

Allies & Intersectionality: Key Takeaways

At the October 2020 webinar of our **Race & Ethnicity Network** we assembled a fantastic panel of speakers to share with us their views and expertise on **“Allies and Intersectionality”**. We explored how people can be better allies to Black, Asian and minority ethnic talent in the workplace. We also discussed the importance of intersectionality when exploring equality in the workplace, recognising that all groups exist across ‘multiple identities’ and highlighting the need to approach people in a complex and complete way.

This document contains the key takeaways from the event, including tips for allies, for diverse and socially mobile talent, and for employers.

We would like to thank our speakers for giving so generously of their time and insights:

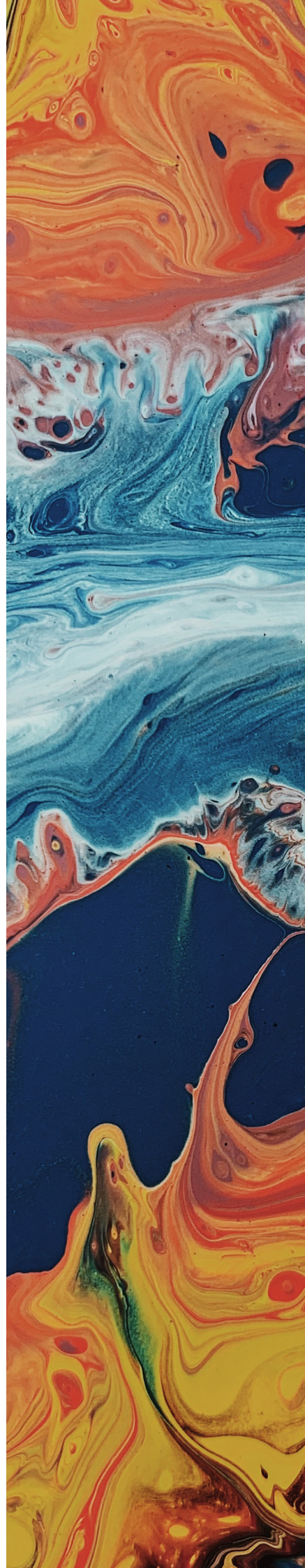
Eric Houston, Senior Legal Counsel, RBC

Patti Kachidza, Senior Lawyer, Axiom Global

Julia Mansi, Regulatory Litigation Counsel, Leading Tech Company

Daniel Winterfeldt QC (Hon), Partner, Reed Smith; Chair, InterLaw Diversity Forum

Thanks to **Slater and Gordon**, our virtual host, for supporting



Tips for Allies

Allies are key to supporting diverse or socially mobile talent on their path to success.

A good ally develops their “empathy” and listening skills.

Allies should educate themselves and talk to diverse and socially mobile colleagues to learn how support them on an individual basis.

Don't make assumptions about your colleagues or their experiences.

Relax and realise everyone makes mistakes. Don't shut down or retreat from your allyship because of one misstep!

Allies support those with less power and give a voice to those who are not in the room.

When one of us wins we all win! We all rise together. We all can be allies to others, even if we are part of a diverse or socially mobile group.

Allies should make a person's diversity and social mobility an asset and not a detriment to their career.

Allies know that talent comes from everywhere. They look for talent and potential in diverse and socially mobile individuals.

Allies need to do more than engage in “performative” allyship (e.g., posts on social media). They need to be active allies. These actions can be big or small, but they must be real, consistent, concrete action to bring about change in the workplace and support diverse and socially mobile talent.

Every ally should do it in their own way and engage in activities that they are comfortable with.

Allies should also explore where they have influence or power to make change or influence structures or decisions to support others.

Allies should engage with career progression of diverse and socially mobile talent – work allocation, flexible working, promotion and advancement, etc.



Tips for Diverse and Socially Mobile Talent

Allies are all around you – you just have to trust and open up to them.

Allies may be networked into the power structure and can support and guide you.

When searching for jobs you may get many, many ‘no’s but all it takes is one ‘yes’ to get an opportunity. Don’t be discouraged!

Language is important for allies, but we also have to give them space to make mistakes and learn from them.

Embrace your background and experiences and present them as strengths and advantages. Value what makes you you!

Don’t let fear of failure keep you from trying! Say yes and give it a shot...

If you have been selected for a job, then you are qualified for the role.

Don’t let others’ preconceptions of you or their focus on differences shape how you feel about yourself and how you perform your role. Don’t let it affect your confidence and ability to perform.

Explore different options. For example, consider a career in-house if law firms don’t seem like the right fit for you.

Get involved in employee network groups. These offer a great opportunity to build your network, support others, and to build your skillset.



Tips for Employers

Unlock the power of storytelling to activate allies!

Engage your diverse and socially mobile colleagues to share their journeys, including successes and overcoming challenges, while being mindful that not everyone may wish to share their negative experiences.

Engage your clients to share their stories and support your business case and engage colleagues.

HR and recruiters should not focus on “fit”. This frequently means that diverse or socially mobile person being themselves will hold them back. We should see value in difference.

Intersectionality is accepting the “whole package” of a person across the spectrum of diversity and social mobility, including sex, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, age, disability, religious belief, etc.

