



Retail Business Services

Associates Learn Allyship with Network of Executive Women

August 26, 2021

As Retail Business Services – the services company of Ahold Delhaize USA – celebrates Women's Equality



Celebrating Women's Equality Day Aug. 26, 2021



Day – observed annually on Aug. 26 – we're also celebrating those who have taken steps to be better allies and advocates for gender inclusivity. Several associates learned what it takes to be a good ally while participating in the Network of Executive Women (NEW) Beyond Allies Program. The six-month program taught participants how to support the women who work with and around them, and how to elevate their voices.

Leanne Campbell, Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) for Retail Business Services, says allyship is essential as the company continues its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion journey.

"It's important for us as a company to continue to provide these opportunities for women to grow into leadership roles," Leanne said.

That goal makes training opportunities like the Beyond Allies program particularly vital.

"It forces you out of your day-to-day work to take a step back and really think about some of these things," Leanne added.

Associates who attended the course agreed – saying they found it eye-opening and empowering.

"I was happy to participate and quite honestly, excited," said Tosh Potter, Director of the Indirect Center of Excellence. "This was an opportunity to be a better me, both personally and professionally."

Mark McCollum, General Liability Manager for Retail Business Services, says the program helped him put himself in the shoes of his female colleagues.

"Some of the struggles I learned that women in the workplace face every day weren't things I'd thought about or consciously considered, so it really opened my eyes," Mark said. "The struggles that some of the folks that were in the program talked about – being in meetings and being talked over or not being addressed – I never considered or thought about, and a couple of meetings after that I looked around and thought, 'Oh, I see what you're talking about.' And once I saw that, I was determined to work to change it."

In the Beyond Allies program, participants are required to read about the experiences of women in the workplace and reflect on what they can do to help. But the program goes one step further than a simple thought exercise – participants are expected to identify a female co-worker who wants to grow in her career and come up with three action items to help her achieve her goals.

For Tosh, this exercise helped him realize that being a good ally doesn't end once you leave the office.

"While I definitely found value in Beyond Allies from a professional standpoint, I found just as much value in the 'aha!' moments that I experienced when I applied those principles with my own family," he said. "I have a much better understanding of the challenges that all women face – including my own wife and daughter."

As Tosh, Mark and other participants learned, being a good ally is surprisingly simple.

"You have to be aware of the issues that women face in the workplace," Tosh said. "And then listen, engage, advocate, recommend and notice. Listen and hear what is said so you don't miss an opportunity. Engage productively. Advocate verbally and frequently. Recommend them for the right opportunity and notice the wins – big and small – and call them out."

For Mark, learning to listen was key.

"I think the takeaway for me was realizing that I need to have a conversation and listen, supporting and looking for opportunities to help my female colleagues advance – just being really conscious about what their needs and goals are rather than making an assumption," he said. "It's so important to recognize that not everyone's experience is the same, and you need to learn what a person's needs are to be a good support for them. Just listen and truly hear what they need and provide support in whatever way you can."

And for those wanting to be good allies themselves, Leanne has a few words of advice.

"If nothing else, just listen," she said. "Being a good ally is really just taking the step back, having that conversation, listening to what they have to say and asking the question, 'What can I do to help?'"