

Executive Interview

2019

Orange Grove Consulting specializes in helping organizations improve gender equity and inclusivity through a set of consulting tools and training programs.

Orange Grove's end goal is to uncover and remove the limiting aspects of talent potential and processes to create more innovative, productive and competitive workplaces. Their network of consultants, trainers and coaches provide a rich skill set, generations of gender and diversity experience, and the highest level of service for our clients.



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About Jonathan Jackson

Jonathan Jackson, Ph.D. is the director of the Community Access, Recruitment and Engagement (CARE) Research Center at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. CARE investigates the impact of diversity and inclusion on the quality of human subjects, and researches and leverages deep community entrenchment to build trust and overcome barriers to clinical-trial participation. His research focuses on midlife and late-life health disparities in clinical settings that affect under-served populations. Dr. Jackson also works as a cognitive neuroscientist, investigating the early detection of Alzheimer's disease, particularly in the absence of overt memory problems. He has become a well-known representative to under-served communities and dozens of affiliated organizations, particularly regarding participation in clinical research. Dr. Jackson serves on the leadership team of several organizations focused on community health, and has written guidance for local, statewide and national groups on research access, engagement and recruitment.

About Jodi Detjen

Jodi Detjen is an organizational consultant and educator. Her mission is to help realize gender equity in the workplace as soon as possible. In addition to being Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Orange Grove Consulting, Jodi is Clinical Professor of Management at Suffolk University. She has spent her career transforming the way people work and designs top-tier women's leadership. She has consulted and run workshops for clients such as Accenture, Microsoft Partners and Oracle. She is co-author of the book, *The Orange Line: A Woman's Guide to Integrating Career, Family, and Life*. Her upcoming book on building inclusive workplaces will be published in January 2020. Jodi earned her B.Sc. from Virginia Tech, her MA from Duke University and is pursuing her Doctorate at Temple University.



About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is responsible for business operations, including overseeing client services, awards program, design and project management. Rachel has worked in the HCM research industry for the last ten years and has 15 years of experience in sales, marketing, business development, and sales performance management. Prior to AC Growth, she held several senior management roles and was on the leadership team at Bersin & Associates, a pioneer analyst firm in e-Learning and now industry-leading HR and Talent Research Company. In her Senior Director role, Rachel developed the strategy and led the commercial execution of the solution provider vertical, and grew the vertical into the company's largest market segment. In her role as Director of Sales, Rachel developed and led a team of senior account executives focused on acquiring global strategic accounts.

RACHEL

Jodi, can you share a little about your background and career journey?

JODI

I run a consulting firm where we work with organizations to get more inclusion and women into senior leadership so that we're really looking at inclusion as a skill set, and not just a skill set but also as an organizational framework. We think of it not as a "Oh, you should be doing this" but as a way to shift the mindset and build the skill set so you can change the organization and leverage the benefits of inclusion. It is really about, how do we take action? This male allyship work that we've done with you is exemplifying that but it's really about how and what can you do to help solve the problem rather than just complaining about the problem. It's very action-oriented.

RACHEL

Absolutely. There were some things that we saw that were unique and then there were some things that we see that are not perhaps as groundbreaking but reassuring as to why it's important.

JODI

The thing that didn't surprise me and also surprised me at the same time was this idea that continually, again and again, we see that there's this gender gap between women seeing the barriers and men not seeing the barriers and, the statistics continue to bear this out and it's just like, why does this keep happening? There's this persistent gap in awareness that showed up in our survey and it continues to show up in other research as well. Why is it that despite the fact there have been years of widespread discussion about the challenges, for most of the respondents there is still a clear gap between what they're saying and what they're seeing? It's interesting that that still exists. I think there's still a lot of frustration and people don't know exactly what it is and so they hear about these things in the ether, and they don't quite understand what it tangibly means in a day-to-day basis. There was a lot of encouraging stuff in the survey. For most of the respondents, another gap that we saw quite clearly was that respondents were saying that they want gender equity to be important, but only a few companies were actually doing it strategically. People said they wanted it but were not necessarily following up with action. I think that speaks to two things: a) people aren't quite sure what they're supposed to do and b) once they do figure out what to do, it isn't always easy to do. Those were really one of the key pieces that showed up.

RACHEL

Great. Let's hear from Jonathan and his perspective. Jonathan, can you share a little bit about your background and your career?

JONATHAN

I am the Director of the Care Research Center at Massachusetts General Hospital. I am originally a Texas farm boy. I grew up on a farm in Texas and had lots of goats, cows, horses and feral hogs. I wanted to emphasize that because when we talk about male allyship, there is always discussion about what a real male or man looks like. I think that roping steers in the pasturelands of Texas may be top of that list and I've done that. I did want to emphasize that I do have those experiences as well and certainly bring them to bear when thinking about male allyship. More recently, I am trained as a cognitive neuroscientist, working on Alzheimer's disease and a bunch of neurological illnesses at Massachusetts General Hospital. I run a research center that is focused on equity and inclusion. Making sure that when we are trying to cure diseases; we make sure those cures work for everyone.

RACHEL

What you're doing is remarkable, both from a human standpoint and also from a cultural standpoint. Diversity and inclusion is something that we should do but oftentimes it's hard, especially in the workplace. There are a lot of politics, a lot of challenges culturally and economically that get in the way. I'm curious, how would you define male allyship and its importance?

JONATHAN

I grew up in an environment that was mostly non-male dominated. I was mostly raised by women, around women and mentored through my career by women. For me, male allyship is certainly action-oriented in the way that we've been discussing but I think a huge part of it is recognizing the magnitude of the problem and recognizing the ways the problem is manifesting, not just at an abstract societal level, but recognizing that there are a thousand things that men do every day that can impede the work of women and other non-men that are in our workplace.

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For me, allyship is standing with these individuals, not just in a way that you can report on a survey or fulfill any demand characteristics or virtue signaling, but really getting in and doing the work and making sure that the non-men who are around you have the same opportunities as the men who are around you and not chalking that up to differences in personality or culture. A lot of the euphemisms that we like to tell ourselves justifies why things are the way they are within certain organizations.

RACHEL

It's being more conscious, especially when it's not inherent or where it's obvious that there is an imbalance in equality in leadership or in the workplace for certain positions. It's about being conscious of it and then being able to make sure you're taking action to give those opportunities. Jodi, is there anything that you want to add to that?

JODI

I think you're spot on. This whole recognition thing is key and what I was thinking of earlier, too. The fact that there still is this gap in recognition, and I think it's because, frankly, when you have a position where things are easier you just don't see how you've gotten a leg up. For example, if you

go into a place of business and the senior leader looks at a man, [and] says, "You know, you went to the same college, did the same sports, I'm going to introduce you to the right people." Well, that's a leg up, but it's invisible. People may see it but it's not always conscious and so that's an advantage that person got simply because they have a similar background.

So, recognizing that as an advantage, one can say, "Oh my gosh! That's embedded with bias," and that's always step one. I think the other pieces though that we need to build on, and expanding on what Jonathan was talking about is this idea of taking action. This is what we call speaking up and part of this is about amplifying women and people who are in the minority in some kind of power way in an organization — amplifying their voices. Basically, literally making sure that everybody in a meeting speaks up and literally making sure that people are listening and taking into account their points and that somebody's ideas aren't taken over by somebody else that's speaking up. Then there's speaking out and this is basically saying, "Hey you know it's not okay that we go out to a bar every week as our team-building activity. Let's instead see what other people want to do and maybe we rotate." Or when somebody is making a joke about a "dumb blonde"; not laughing, you can say, "Hey, actually that was kind of rude, let's make a joke about something else."

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Another example, if a client ignores a female manager and goes straight to a junior male, the man can say, “Actually, she’s in charge” or her manager could say, “She’s fantastic, she’s one of the best we have, you’re lucky,” so he can make sure that she’s standing out.

It’s really about taking action and taking action means changing these systemic hidden biases that people don’t see.

I want to speak about — and Jonathan, I would love to hear your view on it, too — this idea of there being a cost, a social-capital cost, for men to do this. Say there is a group of men and they’re making jokes about the women and you’re the only one who speaks up, there’s a huge social capital risk to this. We need to be conscious of this, it’s not cost-free for men to be allies. It’s not just “Oh, you know, I’ll help her out.”

It’s actually asking them to take some of their power and use it to make things more equitable. Jonathan, I wonder if you had any experience with that risk aspect and what you thought about it.

A JONATHAN

I would say that I do, and this is where I have to disclose - I am a black male. I’m African-American and so a lot of my thoughts around allyship and how it can be certainly invisible to talk about, what non-men have to go through. It’s sort of rooted in what I see, with what white allyship looks like and the

costs of speaking up and speaking out in those kinds of contexts. I think that my identity as a black man sort of helps me see what allyship looks like and feels like on both sides of the equation.

On one hand, I completely agree with you, Jodi. It’s really hard to speak up, especially if you’re with a lot of other men and they’re engaging in “locker-room talk.” There is no easy social way to encourage the men in this environment to not engage in that sort of behavior. And then on the other side, there are a lot of aspects of this that can feel really subtle. If there is a subtle, sort of micro-aggressive action, such as addressing a junior male instead of a female, who is a leader, calling that action out also has a social cost.

It feels like you’re told that you’re taking something too seriously, blowing it out of proportion or overstepping your bounds, from a social context. Whether it’s sort of cartoonishly overt or whether it’s relatively subtle, or somewhere in between, it’s hard for men to speak up and speak out. One, because a lot of us don’t even see the issue but for those of us who do there is no elegant, easy cost-free way to bring it up without drawing some of that negative attention back on ourselves. It does feel a little bit like a plight in some instances.

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I want to offer my own counterpoint to that, and this is where I get back to my background of being a Texas farm boy. Part of that mystique of being a “real man” is that we are the kinds of people who will go it alone, who will face any odds, who will defeat any enemy to protect the people that we love. For me, there is no more real way of doing that than by being engaged as a male ally. I think that a lot of the jokes and a lot of the micro-aggressions that come up sort of subvert that ideal but if we are trying to hold up these shining examples of what a real man looks like, of John Wayne or even John Wick, the idea is that we should leverage some of those principles, to support the people that we care about, the people that we work with, our colleagues, our subordinates, our superiors; the ideas that we should leverage this identity to say you know what, we have so much strength, we have a disproportionate amount of strength, that being a real man means using that strength to empower others.

I don't think that there's any other way of trying to achieve male buy-in and being a real male ally than saying you know what, “I have enough power.” A real man would make sure that others are empowered to be just as independent and just as action-oriented and just as invoking some of these traditional masculine ideals of being independently effective. Making sure that others have that chance is what male allyship really should look like.

 JODI

I love what you just said. My question for you is, what's the upside? You use this traditional male strength to be a male ally, what's the benefit, what do you get from it?

 JONATHAN

There many ways to answer that question. First, you can start at the academic level. If you foster a culture that is more inclusive and more welcoming, there's a better chance for people to speak up. We know from virtually every sector, every kind of organization that you improve that organization's bottom line, whether you are service-oriented, goods-oriented, whether you care about your environmental impact or financial or physical impact, more diverse voices help. In many organizations, you already have non-men and especially women within the culture. Without having to drastically or radically changing your hiring practices, you can just promote the voices already in the room.

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The one upside is that you're now collecting the money that you previously left on the table, by working to share that power. The other thing that is a little bit more individual and personal for me, is that there has never been a single instance in my life where I have consciously worked to share power with someone else. Mostly with women but, occasionally maybe it's a man who has a disposition, demeanor, or culture that makes it harder for him to speak up. There's not been a single case where that hasn't come back and personally benefited me either in the short, medium, or long term.

If you want to stick with recognizing that maybe this isn't ideal but if you want to appeal to this real-man, lone-wolf sensibility, and this is just one strategy of many, working as a male ally and empowering women and non-men benefits you. You can cite another example; you can say, "Oh, let's treat this like Lonesome Dove or the Magnificent Seven or Seven Samurai." The idea that you can be this collection of lone wolves that comes together to protect the organization or culture around you. By lending each other's strengths and by making sure that you share power in such a way that allows you to focus on what you're really good at by bringing other people into the perspective, especially with a diverse set of skills and strengths. The idea is that now you can focus on your real strengths and lean on others to support the areas that maybe you're not traditionally good at. It helps you build and foster a team. Right now, the way we build teams is that we are disproportionately silencing a lot of people on that team, and that creates an

atmosphere where you have to flatten the power structure.

The upside of sharing power, especially to women, is that it allows you to unflatten that structure and allows you as an individual to focus on your strengths, and to rely on others to leverage their own strengths to support either your group or individual goals. The upside is that it makes your job easier. It makes you potentially look better because you're focusing on your strengths. If you want to operate this from a purely selfish point of view, working to empower others, especially those who have not had been empowered historically, almost always brings just real benefit.



JODI

It's funny that you're saying that about the team piece because that's what we see in a lot of our research as well. One of the best ways to be inclusive is to change the team dynamic and how decisions get made. In our survey, women were 18% more likely to say that they've been spoken over or interrupted in meetings. It's the idea that making those voices more equitably heard and spoken throughout. It's not the end-all-be-all but it's one component of changing the structure. I think so much of this is happening at the micro-level.

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This is the thing, I think that can be difficult for people, because now ally-shiping seems like this huge thing when in fact, we're really talking about the micro-conversations that people have in the hallway or who gets the advantage, who has the biggest voice in terms of making a decision, whose ideas are actually put into the proposal. All these different aspects add up, and so it's all the micro-pieces in day-to-day interactions that can make a difference. That's male allyship, and it can get easier because it's something that you can do on a day-to-day basis and in the course of doing work. But it makes it harder in the short term because you have to become more obvious and aware of it, even though you may not understand all the different little ways that those inequities are happening. In the short term, it's more work but in the long term, it can yield all the benefits that you're talking about.

**RACHEL**

This also ties into the unconscious biases that we have. I feel that it's really important for male allyship to connect the two. Bringing awareness to male allyship is also understanding what those unconscious biases are and how to help people to think differently and change behavior.

**JODI**

One of the things that we always talk about is that you cannot change systems with the current mindset. You have to change the mindset of people and then you can start to make these different changes because if you try to do all these different changes without the mindset shift it's more work and feels very difficult.

For example, if you want people to speak up in a meeting and you had the history of people not being allowed to speak, just saying that you want people to speak up, is not going to allow people to speak up. You've got to change the mindset and say, "This is what we want to try to achieve and this is why we want to achieve it. Here's how we're going to change the process to achieve it and then people will give it a whirl." Because now you set the whole context and have to start with that unconscious-bias mindset shift to have this stuff happen.

JONATHAN

A I wanted to mention that the unconscious bias is a huge part of this and I think that instead of trying to work to undo the unconscious bias or, frankly, even getting people to recognize that there's unconscious bias, I would suggest that we hack the unconscious bias in such a way that we say, "All right, we have this bias against women in a variety of ways that manifests in so many aspects of our environment."

Instead of saying, "The solution is to give women and non-men special treatment," reframe that and if you have this negative reaction saying, "We don't want to give anyone special treatment." The best way is to treat it as a meritocracy. Instead of trying to say, "All right, the meritocracy is not real, it feels like everybody is on a level playing field but it's actually quite tilted." Instead of getting people to realize that at an unconscious level, say, "We're going to make sure that we design practices that are as inclusive as possible." If you believe in the power of the meritocracy then, you should believe in the power of checking that you have a meritocracy.

One clear way is to see who's in the room, but then you want to do some of the small work that Jodi is mentioning. What kind of conversations are you having? Who is being left out when you're making decisions? It doesn't take a lot of data analysis to realize that there's probably a subset of people

within your organization that aren't being heard and it is probably not a random subset, it's probably not just because of their personalities. You want to make sure that you're working to make sure that every single person has a chance to contribute because many hands make the work much lighter and it is also a source of innovation. If you want to operate this on a very selfish level, the first person to crack this and to design really inclusive welcoming workspaces is going to really improve their bottom line, they're going to jump out ahead in terms of innovation and they're going to probably be happier going to work day to day. This is one of those opportunities where even if you're operating out of pure selfishness rather than any sort of sense of social justice or equality, this is something that you should be looking at, measuring and working on because this is a huge source of inefficiency within organizations.

RACHEL

Q Absolutely. I truly believe, just like with anything, if you want to change the mindset or you want to make a difference, you have to raise awareness. It has to become embedded in the discussions and into your process for people to really start to embrace and to make that type of change. Jodi, you point out the Allyship Competency Continuum; can you address this?

JODI

A Sure. It's a five-stage continuum. At the first stage, it's denial and saying there is not a problem. We saw some of this in our research. It wasn't a huge number, but we had a few people that came out and said "This is ridiculous" and "This a dumb question," and they really did not even want to accept that there was an issue at all. Then there is a second round, which was really about gender, that men and women are different and that each gender is better at certain things. We did not see that come out very much in our survey, however, in some of my company's work we have seen that a lot where there's this bias on gender. There's the ostrich, which is "I know there's bias, but I'm not biased and I treat everybody the same." We did see a lot of that in our survey results when people were like "I'm fine, I do everything, I'm already supportive." Of course, in a survey, you can't tell whether that's accurate or not, but we know from previous work that some of that is not accurate, that people feel like they're giving help but that help is not always the most beneficial.

The fourth one is acknowledge where people are saying, "I'm learning about gender, I'm actively working to mitigate its effects on my decision making and interactions with others." This is the place of learning. Once people get to the acknowledger stage, which is stage four, that's when people's minds start to open up and you start to see the mindset shift.

It doesn't take very long for people to get to the last stage, which is allyship, which is "I fully understand the gender bias and I'm actively working to help others learn, too, and take action." That acknowledger piece is critical and then it goes fast. It's almost like an S-curve where it goes up at the end pretty quickly because as soon as you start to accept that this exists, then you start to see it and once you start to see it, you realize how pervasive it is and then it's almost impossible to not take action.

RACHEL

Q It boggles my mind to this day when someone responds that way and we see this in other studies, too. One of the studies we did last year on advancing women in technology leadership, some of the questions we got from respondents were, "Are you serious?" "Why are you saying this to me?" One response was "It sounds like a great party." We were shocked by some of the commentary and again, this was not the majority and was a very small percentage.

A JODI

This comes back to Jonathan's point and that is, there's a lot of fear and risk embedded in men who push against the norm. If you're sticking up for a woman or a minority person in a majority situation, it's very, very risky to do so, especially if you don't have a huge position of power. If you do have a huge position of power, it may be risky because you don't want to lose it. I think it's hard for people. The reaction then becomes defensive and denial because it's easier to do that than it is to take the risk to learn about what's happening.

Q RACHEL

Sure. I think a lot of companies right now are at different stages in how they are looking at inclusion and diversity or helping women advance in the workplace. I do see a lot of interesting conversations and dialogue on wanting to make a difference, but a lot of companies are still struggling. I think that's why we must show them how to make some sense out of it — how do we help how organizations implement different ways of developing or shaping these conversations for the future?

A JONATHAN

I mentioned earlier that my identity as a black male helps me see different sides of this than I think maybe other male allies could. I would say that for me when I'm thinking about the problems within myself and the ones that I see in others, there's kind of this intersectional conglomeration of some of the ideas we've talked about today. I would say that it's very easy to say "I recognize the problem, it's a big problem, I'm not part of the problem and also, I don't have any power to achieve change." Those things coming together, I think, is probably one of the biggest barriers to any sort of effective change culture. Rather than any of them individually, it's the idea that there is a problem out there: "It's not my problem and I also don't have any agency because it's either too big or I'm too small." If there are any men out there that are thinking some combination of those ideas, what I want to emphasize to you is that, No. 1, I'm going to put it not so nicely: "You are the problem." No. 2, you are also the solution. Focusing on these small things that you can do in your interactions every day, not just in your interactions with women and non-men, but your interactions with other men.

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So, when you're seeing these things, feeling comfortable enough to try to point it out or becoming comfortable with that discomfort, is the best way to start to move up this process or move along the continuum, as Jodi very elegantly described just a few minutes ago. The idea is that we all have power and we need to share that power — especially in those moments when we feel like we don't have any. It's counter-intuitive and it's something that I struggle with every day but if you don't speak up when you have a chance, then who else is going to?

RACHEL

That's really good advice. If everyone can take it exactly how you said it, then we would all be in a great place. It's really important to share and especially from your unique perspective, Jonathan. You add a lot of personal and professional expertise that can really help others.

JODI

I want to re-emphasize Jonathan's point about taking action. When we start to believe that we can make change, we feel empowered and can do something. We move from helplessness to hopefulness and it's a beautiful way to go.



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