HOW TO BE A BETTER ALLY TO WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

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FIRST EDITION

WHERE DO I START?

This guide is intended to serve as a primer on how to be a better ally to women of all backgrounds in industrial design, with the intention of combating the gender inequality present in our industry. The first section will cover the basics of allyship. These are the principles by which we support those who experience inequality.

If you have ever asked yourself, "what can I do to help? Where do I start?" then this is the booklet for you.

If you see a word highlighted like this, you can find its definition in the glossary on page 17.

ALLYSHIP BASICS

What is allyship? Allyship is the ongoing practice of solidarity and partnership practiced by someone who is in a position of power or privilege. Anyone can be an ally - by recognizing that although you may not be a member of the community you are supporting, you can still commit to using your voice and your power to help others gain equality in the industry.

As an ally, you need to do the work of educating yourself on the experiences of marginalized designers. This primer is a great start! If you have more questions, see the sources listed on page 18.

DO's:
- Be open to listening
- Be aware of your implicit biases
- Do your own research
- Acknowledge your mistakes
- Accept criticism with grace, even when it is uncomfortable
- Do the work every day to become a better ally

DONT's
- Don't expect others to explain to you - do your own research
- Do not center yourself in the dialogue - it isn't about you

INTERSECTIONALITY

Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989, describing it as a "prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other." This approach combats the way many people look at gender inequality as separate from race, class, sexuality, and other identities. Intersectional feminism looks instead at the way these identities intersect, and shape the experiences of women.

A white woman will face very different challenges in the workplace than a woman of color. This is not meant to compare the injustices faced by people of different identities; it is simply a lens through which we understand the experiences of those around us to better support and uplift them.
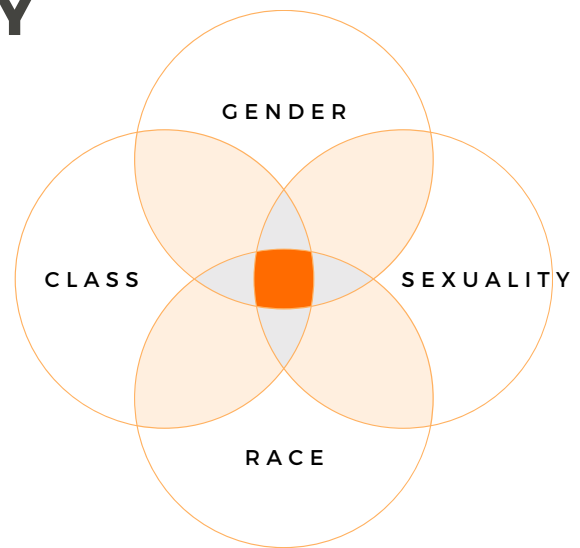
As allies, we use our power and privilege to help our colleagues and friends who have been underrepresented. In this vein, it is critical to support designers who experience multiple types of discrimination. White women, though underrepresented in the industry, still benefit from their position of relative privilege. It's critical that we uplift all women to create equality in the field.
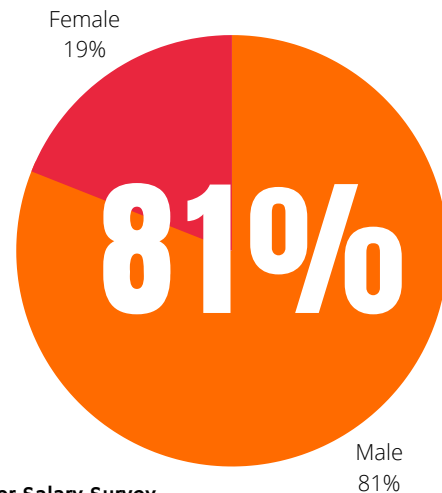
WOMEN IN THE ID PROFESSION

Many of you already recognize the significant gap between men and women in industrial design. However, that gap is larger than many of us realize, and it has real impact on the lives of millions of people who use the products that we design. In this section, we will dive a little deeper into the inequality present in the industry, and why changing the status quo matters.

THE STATE OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

To understand why the industry needs to change, we need to look at industrial design as it stands today. Coroflot's Industrial Designer Salaries in the United States illustrates the alarming gender gap present in the industry:

81% OF PRODUCT & INDUSTRIAL DESIGN IS MALE

Female 19%

81%

Male 81%

Data from Coroflot's Industrial Designer Salary Survey

2018 report by Design Council reported that in the UK, product and industrial design are male-dominated professions at 95%, even though 63% of students studying art & design there are women. Does that statistic shock you? It should. And we should have even more data to back up the plight of women in ID specifically - the lack of studies on the subject makes it difficult to point to easy facts and figures that prove how challenging it is to be a woman working in product & industrial design today.

As one might expect, the lack of representation for women in ID has resulted in a gender wage gap. Citing the UK Design Council's study, women working as product, clothing, and related designers earn 18.3% less than their male counterparts. Additionally, women make up only 17% of all design manager positions. The lack of women in design leadership positions compounds the issue, as women entering the workforce do not see paths to achieve longterm success, and leave the industry.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Women make up half of the population, and use many products that are designed, primarily, by men. When women are not given a seat at the table, there are devastating consequences - for example, the widespread use of the male body as an ergonomic reference for automobiles has resulted in a 17% higher fatality rate for female motorists (NHTSA, see sources). Seatbelts, medical equipment, industrial equipment... These and many other critical products are not designed with all bodies in mind and women die as a direct result of this practice.

This is not to say that men should only work on "men's products" and women should only work on "women's products." It's important to include a variety of perspectives throughout the design process.

Roughly half of ID students are women, yet the representation of women in the field plummets after graduation. Many of these women transition to adjacent fields that are less hostile to women such as research or Color Material Finish (CMF), but many leave for good. Women do not feel welcome in ID. When there is such stark inequality in this industry, both users and designers suffer. We must advocate for and make space for those who have been historically under-represented in the field.

THE DESIGN PROCESS IS IMPROVED WHEN DESIGNERS FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES COME TOGETHER TO COLLABORATE.

THE GUIDE

Now that you've done your homework, you're ready to get into the guide itself. This section will provide you with the tools you need to support and empower women in the industrial & product design industry specifically. We'll build upon the foundation of good allyship and talk about some of the specifics of making an impact, no matter your place in the industry. From CEOs to students, everyone can be a force for good.

Let's get started!

1 TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

The first step towards meaningful allyship is introspective. An important part of this process is acknowledging our mistakes, and learning from them. Take a few minutes now to think about some of the areas in which you can grow. Are you a good listener? Do you give an equal platform to both women and men? Do you recognize and celebrate talent equally in your organization? Do you go out of your way to hire diversely?

These questions will look different for all of us, but it's important to recognize where we still have room to grow.

Allyship is an ongoing process. Check in on this periodically

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EXAMPLES OF COMMON MICROAGGRESSIONS THAT IMPACT WOMEN IN ID:

- Calling a co-worker "sweetie" or "honey" or any pejorative term

- Delegation of "office housework" or food ordering solely to women

- Making assumptions about women - "she wouldn't want to take on more responsibility with this project, she has kids" or "she wouldn't want to be part of the factory visit."

- Pigeonholing women in design into trend work, research, soft-goods, or other female-coded work

- Making assumptions about merit - "if she was good enough at design, she would be in charge"

2 BUILD INCLUSIVITY

If we want to increase the number of women in industrial design, we need to build inclusivity into the very structure of the studio. Expectations of long work hours, grueling travel schedules, and a lack of flexibility can plague agencies and corporate studios alike. Many studios also suffer from a "boys club" culture that makes it difficult for female designers to feel welcome and access the same opportunities as their male colleagues.

This is an active process. Silence builds culture too - instead, use your voice to build change.

THINGS YOU CAN DO AS AN ALLY TO BUILD INCLUSIVITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE:

- Speak up on behalf of women, even when they are not present

- Don't take on projects your team can't achieve reasonably - work towards a 40 hour week

- Discuss flexible hours and increasing payed parental leave with your employer

- Actively listen to your female colleagues - avoid the impulse to interrupt or add your 2¢

- Sponsor or mentor talented young female designers

- Use your platform to share and celebrate women's work, advocate within your network

3 UNLEARN BIASES

Many of our interactions are shaped by the implicit biases we possess. These biases come from an evolutionary need to make snap decisions based on judgments and are not inherently bad. However, we need to consciously interrogate how our biases shape our interactions with the industry and do the work to unlearn these harmful biases.

Self awareness is the first step to combating your biases.

Take an _implicit association test_ online, and take a look at your results. Often, our implicit biases don't align with our declared beliefs

If your biases don't align with your beliefs, take the time to dissect the way your biases intersect with your own identity. Everyone has biases, and examining and re-evaluating yours is an important step in the allyship process.

Opportunities to have discussions with others about your biases can be helpful - as an ally, you can bring up the topic of combating bias on behalf of the women with whom you work. Ask your peers about what they do to combat bias. Do they have an individual strategy? Start that conversation.

Combating bias on an institutional level is even more important. Work with your organization to develop concrete objectives for reducing stereotyping. Work to develop standardized criteria on the impact of bias in hiring and performance evaluations.

4 HIRE DIVERSELY

Hiring diversely is one of the most important steps an ally can take to help women and other underrepresented people in the design industry.

It is also one of the most difficult, as it requires the ally to go out of their way to actively seek female candidates for the job in question.

It is also important to note that you can attract and retain diverse talent by making your organization welcoming and inclusive towards women. Leverage diverse interview panels, and encourage referrals from female employees. These discussions will look different for different employees and organizations - don't be afraid to lean into your leadership team or HR department for support. **Hiring diversely will only enhance the work and better respond to the world by inclusive representation.**

TIPS THAT CAN HELP YOU TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY IN YOUR WORKPLACE:

- Audit your existing practices - what are your challenges?

- Widen your talent pools, and don't just rely on word-of-mouth referrals

- Write your job postings thoughtfully, avoiding loaded language & calling out inclusive benefits for employees

- Teach your recruiters how to avoid biases in hiring

- Offer workplace flexibility - your policies might be keeping talented women from applying

- Strategically seed your pipeline with diverse candidates - encouraging female students, hiring female interns… invest in the future of women in design!

5 AMPLIFY WOMEN

Amplifying the voices and work of female designers is a great way to work towards equality in design. Like much of allyship, you can do this work on both a personal and a systemic level. On the personal level, you can amplify the contributions of women if they aren't being heard. Echo what they have said, and acknowledge their role.

"Actually, Liz had a great idea about how to address that. Liz, do you want to say more?"

This is a great way to make women feel heard, and lets them speak to their own work. It is also critical to amplify the voices of designers with intersecting identities that make it even more challenging for them to be heard.

If you supervise women, then make space for conversations about goal setting for professional and personal development. This sends a message to your direct reports that the organization wants them to grow and achieve their goals. Encourage your female employees to aim for ambitious goals, and invest in their success.

On a systemic level, use your platforms to amplify the work of women. If you are sharing work online or garnering speakers for an event, aim for equal representation.

This will require you to actively seek out women to speak, and find work created by female designers. That labor is part of allyship. If you can, give a platform, interview, or speaking opportunity to a woman who may not be part of the same small and visible group of female industrial design speakers. If you run a design organization, are a publisher of design content, or are a leader in your workplace - your help here is critical.

6 **CREDIT DESIGNERS**

Throughout your career, you will work with designers from a variety of backgrounds. When you collaborate with women or other marginalized designers, it's important that you credit their contributions appropriately, especially if they aren't present to stand up for their work. If you are celebrated for work that was a group effort, the onus is on you to speak up for your teammates and recognize their successes.

Don't let their names get left off of awards, patents, or other forms of recognition. Share the spotlight!

Acclaim is not a zero-sum game - their recognition doesn't detract from your success.

If you find yourself on a panel of all men, you can request to give your seat to a marginalized designer, or request that the panel be more diverse. If you are a designer who finds yourself frequently invited to panels and speaking opportunities, this is an excellent way to let women step forward and take credit for their work.

Giving women the platform to speak to their work is a meaningful way to let them receive appropriate recognition for their contributions.

This action can be particularly meaningful when done in workplaces or classrooms where collaboration is prevalent, as is the case in much of product design.

7 GROW GRACEFULLY

While practicing allyship, we build our capacity to receive criticism, to be honest and accountable with our mistakes, and recognize that being called out for making a mistake is a gift—that it is an honor of trust to receive a chance to be a better person, to learn, to grow, and to do things differently.

It is very likely that at some point in the process, you will feel uncomfortable, challenged, and hurt. It's important to remember to decenter yourself from the conversation at times like these. Part of the privilege of one's identity as an ally is that we have a choice about whether or not to resist oppression.

Marginalized people don't have that choice, so respect those who give you feedback by accepting it gracefully and commit to doing better next time.

WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, YOU CAN USE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO GUIDE YOUR CONVERSATION:

- Center the impacted: "are you okay?"

- Listen & learn: "what you said hurt me and others"

- Apologize for the impact: "I'm sorry" - avoid making excuses that devalue the apology

- Stop the pattern: "I won't use that kind of loaded language in the future"

If you find yourself in a situation where you have been called out, and are too frustrated to respond appropriately, take a minute to step away and cool down. Process what you heard, and return to the conversation with a cool head.

ADVICE & LEARNINGS

The creation of this guide relied a great deal on the collective wisdom of many members of the design community.

This final section consists of advice and learnings from a variety of designers, who shared their words of wisdom with you.

Take what you have learned in this guide along with their advice, and go forward knowing that you have the tools to be a better ally to women in industrial design.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Excessive caution hinders meaningful allyship - don't overthink it, get involved

Believe women - if a woman shares her experience with you, believe her words

Diversify your feed - follow more women online

Ask yourself "what am I doing to perpetuate this cycle?"

Find and reach out to female peers with job opportunities

Connect women to other women based on their interests

Find, follow, and encourage female designers in school

Be mindful about respecting boundaries

Clean up your own messes! Contribute to making your workspace livable for everyone

Don't blame the pipeline. If only 10% of applicants are women, seek out the other 40%

Maintaining the status quo does not make you an ally

Use public allyship thoughtfully - use your voice to center women in discourse

Demand data about women in design from your organizations

Ask women what you can do to help them - when she tells you, listen and follow through

Exhibit patience and grace, both for yourself & others

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable

Don't let your bruised ego stop a woman from voicing her thoughts

PASS IT ON

The final recommendation of this guide is simple: pass it on.

Print it out and give it to your colleagues and coworkers.
Pin it up at your studio, or on the bulletin board at your school.
Email it to your team, send it to your boss, and have a conversation about it
with the people you care about.

This resource can only be helpful if designers know it exists.

The same goes for the ideas within the guide. Share them openly and willingly,
and encourage the people you work with to do the same. Your commitment to
the betterment and the wellbeing of the industry through the action items
found in this guide makes meaningful change for women in industrial design.

Keep it going, and pass it on!

GIVE BACK TO THE GUIDE

Have a suggestion for the guide? Want to pass on your recommendations
for the next edition? Just want to share your experiences in the industry?
Please contact us at **designallyship@gmail.com**! You can also find us
on Instagram at **@designallyship** and **designallyship.com**.

GLOSSARY

Identity: An individual's self-concept, as derived from their perceived membership in a group. Sam prefers to use they/them pronouns to express their identity.

Implicit Bias: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. He had a conversation with his boss about addressing implicit bias in the workplace.

Inclusivity: The practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized. A company can take steps to be more inclusive by auditing their hiring practices.

Marginalized [people]: Individuals that experience patterns of social and political inequality via a group that is assigned negative meanings by the broader society or dominant culture, thereby fostering oppression. Emilio took the time to explain some of the difficulties faced by marginalized designers to his colleagues.

Microaggression: brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups. She expressed her frustration with the microaggressions she experienced in the studio.

Privilege: Social privilege is a theory of special advantage or entitlement, used to one's own benefit or to the detriment of others. These groups can be advantaged based on social class, age, height, IQ, disability, ethnic or racial category, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion. Josh acknowledged the privilege of being able to attend an expensive design school.

SOURCES

Rochester Racial Justice Toolkit, by Nicole Nfonoyim-Hara

Guide to Allyship, published by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation

The Design Economy 2018, published by the UK Design Council

Industrial Designer Salaries in the United States, published by Coroflot

Designing With a Difference, by Marti Barletta, published in Innovation Magazine, Spring 2016

Design Defined: The Lack of Women in Industrial Design, by Kellie Walters & Betsy Barnhart

Where are the Women? Women Industrial Designers from University to Workplace, by Catherine Anne Lockhart

Industrial & Product Design, published by Data USA (Deloitte & Datawheel)

Injury Vulnerability and Effectiveness of Occupant Protection Technologies for Older Occupants and Women, published by The US Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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