

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO  
MUSLIM AMERICAN INCLUSION

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# INCLUSION

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*Creating  
Globally  
Inclusive &  
Culturally  
Competent  
Workplaces*

CISCO

YVETTE  
KANOUFF

Powering the Future:  
Diversity, Collaboration,  
and Innovation





**"I want to work with leaders to create environments where everyone can thrive."**

# Yvette Kanouff

**Senior Vice President / General Manager, Service Provider Business, Cisco**

**Y**vette Kanouff is a pioneer and recognized leader in the service provider industry. As Cisco's Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Service Provider Business, Kanouff leads a team of more than 6,000 Cisco software and hardware engineers, architects, and product and operations managers in developing and delivering technology innovations that are disrupting the industry, and transforming service providers worldwide.

Kanouff brings more than 20 years of service provider, media, and software experience to Cisco. Early in her career, she won an Emmy for her work on video on demand, and she holds several patents on digital technologies. She received the National Cable and Telecommunication Association's 2014 Vanguard Award for

**“The lack of diversity in the tech industry isn’t going to solve itself. We need new strategies.”**

Leadership in Science and Technology, and was named an Industry Pioneer in 2016. *Broadcasting & Cable* named her one of the most influential women in the television industry. *CableFAX* named her the industry’s “Top Techie” in 2011, and included her in its *CableFAX* “Digital Hot List” four consecutive years. In 2016, *CableFAX* named her one of the Most Powerful Women in Cable. Kanouff holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in mathematics.

As a female working in a male-dominated industry, Kanouff is committed to and passionate about the critical need to increase diverse talent in the tech sector. *Inclusion* magazine recently

spoke with Kanouff about her role in creating the Multiplier Effect—a bold idea to leverage the power of sponsorship to accelerate the pipeline of extraordinary, diverse talent.

**Inclusion:** What is the driving force behind your commitment toward improving diversity and inclusion throughout business and industry?

**Yvette Kanouff:** Throughout my career, I was often the only female in my workplace. When I worked in Cisco’s Service Provider Video Software and Solutions Group, women comprised only 6 percent of our industry.

We had virtually no other dimensions of diversity in engineering.

My experiences in overcoming the obstacles and learning how to thrive as a female leader in technology, are the driving force behind my commitment. I want to work with leaders to create environments where everyone can thrive.

**IN:** What was the inspiration behind the Multiplier Effect Pledge? What problem is the pledge tackling?

**YK:** The lack of diversity that’s common in the tech industry isn’t going to solve itself. We need new strategies. I’ve always sought out and supported programs that focus on advancing diversity and accelerating career progression, but they always seemed to fall short from my perspective. They focused on giving career advice, but didn’t really help advance careers in a real and meaningful way. I wanted to take it further.

So, I came up with an idea that I believed would make a real difference. I imagined the impact if everyone in the tech industry sponsored

## ▶ What Is the Multiplier Effect?

**T**he Multiplier Effect challenges leaders of all levels to take a personal pledge to accelerate the progress of extraordinary, diverse talent.

The Multiplier Effect isn’t just a pledge—it’s a movement. A movement to break the inertia. To multiply the impact of inclusive, collaborative leadership. To transform longstanding issues. And to join forces in creating fully diverse organizations.

The powerful idea behind the Multiplier Effect began with a simple question that Yvette Kanouff, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Cisco’s Service Provider Business, posed to a group of technology leaders at last



year’s Mobile World Congress: What impact could we have if every leader in our industry sponsored one diverse person to the next level in his or her career?

Sponsorship is critical to the development of extraordinary talent. Yet recent data indicate a clear disparity in who typically benefits. One in five

men have a sponsor, yet only one in eight women, and one in twelve minorities do.

“While mentors listen, sponsors act—by telling you what you need to know, clearing obstacles from your path, and making your success their business,” says Center for Talent Innovation CEO Sylvia Ann Hewlett.

Cisco believes that it’s time to create infinite new possibilities for sponsoring and accelerating diverse talent in this age of collaboration. It’s time for leaders of all levels to act—and to change the equation for diversity.

Join us. Visit [multiplydiversity.com](http://multiplydiversity.com) to take the pledge.

an extraordinary, diverse candidate and helped that person advance in his or her career. It would create a “multiplier effect” and build a full pipeline of diverse talent that continues to build and grow. We all see the effect of “multipliers.” That’s why we called it The Multiplier Effect.

**IN:** What compelled you to reach out to other companies in your industry?

**YK:** I was always clear that the impact possible through the Multiplier Effect was bigger than any one company. The ideas and concepts behind the pledge were initially conceived in a discussion forum at Mobile World Congress on how to move the needle on diversity in tech.

**IN:** What are the objectives of the Multiplier Effect Pledge program?

**YK:** The main objective is to accelerate the progress of diverse talent and build a full pipeline of diverse talent that continues to grow. To make that objective a reality, we believe we need to focus on doing three key things. One is to reimagine sponsorship—dynamic, relational, focused on one action at a time. Second is to create momentum and scale to multiply the power of inclusive and influential leaders at all levels. Third is to introduce sponsorship and advocacy as critical skills for leaders in creating their own future—and link those skills to success in achieving the next level of leadership.

**IN:** Who can participate in the program?

**YK:** Everyone can participate in taking action to help someone achieve the next level in their career. Even a newly hired employee with a passion for accelerating diversity can help a graduating student get that first job. We all play a role in changing the equation.

**IN:** What makes for a good sponsor?

**YK:** To sponsor someone means to take an active part in the advancement of their career. To meet regularly; share best practices; provide guidance and feedback for the person they sponsor; and introduce them to the right people in the industry who can help advance their career. This isn’t “mentoring”—it’s an

essential, reciprocal relationship focused on career growth, helping someone achieve their goals more quickly than would otherwise be possible.

**IN:** What are your personal experiences with sponsorship?

**YK:** I have had sponsors since early in my career who believed in me; guided me; helped me overcome obstacles and build on my strengths; introduced me to industry leaders; and really helped advance my career. I will be forever grateful to them and will never forget their contributions to my success.

**IN:** What has the response been to the Multiplier Effect to date?

**YK:** The response has been phenomenal. In the past few months, we’ve been able to promote the pledge to tens of thousands of people in the tech industry and beyond at events like Mobile World Congress, South by Southwest, Cisco’s own Global Sales Experience, and Cisco Live. Our CEO Chuck Robbins took the pledge and is one of our biggest champions and a longtime advocate of diversity.

As a technology company that values “always on” connections, we’re working to create new tools to help anyone join the conversation and better understand the power and potential of sponsorship and the Multiplier Effect.

**IN:** How can executives in your industry sign up?

**YK:** Leaders of all levels—and in every industry—can take the pledge. Visit [multiplydiversity.com](http://multiplydiversity.com). Commit to sponsor one diverse candidate and challenge your peers to do the same.

**IN:** What are your hopes for the future of the Multiplier Effect?

**YK:** I would love to see a huge number of pledges—across many companies and multiple industries. But more than seeing the number of pledges, I hope we continue to build on this incredible momentum and create real progress in advancing diverse talent. A win for the Multiplier Effect is a win for us all.

**“I imagined the impact if everyone in the tech industry sponsored an extraordinary, diverse candidate and helped that person advance.”**



# One Pledge— Infinite Possibilities

BY SHARI SLATE

**At Cisco, collaborating everywhere is what we do.** So when one of our own passionately inclusive leaders proposed a bold idea to change the equation for diversity in our industry, we were all in. Seeing the Multiplier Effect Pledge become a reality is proof positive of how many leaders are as passionate as we are about accelerating the progress of extraordinary, diverse talent.

In creating the Multiplier Effect, we've focused on one key guiding principle: Go Big. The power of the pledge—and the movement it's created—is in the exponential expansion of sponsorship: bold, effective action by a rising movement of influential leaders who want to make "someone else's success their business."

The Multiplier Effect has been featured in some of the biggest events in the technology industry, such as Mobile World Congress, Cisco Live, the Cisco Global Sales Experience, and South by Southwest. Now, we're reaching influential leaders across industries through forums like the Simmons Leadership Conference and the YWCA. Our founding signers include Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins,

along with dozens of other top tech executives.

We've presented the Multiplier Effect to crowds numbering in the tens of thousands already. What we're discovering from our potential multipliers is that sponsorship represents a new development opportunity. They're already familiar with mentoring and coaching, but they'll need to learn how to expand their influence as a sponsor.

Here's what we suggest to get started. First, recognize that the power of sponsorship begins through the power of connection. Inclusive, collaborative leaders already know that diverse connections make us more innovative, more agile—and ultimately more successful. Sponsoring extraordinary, diverse talent gives us insight into how to connect the different backgrounds, abilities, cultures, orientations, work styles, and points of view that will drive collaboration at exciting new levels.

Next—leave any preconceived notions of sponsorship behind. Your relationships can be as unique as you are—leveraging your innate abilities to dynamically connect, collaborate, and create a path forward. The power of sponsorship isn't measured by the amount of time

invested. It's measured by the velocity and effectiveness of the actions taken. From the perspective of return on investment, sponsorship is influential leadership at its best. When we break through the inertia around accelerating our top diverse talent, we'll all experience exponential returns. That's the Multiplier Effect in action.

Most importantly, get ready to go bold. We already know we're not going to overcome our challenges in creating full diversity through incremental progress. It's going to take bold, decisive action to open doors, overcome obstacles, and create new opportunities for extraordinary, diverse talent. How will we get there? Together. One connection, one new possibility, one bold action, multiplied by a legion of passionately inclusive leaders ready to change the equation for diversity.

These are exciting times for those of us who work to

translate that passion into transformation in our companies and communities, and across the world. So many leaders are taking a stand and signing the Multiplier Effect Pledge. It's one pledge with infinite possibilities. Are you in? Whose success will you make your business, starting today? **IN**

**Shari Slate is the Chief Inclusion and Collaboration Officer at Cisco.** Her organization is responsible for leading Cisco's Office of Inclusion and Collaboration, as well as global community relations. Slate has been widely recognized for her visionary leadership and transformational views on the true value of inclusion. Guided by her thought leadership in this area, Cisco is embracing new models of inclusion and collaboration to fuel innovation, accelerate market leadership, and reimagine workplace practices in the digital era.