

SEIZING YOUR POWER AND OVERCOMING IMPOSTER SYNDROME FROM THE LATINE PERSPECTIVE



September 15th through October 15th, we are observing [Hispanic Heritage Month](#) to recognize and celebrate the many contributions, diverse cultures, and extensive histories of the [LatinE](#) community. While it's fantastic to honor LatinE in this way, it also creates an opportunity to celebrate and advance LatinE in the workplace and discuss some of the self-created barriers holding us back.

To level-set, let's look at how LatinE workers are doing in the U.S. workforce. According to a recent [Pew Research Center](#) survey, in the second quarter of 2021, Hispanic median-wage workers in the U.S. earned 72.8 percent as much as White median-wage workers, an increase of three percent over the second quarter of 2019.

Separately, the [Pew Research Center](#) analyzed federal employment and education data about the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) workforce and found that, as of the latest data in 2018, only 12 percent of Hispanics are earning a bachelor's degree in a STEM field, nine percent are earning STEM master's degrees, and six percent are getting research doctorates in STEM fields. And while Hispanic workers make up 17 percent of total employment across all occupations, they're only eight percent of the STEM workforce.

LatinE are still a very distinct workforce minority in the white-collar job space, and the external factors and workplace [discrimination](#) holding them back can also be compounded by internal factors that workers place upon themselves, namely [Imposter Syndrome](#).

It's hard to gain a seat at the table when you don't see others like you in the workplace. Imposter Syndrome feeds into the self-doubt that you belong there in the first place, convincing you that you don't, and that your skills and expertise are fraudulent. It's "fake it until you make it" taken to the

extreme.

First identified in 1978 by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes, Imposter Syndrome is more common than you might expect, especially among women and minorities. According to the [Advancing the Future of Women in Business: The 2020 KPMG Women's Leadership Summit Report](#), 75 percent of the executive women surveyed said they have experienced Imposter Syndrome during their career.

Regardless of the amount of experience you have, and the support and encouragement from others, it's easy to fall into a trap of believing you aren't good enough, smart enough, and experienced enough to be *that leader* or to take over *that position*. It is something that strikes most women and especially most Latinas.

That was certainly my own experience. I grew up with a cultural belief that the "man of the house" will provide or that your "husband" should always make the "final decision," and that certainly didn't help, especially working in the tech sector, surrounded by men. When I started at BMC almost 26 years ago, there were few Latinas in IT—or Latinos.

I was a bit out of place as a woman and as a Mexican-American. I was easy prey to Imposter Syndrome, first by being a woman, and even more so when I couldn't relate ethnically to my leadership. This didn't mean I couldn't do great things, even early in my career, but that nagging thought at the back of my head that I just "wasn't really capable" certainly held me back.

I've been fortunate to have worked with amazing men and women over the years who encouraged and believed in me, and I've built a great career at this wonderful company. While I have learned how to quiet that voice at the back of my head and believe in myself and succeed, it still rears up occasionally—no matter how confident I may appear on the outside.

However, now I can recognize that when I am immobilized by the fear of not being able to do something, it's because Imposter Syndrome has resurfaced. By identifying it, I can get past it, stop the irrational thoughts, take an objective look at what I can and can't do, and move forward.

My parents raised me to be a strong, confident woman and I am not going to let Imposter Syndrome get in my way. I wish I had learned this earlier in my career and I hope that every young woman recognizes that it's a real thing, it's okay to feel it, and it's okay to ask for help. (That goes for everyone, really.)

Thankfully, there are several online tools and resources to help you recalibrate your sense of worth in the workplace and acknowledge and validate your own strengths so you can bring your [best self](#) and enjoy your wins.

- Take the [self-test](#) to see if what you're feeling is Imposter Syndrome.
- The [American Psychological Association](#), [New York Times](#), and [ImpostorSyndrome.com](#) have concrete steps you can take to help overcome these feelings.
- Find a [mentor](#) who's walked the path you're on before you and who can share their own experiences to help you.
- Join an employee resource group (ERG) at your company, and if one doesn't exist, talk to HR about creating one. We talked about BMC's ERGs and how to build them in a blog post [here](#).

One of the best ways to help yourself is to help others, and we have several [blog posts](#) on our ongoing volunteerism efforts through BMC Cares. In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, these are some of the ways you can help support LatinE education and workers.

- Support LGBTQ+ initiatives in Colombia through [LGBTI Social Alliance of Antioquia](#), a youth, social, and community-based organization that promotes actions and develops strategies aimed at the recognition of diversity as a common heritage of humanity.
- Promote human dignity through the citizen, educational, and professional formation of socially vulnerable women from childhood to adulthood through [AFESU](#) in Brazil.
- Donate cell phones to [Programa Verdad by Anatel](#) in Mexico and all electronic devices to Equidad in Argentina.
- Donate to Gerando Falcoes, an organization dedicated to transforming the lives of children, young people, leaders, and favela residents through education and access to work and technologies in Brazil.
- Volunteer your services as a translator with [Tarjimly](#). Our blog post on this is [here](#).

While our culture often teaches us about the existence of gender roles, it's important to also remember that culture is fluid. Take the strengths of your upbringing, but don't ever let a stereotype get in your way. You are good enough. You are capable. And you and the world are better for it when you seize your power and share your talents.