

## Set to Win

By Ray Arata

*Ray Arata is an inclusivity ally leader, DEI consultant, and founder of the Better Man Movement. He has trained, coached, mentored and led countless men to become their better selves and understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to inclusion, equality and diversity. In this excerpt from his book [Showing Up: How Men Can Become Effective Allies in the Workplace](#), he talks about the value of creating a culture of belonging — and some of the powerhouse organizations he’s helped lead the way.*

The Me Too, Time’s Up, and Black Lives Matter movements have created a perfect storm of bad behavior, largely due to men’s toxic behavior. These movements were a long overdue response, as well as an outright refusal to tolerate this type of behavior. Men are on high alert: The spotlight is squarely focused on their behaviors, and we have already witnessed a number of “high profile” instances of men being fired, stepping down from leadership, and finding their careers ruined by their choices and behavior, as well as their abuse of power. Their careers were tarnished after social media exposed their actions. These very same men work inside companies and are often in leadership positions, thus posing a question for many organizations: Do we ignore, react, or take initiative? What is your position?

One thing is for sure: The underlying playbook of what it means to be man, and how it shows up in our roles as leaders, partners, spouses, and parents, needs a rewrite. The writing is on the wall. It’s time for us individually and collectively to embrace healthy masculinity as a way of being, in our personal and business lives. Not only will those we care about benefit; we will, too. Company cultures that have a predominance of men in leadership are ripe for change. How you change just depends on what will motivate you to change.

Troy Young, president of Hearst Magazines and publisher of *Good Housekeeping*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Town & Country*, resigned in July 2020 due to allegations of sexual misconduct. For most companies in a situation like this, there isn’t a playbook; they have to create one.

The Hearst Corporation is one example of how one man, through his misconduct, can create a wake-up call moment for the leadership of a company. How and if a company answers a wake-up call says a lot about them. How you or your company answers says a lot about *you*.

A “wake-up call” is a shock, surprise, or realization that causes you to become fully alert to what is happening in your life. It can also be thought of as a glimpse into a moment of truth, where you see that staying on your current trajectory and not changing only creates more pain.

A wake-up call of this magnitude gives a company a snapshot of its culture and creates a choice point for moving forward.

Hearst chose to answer the wake-up call in a healthy masculine way.

iCrossing, a subsidiary of Hearst, hosted the 2018 Better Man Conference in the Hearst Tower in Midtown Manhattan. When this all went down, they reached out to my company to address their culture issue head on. Their resulting commitment was to sponsor and send seventy senior executive male leaders to our fall 2020 virtual Better Man Conference as a kick-off event, to be followed by a training course on allyship with an emphasis on healthy masculinity. The men were eager to learn so that they could do their part and play a role in shifting their work culture.

This is just how one company responded. Organizations have been slow to initiate efforts to engage men as allies and inclusionary leaders until either they see business benefits or their hand is forced. It appears that the tide is changing for organizations, albeit slower than it should.

Some companies are making bold goals that *require* the engagement of men as allies and inclusionary leaders. The Intel Corporation, which has been a partner, client, and sponsor of the Better Man Conference over the years, made one of its goals for 2030 to increase the number of women in technical roles up to 40 percent. This, in essence, would double the number of women and traditionally excluded minorities in senior leadership. They recognize that in order to make this goal a reality, they must include men in their DEI efforts.

The wake-up calls just keep coming. I invite you to consider another wake-up call moment that has presented itself to you and the company you work for: COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement.

LeanIn.org and the consulting company McKinsey conducted a 2020 Women in the Workplace study that looked at the pandemic's impact. According to its results,

Women in particular have been negatively impacted. Women—especially women of color—are more likely to have been laid off or furloughed during the COVID-19 crisis, stalling their careers and jeopardizing their financial security. The pandemic has intensified challenges that women already faced. Working mothers have always worked a “double shift”—a full day of work, followed by hours spent caring for children and doing household labor. Now the supports that made this possible—including school and childcare— have been upended.

In December of 2020, largely due to the pandemic, 100 percent of jobs lost were held by women. In December 2020, women lost a total of 156,000 jobs while men gained 16,000 jobs,

according to the National Women’s Law Center: “Of the net 9.8 million jobs lost since February 2020, women’s jobs have accounted for 55% of them.”

As a result of these dynamics, more than one in four women are contemplating what many would have considered unthinkable just six months ago: downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce completely. This is an emergency for corporate America. Companies risk losing women in leadership—future women leaders—and thus unwinding years of painstaking progress toward gender diversity.

This business pain is real for many organizations. Is this happening at your company?

Personally, I seek to find the silver lining in challenging times. Amidst this crisis there is an opportunity. Do you see any silver linings? As a result of COVID-19, are you making adjustments in your leadership?

If organizations prioritize building a more flexible and empathetic workplace, they may be able to retain the employees most affected by today’s crises—women—and nurture a culture in which women have equal opportunities to achieve their potential over the long term. Men will need to develop their own ability to be empathic. This includes you!

You might be wondering: How is engaging men as allies and inclusionary leaders good for business? On a more personal note, how is it good for you?

The compelling reason for companies to engage men as allies centers around attracting, retaining, and hiring talent. Creating a culture of belonging wherein men are active allies increases the likelihood that people bring their whole selves to work, which increases overall effectiveness. Unless you have men on board and part of diversity and inclusion efforts, the status quo for men in charge will remain, and the lack of opportunities for those who don’t identify as men will slowly erode a company’s ability to be competitive.

*Excerpted from Chapter 1 of [Showing Up: How Men Can Become Effective Allies in the Workplace](#), by Ray Arata.*

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