

Finding an ally, becoming someone's ally -- To live more like yourself #2 (Click [here](#) for #1)



Adrienne Cooley, Director of Product Management at SIOS Technology Corp.

Adrienne Cooley, Director of Product Management at SIOS Technology Corp. We asked her about "Ally," an important aspect of her career, and what she has learned as she has gained experience.

- You must have had many challenges in building your career as a female engineer. What lessons have you learn from them?

Adrienne: Throughout your career, you will meet people who see characteristics that you are not aware of and help you move forward. Such people are called Allies. The key in your career is to recognize and find out who your allies are. I was able to take on the challenge of becoming a product owner at my previous job thanks to my boss, who reached out to me as an Ally. At the same time, it is also important to find people you can be an ally as well. To accomplish something, you need to have a group of friends.

I'm also taking on a variety of challenges at STC. In 2021, I was promoted to Director of Product Management, where I work with leadership on driving our strategy. This was the first time in my career that I was on a leadership team or had direct reports and became a people manager, but I am glad I took the plunge and said, "I will do it". The warm support and open culture around me pushed me to take a big step forward.

- If the position changes, everyone becomes a minority, right?

Adrienne: Yes, it is. It is important to recognize that it can happen to anyone and not think of it as something else.

Gender bias working against you and being a minority in the workplace or at school, can also cause a shake-up in confidence. By the time I graduated from engineering school, I had fewer female classmates than when I started. Unfortunately, this trend continues to this day.

It is difficult for minorities to accomplish something in a solitary environment without support. When they are caught in anxiety, they may feel inferior because they cannot do it while everyone else can, and they may lose motivation because they cannot talk to anyone about it.

If they know that others are struggling with the same issues as them, they will be able to calm down and work through them. Do not be afraid to ask for help or ask questions. Receiving help from others is not a weakness, it is a strength.

Some people say that policies for women and minorities are unfair, but I believe they are meant to prevent them from losing their motivation to be only one or relatively alone.

- Do you have any advice on how to improve to become a more diverse organization?

Adrienne: I would like to share two statistics that I have read. The first is that if you have a diverse team, you are 87% more likely to make better decisions than a non-diverse team. It is important to listen to different opinions, because then you can make the best decisions. You cannot make different decisions if you do not listen to different opinions, can you?

Another is that women in engineering are more likely to focus on the benefit to the end user, while men are more likely to focus on how interesting it is to them or how much money they can make. This is an interesting example of why diversity thinking is so important and shows the thought process behind it.

At STC, we have formed a community for female employees to share each other's experiences and advice, and to hold themed discussions. I would like to see more women in the STEM^{*1} department of the SIOS Group and see them step up to the next level. I want to help women gain confidence and support them grow to the stage they desire. I would like to see a society where words like "rikejo"^{*2} are not necessary.

^{*1} STEM: Collective term for the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

^{*2} rikejo: Abbreviation for "science girls" in Japanese, a slang term for female science students, female researchers, female junior and senior high school students pursuing science-related careers, and female employees in science-related fields.