brought significant, new visibility to an age-old issue.

What does this have to do with the workplace? A lot. Just as LGBT employees have made great strides in creating more inclusive policies and practices at the corporate level, allies have quietly — and not so quietly — been laboring as well, bringing their influence as well as sweat equity to create organizational change.

How do we define an ally? In the LGBT community, an ally is a heterosexual who publicly declares support for and advocates on behalf of LGBT rights. More broadly speaking, an ally in the workplace is any member of a 'majority' group who uses that position to further equality for 'non-majority' populations.

Although this paper contains LGBT ally references, and many examples are derived from the context of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), there is also a larger opportunity afoot. Allies permit "a space for radical coalition building among groups." <sup>1</sup> Organizations are filled with allies who, one at a time, demonstrate a commitment to building more inclusive workplaces.

# Introduction (cont'd)

Companies would do well to heed this potentially valuable resource in achieving greater inclusion and employee engagement at work. No other employee constituency is as impressively committed to furthering other employees' engagement and therefore as able to elevate diversity and inclusion efforts.

The history of allies is a proud one, inside and outside the workplace. Many of the gains in 20th and 21st century civil rights movements have been helped along through the tireless efforts of allies. They were the brave pioneers who spoke for others' interests without being asked, paving the way for equality in a way that only they could. Given that much of our lives today are defined by our professional identities and environments, it is not surprising to see allies challenging accepted norms and practices in the workplace — and settling for nothing less than progress.

More and more, allies are not only identifying themselves as such but also speaking up about wanting structured avenues for contributing their support. Forward-thinking organizations recognize the potential for allies but want to fully understand the value proposition. They want a roadmap for how to involve this eager group.

## **THIS WHITE PAPER IS THAT ROADMAP.**

Thought leadership is a hallmark of JBC, and part of our ongoing efforts to identify emerging trends in the workplace and marketplace. The outstanding feedback we continue to receive from our [ERG Benchmarking Study](#) inspired us to launch this latest investigation into allies, which we believe represent one of the newest, and perhaps most important, trends in diversity and inclusion.

# Introduction (cont'd)

Included in this white paper is an overview of allies within the context of ERGs, and the benefits they can bring to organizations. The case study section offers an inside look at the steps companies are taking to successfully engage allies. Finally, JBC predicts where we are headed with allies, identifying several emerging trends that are relevant to all organizations looking to initiate and maintain effective ally programs.

JBC is a certified woman- and LGBT-owned strategic leadership and diversity workplace consulting firm based in New York. JBC is in the business of transforming human potential, by creating more inclusive and innovative workplaces, while aligning individual performance with organizational results. JBC provides expert consulting, facilitation, coaching, workshops, products and seminars to turn talent networks into business innovation pipelines. Its broad client base includes such Fortune 500 companies as Cisco, Rockwell Collins, McKesson, Johnson Controls and Bank of America.

We look forward to being your guide to understanding and acting on this paradigm shift in diversity and inclusion. Special thanks to sponsors Alcoa and Cisco, whose support is a testament to their commitment to furthering workplace next practices, and to our friends at UBS, Barclays and the Central Intelligence Agency for sharing their experience-based insights on allies in the workplace.



Jennifer Brown

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## PLEASE NOTE:

Throughout this paper, we use the term 'majority' to refer to population segments that are not traditionally considered diverse or oppressed. The term is used with awareness of the fact that beyond the workplace, diverse populations — typically referred to as minorities — actually comprise the majority.



# What's Inside This Paper?

JBC's investigation into ally engagement resulted in several key findings. These have been codified in this white paper in order to benefit companies that are learning about allies for the first time as well as those that already have ally programs in place.

The paper provides:

- An in-depth look at the meaning of allies:
  - How are they defined?
  - How can that definition be expanded?
  - What benefits do they offer to organizations?
- Case studies on leading companies that have successfully implemented ally programs;
- Thought leadership on the future of ally engagement.



# Background

## HOW DID WE COMPILE THESE FINDINGS?

This white paper was set in motion when Barclays, one of JBC's forward-thinking financial-services clients, created a tipping point.

Barclays came to JBC in the summer of 2011 seeking a partner to explore the value proposition and logistics of creating an ally program for the company's LGBT Employee Resource Group (ERG). Barclays knew that potential ally membership could one day outnumber that of its primary LGBT ERG – something that is already happening in some companies – and yet allies remained a nascent resource. Barclays wanted to change that.

Barclays wasn't alone. JBC had been hearing from several clients and industry contacts that trend-setting companies are eager to capitalize on their latent ally resources. Allies wanted in, but they didn't know how to get there.

JBC collaborated with Barclays on hosting an informational event about allies, bringing together a variety of leading companies that had allies on their radar screens. Some organizations were far along in their efforts, including UBS and Alcoa, which both shared a great deal of insights and findings based on their ally engagement activities (*see case studies beginning on page 18*). Other organizations – ESPN, Cisco, BNP Paribas and JPMorgan Chase – attended in order to learn about and contribute questions regarding how to get ally programs off the ground. The event generated an enormous amount of constructive feedback and shared resources.

The success of the Barclays event led JBC to coordinate a follow-up meeting about allies just a few months later, at the Out & Equal Workplace Summit in Dallas, Texas. ESPN, Cisco and JPMorgan Chase were again represented, joined by leaders from Alcoa, Disney Parks & Resorts, Bank of America, and several other leading organizations eager to share their experiences and learn about harnessing the power of allies. JBC facilitated a private, high-level discussion that captured best and emerging practices for ally engagement, all of which are reflected in this white paper.



## WHAT QUESTIONS DID WE ASK?

At these recent events on ally engagement, JBC facilitated discussions around the following questions:

- How do you define an ally?
- Do you have ally initiatives with ERGs other than LGBT? Why or why not?
- What are your goals for your ally programs?
- How do allies benefit?
- What significant milestones have your current ally efforts achieved?
- How do you target your efforts to attract new allies?
- How do allies at different levels get involved?
- What events are popular with your ally population?
- How do you distribute material to existing or potential allies?



# Allies Defined

## WHAT IS AN ALLY?

In the LGBT community, an ally is a heterosexual who publicly declares support for and advocates on behalf of LGBT rights. More broadly speaking, an ally in the workplace is any member of a ‘majority’ group who uses that position to further equality for ‘non-majority’ populations.

In the workplace, allies — a term used interchangeably with advocates, champions and others (see *Rich Goldberg profile, page 27*) — play an important role in how non-majority groups are viewed.

A few innovative organizations have established ally programs that are beginning to contribute to employee satisfaction and the bottom line (see *case studies beginning on page 18*). These companies are shifting environments that were once experienced by some as less welcoming into places where inclusion is acknowledged as a priority.

Still, most organizations have yet to recognize the true potential of allies because they are unclear about how to enable allies’ full contribution at work. There remains a lack of knowledge of, and consensus about, allies and what their role should and can be. This ranges from not knowing who allies are, to knowing who they are but being unaware of the ways they can improve a company’s internal culture as well as its external reputation and position in the marketplace.

As a result, allies are drastically underutilized within most companies today. For those organizations that have recognized and even started to leverage the value of allies to the LGBT workplace community and beyond, results are starting to emerge.



# Allies Defined (cont'd)

## WHAT BENEFITS DO ALLIES BRING TO ORGANIZATIONS?

The case studies that begin on page 18 represent the early-stage benefits being reaped by organizations which are investing in the ally opportunity. However, JBC's work with global organizations across a variety of sectors suggests that the value proposition for engaging LGBT allies is more significant than what's reflected in those case studies. Our research and experience indicates that organizations with active ally programs stand to benefit in three significant ways.

### IMPROVE EMPLOYEE LOYALTY AND PRODUCTIVITY

Workplace diversity and inclusion have come a long way, but there's still much work to be done.

Recent research from the Center for Talent Innovation (previously the Center for Work-Life Policy) shows that approximately 48% of LGBT employees are still closeted at work. And 58% report hearing derogatory jokes or comments about their sexual orientation in the workplace. <sup>2</sup>

Several studies have shown that LGBT employees who feel they have to hide their identities at work suffer disproportionately from stress, malaise and dissatisfaction with their careers. They are far more likely to leave their current jobs in hopes of finding a more welcoming employer. In addition, hostile or even indifferent work environments have been shown to negatively impact productivity.

Companies that fail to address this issue ought to prepare for a dip in not only employee-retention scores but also market share. Recent figures estimate the LGBT community's collective buying power at more than \$790 billion.<sup>3</sup> Companies must enlist their LGBT employees in order to aggressively pursue this demographic and secure a dominant market position. Allies can help in this regard.



# Allies Defined (cont'd)

## WHAT BENEFITS DO ALLIES BRING TO ORGANIZATIONS? (cont'd)

The presence of allies raises the visibility of an organization's support for non-majority groups. In stepping forward, allies contribute to creating corporate cultures in which LGBT employees feel supported in coming out, and other non-majority groups feel embraced for their differences. They also offer support to employees who may not identify with a non-majority group but who are reluctant to reveal a particular aspect of their identity – perhaps they have a child who has just come out, or are partnered with a person of a different race or ethnicity.

In addition, allies, especially those from the executive-level ranks, can help drive progressive policies around equal benefits for LGBT employees. This affects a company's ability to effectively recruit diverse talent, especially younger recruits who actively seek signs of commitment to inclusive practices. This can be a corporate differentiator.

The presence and proactive visibility of allies sends a message to all employees that it is okay to bring your whole self to work. This, ultimately, allows companies to reap the benefits of employees who feel understood and valued.

## LIGHTEN THE LOAD FOR ERGs

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have long been at the helm of the movement to gain visibility and equality for everyone in the workplace. After years of championing this fight, many ERG members are battle weary. Allies lend critical mass, energy and positional influence that can help take workplace diversity and inclusion to the next level.



## Allies Defined (cont'd)

With allies organized and prepared to contribute, LGBT-identified ERG members no longer have to carry the burden alone — stepping in to correct every derogatory comment, having to attend every recruiting event, always being available to contribute the ‘other’ perspective. And since allies, who are often non-minorities, have a different level of emotional investment in the issues addressed by ERGs, they are able to engage in a more neutral, dispassionate way. If they are in fact extremely passionate, which carries some risk, they are often judged differently than an LGBT-identified person exhibiting the same level of conviction.

They also emerge fairly frequently from the higher ranks of an organization, so they can help accelerate initiatives on behalf of ERGs.

Lightening the load for ERGs frees up members to expand in new directions if they choose to and also allows the company to benefit from the fresh, diverse viewpoints offered by allies.

### IDENTIFY KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The ability of diversity efforts, and mechanisms such as ERGs, to affect business metrics traditionally has been hindered by their size and limited senior-level involvement. In this way, allies are the great multiplier. They allow companies to mobilize larger and more influential segments of their populations to ensure that optimal contributions are made.

The contributions of diversity and inclusion efforts to the bottom line are potentially huge. We have all heard that diverse groups represent the fastest growing market segments, but organizations continue to literally leave money on the table by unconsciously and even consciously failing to direct efforts toward them.



## Allies Defined (cont'd)

Current research estimates total LGBT buying power at \$790 billion. Forty-seven percent of LGBT adults are more likely to purchase a company's products or services when an advertisement has been tailored to an LGBT audience, and 23 percent of LGBT adults have switched products or services in the past year because a different company was supportive of the LGBT community.<sup>3</sup>

These opportunities often are ignored due to lack of understanding and comfort in learning more about diverse segments. Whether in the business-to-business (b2b) or business-to-consumer (b2c) space, a company's likelihood of excelling in today's marketplace is hugely dependent on its responsiveness to and adeptness at understanding these segments.

An active ally community exponentially expands a company's ability to identify and capitalize on key market opportunities. The sheer potential numbers mean not just more people but more seniority, experience and influence behind the effort to stay innovative and responsive to market changes. The cost of not doing this can have a lasting negative impact on a brand.

## THE CHALLENGE OF ‘COMING OUT’ AS AN ALLY

Despite the many benefits of being an ally, the experience presents an emerging challenge of inclusion: How do allies balance their dual role, still members of the majority yet newly aligned with a non-majority community? In conducting our research for this paper, one ally described the phenomenon as **“living between two worlds.”** Indeed, many allies find themselves caught in the middle — not fully accepted by the non-majority while at the same time now having to field questions and perhaps even criticisms from their majority colleagues. This is especially common among LGBT allies because of the stigma associated with non-majority sexual orientations, particularly in more conservative organizations or regions. Most allies in our network, however, remain energized in spite of this dichotomy — as inclusion champions, they are only galvanized by the current reality, however inhospitable to their efforts it may feel at times.





# Allies Defined (cont'd)

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE ALLIES?

During the collecting of data for this white paper, it became clear that allies are being underutilized for two primary reasons: 1) the mechanism to self-identify and engage with ERGs and corporate inclusion efforts is unclear, and 2) the larger value proposition for allies to identify as such, and get involved in programs such as employee networks, has yet to be made crisp.

The good news is that many employees are eager to access and be a part of workplace diversity communities, such as ERGs, and the opportunities they provide.

The following value propositions can be utilized for employees who want to become more formally involved, as well as for internal champions (e.g., ERG leaders, diversity and inclusion specialists) who want to promote the 'what's in it for me' factor to gain greater participation.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

With traditional professional development opportunities at many companies continuing to diminish, employees today have to be extremely self-motivated and creative in order to truly develop themselves professionally. Ally involvement in inclusion and ERG efforts allows diverse and non-diverse talent alike to enjoy the professional development opportunities that are becoming a signature mark of these programs.

ERG leadership roles — which by design and necessity encompass cross-functional, geographic, and influence-based strategies — provide unique exposure and learnings. Successful ERGs expose all employees to critical emerging professional competencies of the future. They provide access to senior leadership; real-time practice in running matrixed, influence-based teams; and an education for employees and managers to better understand the needs of diverse talent and markets.



# Allies Defined (cont'd)

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT

ERGs, which began as support networks for individuals working to overcome workplace discrimination, are starting to evolve into places where employees can go to stand out, to offer unique perspectives that have the potential to directly influence business decisions. When set up appropriately, efforts inclusive of allies create opportunities for a greater number of employees to gain more visibility within their companies. Everyone wins.

Some companies today explicitly state their preference for employees who prioritize corporate citizenship. Ally programs afford majority employees the opportunity to demonstrate their character and potential. Allies also enjoy the networking and mentoring benefits of being aligned with ERGs.

Getting allies involved also allows them to directly develop additional cultural competency, which enables them to be more effective leaders, managers and business partners in today's rapidly diversifying workplace. In turn, allies provide a safe and affirming work environment that allows all employees to reach their full human and career potential.

All of this translates into increased career advancement opportunities. It provides an engagement space for majority employees who don't traditionally fit into ERGs.



# Allies Defined (cont'd)

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

Another benefit of ERGs is the sense of community that forms within and among the various groups. Ally involvement is an opportunity for majority employees to feel a part of a community, to enjoy the benefits of working together with like-minded people toward a common goal. Allies become part of something bigger than just their individual, day-to-day role.

This increased sense of belonging and acceptance influences an overall more cohesive corporate culture. This is vital in today's increasingly virtual, global workplace, where traditional touch points like face-to-face interactions are decreasing, and 'culture' as it was traditionally established is changing as well. Given these dynamics and many others, critical business enablers such as company loyalty are becoming more elusive than ever. The engagement of enthusiastic allies on creating more inclusive workplaces serves to counter-balance the forces of disconnection and fragmentation that are taking place.

# Case Studies





After attending the 2009 Out & Equal Workplace Summit, Operating Committee member of UBS Pride Americas Matt Koehler knew it was time to start paying attention to non-LGBT employees. Talks at the event on the topic of engaging straight allies left Koehler inspired and energized about implementing the ideas at his company. He returned to work determined to make UBS a forerunner in rallying allies in support of true workplace equality.

## CREATING AN ALLY NETWORK

Although conversations about forming an ally network at UBS began in 2009, the program did not officially launch until April 2011. This is because Koehler and other Pride Americas leaders were determined to lay some solid groundwork that would ensure success.

A big focus during the creation stages of UBS's Straight Ally program was defining criteria for membership. The group is open to all UBS employees but potential allies are asked to take the UBS Straight Ally Pledge, which is based on work done by Straight for Equality, an outreach and education project created by [PFLAG National](#)<sup>5</sup>. The pledge is essentially a way for allies to 'come out' in demonstration of their support for Pride Americas.

In addition to the pledge, emphasis on visibility was important during the early stages of UBS's ally effort. Members of the group are given a custom-designed mug with "Proud Straight Ally" on one side and "UBS Pride Americas" on the other, as well as a copy of Straight for Equality's guide to being a straight ally. The mugs serve as conversation starters among employees and have proven influential in getting the firm's leadership involved. They are also a visual indicator of 'safe spaces' for LGBT employees.



## UBS (cont'd)

The recruiting effort for executive sponsorship of the Straight Ally program was targeted and thorough. The Pride Americas Operating Committee began with senior management that was in support of the primary ERG, and then expanded the search throughout the company. In some cases, they even went door-to-door knocking on offices and asking for participants.

Senior-level management was firmly on board in time for the kick-off event for UBS's Straight Ally program. Brian Hull, Vice Chairman of UBS Wealth Management Americas, who is known for being very focused on diversity, crafted a personal invitation to his direct reports. The event consisted of a panel discussion involving several senior executive sponsors and a celebrity guest speaker — Claire Buffie, former Miss New York and the first Miss America candidate to focus her platform on LGBT equality.

### RESULTS

In the first two months following the launch of the Proud Straight Ally program, UBS's Pride Americas ERG doubled its membership. The group currently has more allies than LGBT members. This positive outcome has been a huge enabler in terms of creating a culture that supports all employees bringing their authentic selves to work, something to which the ally program's executive sponsor, Brian Hull, is staunchly committed.

The Proud Straight Ally mugs continue to be very effective at starting conversations around LGBT equality that previously were not taking place. In addition, plans are underway for a storytelling event, facilitated by PFLAG, where managing directors and executive directors will share personal stories about their interactions with LGBT individuals. UBS also is working on a mentoring project that involves members of the Straight Ally program.



# ALCOA

Alcoa's LGBT ERG, Employees at Alcoa for Gay and Lesbian Equality (EAGLE), launched in 2007. Compared with other companies' LGBT ERGs, EAGLE was ahead of the curve on the ally front — the group was open to all employees, specifically welcoming allies into the fold, from its inception.

However, when Mary Ellen Lammel and Molly McGovern, Global EAGLE Co-Leads, set out to create new ways to engage current allies and attract new ones, they discovered that their ally population (much like their LGBT population) covered a significant range of the 'out' spectrum. While a handful of allies were 'out and proud' about their support for the LGBT community, many allies remained silent about their association with EAGLE.

In order for EAGLE to move forward with its goals, it needed to develop a robust set of programs to engage allies and help move them along the spectrum.

## FOCUSING ON ALLIES IN AN LGBT ERG

EAGLE's early ally efforts solely revolved around recruiting. EAGLE's mission is to create a safe and affirming environment where all employees can bring their whole selves to work. So EAGLE's primary goal became increasing its numbers. To do that, efforts were made around branding, making sure Alcoa employees were receiving clear messages about EAGLE's inclusion of allies. After all, what better way to foster an affirming atmosphere than by developing an army of supportive employees who display their acceptance of the LGBT population?

Branding materials such as stickers and pins were created for EAGLE allies by adding "I support" to the standard EAGLE logo. It was a simple change that went a long way toward helping allies display support for their LGBT colleagues.

# ALCOA (cont'd)

## JOINING EAGLE AS AN ALLY

Initially, when EAGLE allies joined the organization, they were given a short guide about what it means to be an ally along with a flyer about the benefits of EAGLE membership. But the leaders in charge of the ally effort realized that the sign-on process, since it is a person's first interaction with the group, is an opportunity to increase the education and engagement level of the new ally.

EAGLE is initiating a pledge process for joining the group, based on a [concept used by PFLAG](#)<sup>5</sup>. The pledge will not only help new members to understand what EAGLE stands for, but also provides them with example behaviors of an ally.

Most importantly, since allies will publicly sign the pledge on the EAGLE portal, it will facilitate allies in "outing" themselves to the organization. Allies will also have the opportunity to publicly explain their reason for becoming an ally, to share their own personal story.

Once allies have pledged their commitment, they will receive a pin or similar item to display at their desk. This serves as a physical signifier of membership. These promotional pieces have proven vital in generating buzz for the effort, also helping to initiate conversations and making it easier for allies to express their support for EAGLE.

## ALCOA ALLIES SAY:

*"For me [the decision to be an ally] was pretty simple. I believe we should live in a world without discrimination. I am proud to work for a company that is willing to take a leadership position and use its brand to advance this agenda. I enjoy working in a diverse environment; it makes all of us better. Finally, I hope adding my voice can help close gaps."*  
— Knoxville, TN

*"My decision [to join EAGLE] was a combination of personal belief that discrimination in virtually any form is inherently bad, and a business-related belief that to succeed we need to build an environment where everyone feels capable of giving their all. I see EAGLE as a really natural platform for me to try and help realize both ambitions. It is very cool to be part of a company that has EAGLE and even better to see people from all over the company signing on."* — Australia

*"I became an EAGLE ally because it allows me to be part of a group that promotes positive change just by being a friend and a listener, by being open-minded, helping to refer individuals to additional resources, joining others with a common purpose, and believing that all persons should be treated with dignity and respect. It allows me to engage in the process of developing a culture free of discrimination."*  
— New York, NY

# ALCOA (cont'd)

## SOCIAL MEDIA: INFORM, RECRUIT, ENGAGE

EAGLE has been on the forefront of social media, utilizing its tools to inform its membership, recruit new members and allies, and provide an arena for engagement on LGBT workplace issues. EAGLE maintains a private members-only site within Alcoa's social networking site (Yammer). This is where LGBT news stories are posted daily and discussions about relevant topics take place among members. It keeps the membership engaged and provides a safe forum for allies to educate themselves and ask questions of their peers.

Yammer also has been used to create buzz about becoming an EAGLE ally. EAGLE's portal steward created a 'Yammer Bomb'— at a specified time, on a specified day, allies were encouraged to simultaneously post on the main, company-wide Yammer page stating why they are an ally. Using a standard format, these posts showed off the diversity of EAGLE's allies. They also served as a recruitment tool because they directed people to where they could learn more about becoming an ally themselves. EAGLE had a significant boost in membership following the event.

## ALCOA ALLIES SAY:

*"For me it is about the future. In the past couple of years, I have had several friends share with me, but they are still not comfortable living openly. Also, my teenage daughter has several friends who are gay or lesbian. I want to be sure that the future is a place where they can be who they are without fear or discrimination. I can't change the past, but I can be part of making the future a more accepting place. I am proud to work for a company that supports diversity at all levels and I am proud to be an EAGLE ally." – Pennsylvania*

*"I think it's great we have a strong ally network, but I don't think we've scratched the surface in terms of what it could be from a numbers standpoint. (I know we're working on ways to grow that, which I look forward to being a part of.) I joined because I think we've done a lot on the diversity front, but there's more to do. All of us have a responsibility to do more and I am open to being a part of it." – Pittsburgh, PA*



# Allies Declare Their Affiliation

ON ALCOA'S INTRANET, MEMBERS 'OUT' THEMSELVES AS EAGLE ALLIES

## Scott Monroe

Chemical Engineer at Alcoa

Hello, my name is Scott Monroe and I am many things:

- A 28-year Alcoan
- A chemical engineer
- A quality professional
- A moderate conservative
- A Southerner by birth
- A Pittsburgh Steelers fan
- A collector and restorer of vintage electronics
- A husband, stepfather, brother and son
- A concerned citizen for the future of our country and our planet
- An EAGLE ally

## Mary Ellen Lammel

Director, Corporate Human Resources and Global Benefits at Alcoa

Hello, my name is Mary Ellen Lammel and I am many things:

- A 20-year Alcoan
- An HR professional
- A mom, daughter, sister and aunt
- An empty-nester, as of this year
- An NPR addict
- A former member of the AWN Global Steering Committee
- An avid reader
- Concerned about our country and all the divisiveness
- Concerned about social justice
- A Democrat
- A Steelers fan
- An EAGLE ally
- Global Co-Lead of EAGLE!



# ALCOA (cont'd)

## DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALLY COUNCIL

As the number of allies grew – currently, they account for around 80% of EAGLE’s membership – it became clear that EAGLE needed to re-consider its approach. Aware that allies have different wants and needs from those of primary ERG members, EAGLE leaders initiated discussions with allies about what they wanted to get out of their involvement with the ERG.

These conversations led to one of Alcoa’s most innovative moves yet – the formation of the EAGLE Ally Council. This council is comprised entirely of EAGLE allies, from all different levels and locations throughout the organization. Participants range widely on the spectrum of being ‘out’ as an ally, which reflects the reality of many employees’ still-developing comfort level on the topic.

The EAGLE Ally Council’s current objectives are to increase the engagement of current allies and increase the number of EAGLE allies. To tackle these objectives, the group used the A3 methodology, a standard analysis tool from the Toyota Production System: develop a business case (recognizing both the goals of Alcoa and EAGLE), account for the current condition (current state of the ally population and the environment at Alcoa), define target condition and begin to lay out an action plan for hitting specific targets.

## RESULTS

EAGLE’s ally efforts have been so successful that Alcoa executive management has started encouraging the company’s other ERGs to add allies to their groups. “This is the way it should be done,” remarked one senior-level executive about EAGLE’s ally network.

Additionally, over 60% of the Executive Council members at Alcoa are EAGLE allies – putting Alcoa leaders who are *not* signed on as supporters of LGBT workplace equality in the minority.

# Q&As with Allies



# Rich Goldberg

VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE QUALITY — CISCO

## How do you define an ally?

I see myself as an advocate. Growing up Jewish in New York City, a first-generation American, I had a lot of names and other rocks thrown my way. I always knew that I escaped the ultimate in terms of discrimination, which gave me an appreciation for the barriers faced by others and led to me being part of the solution. I like the term ‘advocate’ best because that’s how I see my role — advocating for people who may not have a voice of their own, or may not have an audience. I can help them connect with an audience by delivering their message, repeating it, and standing up for the issues they face. Advocacy means you are willing to fight alongside someone. Most of my engagement in this regard is with our women’s network.

## Why is being an ally so important to you?

I have an obligation to give back more than I receive. In doing this, I believe I am setting up myself and my company for success. It enables diversity of thought, ideas, and decision making within an organization. If we can create a groundswell by role-modeling this type of thinking, it will change cultures. It requires more than just being aware. Role-modeling behavior that says, “It’s okay to speak up and act vulnerable,” invites others to do the same.

## What kinds of activities do you engage in as an ally?

Mainly mentoring. I find mentees in lots of different venues. I even met one mentee at a Costco gas station! She saw my badge and we’ve been in a mentoring relationship now for four years. Mentoring helps get your head on straight. It allows you to step outside of your experience and hear from people who see your company in a different way.

.....

“If we can create a groundswell by role-modeling this type of thinking, it will change cultures.”

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# Rich Goldberg

VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE QUALITY — CISCO

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“My advice would be to start small. Start with just one conversation with one person.”  
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## How has identifying as an ally enhanced you as a professional?

It has enriched my ability to understand external viewpoints. My willingness to listen to and understand these other perspectives has built my cultural competency and given me credibility among colleagues who may not have otherwise valued my input.

## What is your advice for other people who want to be better, more proactive allies?

Nurturing others is rewarding. Our CEO, John Chambers, and our leadership team say, “Best in the world, best for the world.” It is about values. Many people don’t know where to start so they feel cautious. My advice would be to start small. Start with just one conversation with one person. This will build your confidence until it becomes part of your fabric. Sometimes you have to be the first to speak up. When you do that, it gives others the freedom to join you, which builds momentum.

# Michael Barber

LGBT COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND LIAISON PROGRAM MANAGER — CIA

## How do you define an ally?

An ally is someone who actively stands up and contributes to building an inclusive environment. It's also someone who gets involved externally, if there are opportunities to do that. A lot of people who identify as allies are just bystanders. An ally should represent their role through behavior. Are they willing to stand up when someone says something inappropriate? That is what an ally should be doing.

## Why is being an ally so important to you?

Being an ally goes back to my childhood. I come from a social activist family. I have always been a rebel from the standpoint of wanting to have a cause that I could be part of. I missed the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and LGBT issues are our country's burning civil rights platform right now. It's incumbent upon me to get rid of some of the stuff that LGBT employees have to put up with. I have the best job in the CIA. I can't think of a better position to be in than to be helping to create this awareness.

## Why are allies important to your organization?

We need to create a workspace in which everyone can bring their full selves to work. There is a psychic cost to having to create a dual life, as so many LGBTs do. It prevents people from being able to give everything they have. In our organization, we need that because of how important national security is. For us, diversity goes beyond the traditional definitions. The more complex the problems that an organization deals with, the more diversity of thought you need in approaching those problems. The CIA has a more complex problem than any other organization — defending our country. We need diversity to represent all walks of life so that we can do our job effectively.

.....

“A lot of people who identify as allies are just bystanders. Are they willing to stand up when someone says something inappropriate? That is what an ally should be doing.”

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# Michael Barber

LGBT COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND LIAISON PROGRAM MANAGER — CIA

## What kinds of activities do you engage in as an ally?

I am involved in pretty much all activities that the LGBT ERG is involved with. I attend their meetings and help organize events. A lot of what I do with outreach is guided and supported by the LGBT ERG. I am actively involved in the ERG beyond what my job requires because I am a firm believer in what the organization is doing.

## How has identifying as an ally enhanced you as a professional?

I didn't become an ally with a self-serving purpose in mind. It was just the right thing for me to do. I wouldn't say it has enhanced me as a professional in the sense that it has helped me advance. I'm in this job because I asked to be in the job. It has enhanced me because I get to work with amazing LGBT organizations and meet amazing LGBT people. I would be concerned about someone who approaches being an ally as a way to move up within the organization.

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“The more complex the problems that an organization deals with, the more diversity of thought you need in approaching those problems. The CIA has a more complex problem than any other organization — defending our country.”

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## What is your advice for other people who want to be better, more proactive allies?

You need to be actively engaged with members of the ERG by helping them work through the issues that concern them. If you really want to be an ally, you need to be involved and engaged. You cannot be a bystander. Otherwise, why would you be an ally?

# Sasha Martin

ANALYST, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS — BARCLAYS

## How do you define an ally?

An ally is someone who actively engages in conversations and activities that promote awareness around LGBT issues. Allies help create a supportive environment for LGBT identifiers and educate the straight community on the importance of LGBT equality. Being an ally is about taking the initiative to set an example. Anyone who is an ally to a group that they don't personally identify with starts off with being an 'ally-type' person at a core level. Meaning, allies have a natural inclination to want to champion on behalf of people who are discriminated against for their differences. Allies have an innate desire to change the status quo within organizations where they find unjust practices. Fundamentally, they are champions for humanity.

## Why is being an ally so important to you?

I think a lot of damage is done by unintentional subtleties around things that are best addressed with absolute clarity. I am someone who did not grow up in an environment where things like LGBT issues were openly discussed. Despite having always felt that LGBT individuals should be treated with the same respect and afforded the same rights as straight individuals, I was not equipped with the verbal tools to effectively communicate my opinions on LGBT issues.

When I came to Barclays and started working with LGBT colleagues, I wanted to be able to bond with them. That required gaining their trust on several levels, and a big part of that is being able to discuss colleagues' lives and what they do in their free time. I think discounting people's extracurricular activities creates an artificial and unwelcoming work environment. I want to be part of bringing more realism and informal communication to the work atmosphere because I believe it plays a central role in creating a productive and dynamic internal culture.

.....

“I think discounting people's extracurricular activities creates an artificial and unwelcoming work environment. I want to be part of bringing more realism and informal communication to the work atmosphere.”

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# Sasha Martin

ANALYST, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS — BARCLAYS

## Why are allies important to your organization?

It's important to note that the benefits of the work performed by allies outlive their employment tenure. Investing in people who are actively involved in creating and reinforcing an inclusive, and therefore productive, culture is incredibly valuable to Barclays in terms of employee satisfaction, retention, and reputation — both internally and within our recruiting pools. This type of work translates into very real profits for organizations that make engagement a management and HR priority.

.....

“ Investing in people who are actively involved in creating and reinforcing an inclusive culture is incredibly valuable to Barclays in terms of employee satisfaction, retention, and reputation. ”

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# Sasha Martin

ANALYST, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS — BARCLAYS

## What kinds of activities do you engage in as an ally?

We have a regional model, so while the ally program has launched in Asia and the UK, we have only just launched in the US. We wanted to ensure that a sustainable infrastructure was in place before engaging the internal community. The first thing I've been working on is a tent card that allies can keep on their desks. It's a way to casually but publicly identify yourself as someone who is supportive of LGBT people and their community initiatives — to say, "I'm on your side." I've spent the past year and a half researching, both internally and externally, theoretical best practices for an LGBT allies network at Barclays. I wanted to ensure that the program we launched was the best it could be and that efforts in the US could be translated to Europe and Asia.

That work ultimately led to the creation of a Chief Allies Officer position on the regional leadership committee, a role I currently fill in the Americas. The primary purpose of the role is to coordinate and execute positive engagement opportunities for existing and potential Spectrum Allies. Responsibilities include the research and dissemination of information around issues that are important to our network members as well as providing an ally perspective to planning meetings so the network's events and communications are inclusive to the straight community as well as its own. Since I am part of the Brand and Marketing team at Barclays, I also weigh in on the merchandise, written materials, and event collateral being orchestrated by the LGBT network. I'm also heavily involved in recruiting and am pulling together a leadership council of Spectrum Allies to ensure the program is relevant and engaging at all organizational levels and disciplines.

# Sasha Martin

ANALYST, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS — BARCLAYS

## How has identifying as an ally enhanced you as a professional?

The most visible enhancement is my expanded internal network, which has exponentially improved my ability to quickly and efficiently resolve day-to-day coordination challenges. In large organizational structures, people spend a lot of time trying to figure out the appropriate contact for approvals, production requirements, briefing information, etc. By getting involved with the LGBT network, I've expanded the number of people, across many different areas of expertise, who can help me overcome those organizational challenges and provide helpful insight I may have otherwise missed. Developmentally, my involvement has challenged me to assume leadership roles on visible projects where I have been independently responsible for communicating, organizing and executing against promised deliverables. This is relatively unusual for someone at my organizational level in a company of this size. It gives me a head start on developing key skills for future success at an executive level.

## What is your advice for other people who want to be better, more proactive allies?

Go to a network/ERG meeting and find out what initiatives people there are passionate about. This can help potential allies understand where they are most needed. You also can attend network events, which shows members that you are supportive of their causes and also a socially evolved person. This means a lot, especially to younger people in companies. Let your manager know that you'd like to organize a team-building event where your team participates in a volunteer opportunity organized by the LGBT network.

# The Future of Ally Engagement





# The Future of Ally Engagement

Not all companies are created equal — ally programs will always reflect the distinct qualities that define an organization. However, through JBC's research and ongoing conversations across industries, we have identified several emerging trends that are relevant to all organizations looking to initiate and maintain effective ally programs.

## 'COMING OUT' IS NOT JUST FOR LGBT

As was mentioned earlier, in discussing the benefits that allies bring to organizations, LGBT employees who feel comfortable coming out at work are more loyal to their employers. They're also more productive during the workday. But the concept of 'coming out' at work is not limited to the LGBT community.

"Ally is an elastic and unspecified enough term that it can apply to multiple different types of discrimination, not simply LGBT-based discrimination."<sup>1</sup> Coming out refers to revealing any part of an identity — hobbies, work or personal experiences, family members' sexual orientation or ethnicity — that may be seen as unconventional for that particular environment or company culture.

Traditionally, corporate environments have been conformist and hierarchical, discouraging of individuality. However, organizations of the future are embracing differences and encouraging employees to bring their whole selves to work.

In the end, success is all about talent — attracting, retaining, and growing the best possible talent within an organization. For diverse talent especially, the comfort and willingness to contribute one's best ideas will be the difference between enterprises that succeed and ones that don't.

A strong and healthy ally population will help usher companies away from traditional corporate mentalities and toward the attitude of the future, which is that fluidity and variety are imperative for innovation. Allies create a critical mass that supports and is willing to speak up about the value of allowing people to come out about who they really are, whoever that may be.



# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

Any student of generational diversity also understands that this philosophy, and expectation, is core to Generations X and especially Y, also known as the Millennials. The latter group, and its attitudes and expectations around inclusion, is poised to influence workplace culture like no other generation. As of 2010, US Census data showed that Generation Y accounted for a larger percentage (27.7) of the population than did Generation X (19.8), Baby Boomers (26.4) or the Mature/WWII Generation (13.0). And as of March 2012, the US labor force was comprised of nearly 32 million Millennials.<sup>4</sup> This large group prizes transparency and keeps score on those who 'walk the talk,' and is already making its presence known in corporate hierarchies.

## CHANGING MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION

The composition of social circles is changing. Ethnic, cultural and sexual-orientation differences, as well as gender identity and expression, are becoming more widely embraced. Allies will amplify this perspective in the workplace by literally changing the face of diversity and inclusion efforts — specifically, the participants and leaders of these efforts will change.

An ally may not have a diverse identity herself, but perhaps she's married to a person of color, or has a gay son. Ally networks are a way for all employees to support our increasingly multicultural, diverse world. This means that ERGs, rather than continuing to be defined by ethnicity, gender, and other visible identities — and remaining closed to anyone who doesn't share those identities — will become more diversified. Organizations such as Cisco, the Central Intelligence Agency and others have made ERGs open to all — any employee can join any ERG, and many have.

Leadership of these groups will diversify as well, with more and more allies raising their hands for diversity leadership positions. As ally success stories create a clearer path for people to stand up for what they believe in, allies will become empowered to use their leverage to accomplish cultural change and innovation for their companies.



# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

Additionally, important ERG leadership positions, such as network chairs, increasingly will be considered high-potential development mechanisms – for allies as well as members of the primary group identity. The skill set, cultural competency, and visibility gained is a natural fit for high-potential programs and every company's need to grow 'leaders of the future.'

The changing membership composition of ERGs will not only present new learning and leadership opportunities for allies but also allow long-term, committed ERG members to branch out and support other groups. They are no longer the only ones holding down the fort.

This will allow ERG members to begin seeking ally opportunities for themselves, to learn about less familiar communities of difference and evolve into broader champions of inclusion. We are beginning to see this occur in alliances between workplace communities – for example, between disabilities and LGBT resource groups – that focus on joint value propositions, and create collaboration opportunities around product and market development.

## BROADER PIPELINE OF AMBASSADORS

In addition to being solely responsible for cultivating diverse and inclusive cultures, ERGs have for a long time been accountable for recruitment and engagement of members. With most organizations still struggling to identify and grow as much diverse talent as possible, often the same people are asked over and over again to represent their companies at job fairs and other recruitment events.

While most diversity representatives are proud of this responsibility and would never turn their back on it, it can be tiring, especially when it rarely comes with a decrease in workload at their regular jobs.



# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

A critical mass of allies will ensure that recruitment responsibilities do not fall so heavily on just a few people. They broaden the pipeline of ambassadors who can speak to prospective employees about the company culture in a fluent, credible way. With Generation Y graduates gravitating to companies that demonstrate inclusive cultures, organizations that effectively train allies in articulating their commitment to diversity will win the lion's share of diverse talent.

## MIDDLE MANAGEMENT GETS ON BOARD

Middle management support has long been a difficult challenge for diversity and inclusion efforts. Until now, there's been no clear way of making them part of the effort. Rather than being treated as potential allies, middle managers at many organizations have been trained to concede to diversity and inclusion. From many middle managers' perspectives, diversity and inclusion efforts are a distraction from the 'real work,' at cross-purposes with performance.

An active ally network allows companies to redefine this conversation with middle managers, and gives middle managers an opportunity to participate and see diversity and inclusion as an enabler to their teams' productivity. Active engagement on the part of middle managers will allow them to view diversity and inclusion as good for business and innovation, and the presence of allies in their environment might provide that historically-elusive tipping point that changes attitudes.

Eventually it will be recognized that people managers have accountability for cultural health. It is not just what you produce but how you produce it and with whom. There will come a time when giving back to the workplace environment and taking advantage of multicultural learning opportunities will be the lifeblood of any manager's success.



# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

## DISTINCT VALUE PROPOSITION FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVES

True diversity at senior executive levels in most large companies is still elusive. Given the persistent blockages in pipelines for diverse talent, especially toward the upper rungs of the ladder, there is a better chance that companies will have more ‘out’ ally executives than LGBT executives – at least in the near term. Once these senior allies have been identified, which can be difficult, careful nurturing and support should be provided. Through their presence and passion, they are truly paving the way as early adopters and accelerating key conversations.

No organization can have too many executives who publically support, in words and deeds, diversity and inclusion. Not only does it send a message to employees, which has a powerful impact on retention, but also, the effort to live, work and lead as an ally makes better business leaders in a rapidly diversifying marketplace in which cultural knowledge and dexterity are critical.

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Where once executives were ‘voluntold’ to serve as executive sponsors to ERGs, we predict that sponsorship will become a **sought-after rotational opportunity**, utilized in executive development programs.

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# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

## SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE RISE

We saw in the case studies earlier that companies are already beginning to utilize social media to engage allies. This kind of activity will increase exponentially.

The potential of this medium cannot be overstated, as we've seen in recent geo-political events where communities come together quickly, start a movement, apply pressure for results, and then disperse. While only time will tell about the lasting effects of those results, the rate and pace of organizational change clearly needs to accelerate in order to keep pace with today's changing market and social realities.

Thus far, similar to how ERGs gain membership, ally engagement has largely occurred by word of mouth. One employee taps another on the shoulder, or knocks on her door, and shares his involvement with a particular ERG. That fellow employee might get involved too. But in a time of virtual workplaces, and as allies develop a bigger presence within organizations, there will need to be a more scalable mechanism for allowing people to raise their hands to participate as allies.

Social media will become a key tool in ally engagement going forward. Not only will it facilitate connections between potential and existing allies, but it also will connect allies with each other, leading to group initiatives such as the formation of an ally council as we saw in Alcoa's case study.

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“The power of social media to expand the influence of [ally] efforts cannot be overstated.”

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# The Future of Ally Engagement (cont'd)

## THE NAME GAME CONTINUES

With the ally phenomenon just beginning to gain traction, many companies are still struggling with how to label this new resource. For example, should allies even be called allies? What about champions? Promoters? Advocates? Supporters? Ambassadors?

Since many ally efforts emerge as offshoots of existing ERGs, there is a tendency to use language that's familiar among people who have been involved with diversity and inclusion efforts for years. But allies represent a whole new constituency that deserves its own consideration in terms of branding.

As we saw in Alcoa's case study above, branding can make a big difference in generating a response from potential allies. Going forward, we will continue to see companies experimenting with branding and naming in order to maximize the effectiveness of their efforts.

## VIRTUAL SUPPORT TAKES SHAPE

When your department is comprised equally of people in New York, Shanghai, London and Sydney — and 99 percent of your interaction takes place online — mugs and pins that identify people as allies become a lot less effective. The increasingly global and virtual workplace will demand that ally strategies move beyond physical signifiers as the primary means of disclosing ally status. Virtual identities, including company bios and social media profiles, will become paramount to the role of allies in keeping momentum for diversity and inclusion efforts across time zones.

# Conclusion





# Conclusion

## THE PARADIGM IS CHANGING

Growing awareness for the potential of allies is on track to accelerate workplace diversity and inclusion efforts. This is a great thing – but it’s not without challenges. As we watch this trend unfold, it’s important to remain mindful of the change it represents. The engagement of this broader population of champions requires looking at the value proposition of ERGs, and all diversity and inclusion efforts, in a whole new way.

Based on what we’ve learned, we at JBC are beginning to investigate what corporations will be faced with in five years’ time. How will allies be integrated into the fabric of the workplace? Will they begin to provide new solutions to the challenge of building inclusion in largely hierarchical structures? And what will this mean for everyone involved – employees, allies, ERG members, diversity leaders, or any combination of the above?

And what about LGBT-identified members of the workplace? ERGs as we’ve known them have been largely driven by safety – the need to create safe spaces where LGBT employees can come together to share their experiences and address problems from a unified perspective. There is a great sense of community and efficiency that comes from this model, and there will always be a need for single-identity camaraderie and collaboration.

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“With younger generations viewing identity in a more multifaceted way, and allies wanting to align themselves with LGBT and other causes, diversity and inclusion efforts must represent multiple levels of value.”  
.....



## Conclusion (cont'd)

However, with younger generations viewing identity in a more multifaceted way, and allies wanting to align themselves with LGBT and other causes, diversity and inclusion efforts must represent multiple levels of value. This does not mean that something is being taken away from ERGs. Rather, by creating long-term value for multiple constituencies, the opportunities become more abundant for everyone.

For example, having allies involved may appear at first to decrease the professional development opportunities available to ERG members. However, the engagement of allies actually increases these opportunities by creating avenues that before may have been closed to ERGs. Through association with allies, ERGs and their causes gain greater visibility – and likely some muscle, too.

ERGs also can benefit from the positional influence of allies. While ERGs are largely comprised of entry and mid-level employees, allies emerge fairly frequently from the higher ranks of organizations. This can help accelerate initiatives for which ERGs may have spent months or even years struggling to find executive-level sponsorship.

Above all, the engagement of allies is a winning proposition because of the perspective it brings. A healthy sense of creative abrasion is what builds innovation. ERGs that are trying to solve complex problems for their organizations – and for their organizations' roles in society – must actively enlist diversity of thought. Ally involvement is an ideal way to achieve this.



“For all the change that ally efforts are already highlighting in organizations, the surface has barely been scratched.”





## Conclusion (cont'd)

There is still so much to be accomplished. For example, we know that a high number of LGBT employees still choose to remain closeted at work despite being out in their personal lives.<sup>1</sup> LGBT is just one diverse community. If we view this reality as a symptom of a larger cultural experience that many other kinds of diverse talent also are having, we should be concerned for the efficiency, productivity and innovation our organizations are capable of achieving – or not.

As we observe these early stages of ally engagement, we already need to be thinking about the next phase, which has to do with whether behavior is actually changing. Does the presence of allies send a signal to LGBT and other diverse employees that the culture is one where they can bring their whole selves to work? How would that be measured? In the case of LGBT, is the number of ‘out’ employees trending upwards? Are more employees publicly declaring themselves allies?

There is still tremendous power in numbers – indeed, many executives consider a critical mass the most compelling benchmark of all – so collective efforts must continue to focus on and drive these and other boardroom-pleasing metrics. In the game of changing corporate cultures, size certainly matters.



For more information, or to learn more about JBC’s products and services, please email us at [info@jenniferbrownconsulting.com](mailto:info@jenniferbrownconsulting.com) , visit our website at [www.jenniferbrownconsulting.com](http://www.jenniferbrownconsulting.com), or call us at (888) 522-1599.

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