10 Ways to Create an LGBTQ+ Inclusive Workplace

Adapted from Jim Lurion

A robust workplace inclusion strategy for LGBTQ+ staff is vital from an ethical and business perspective. This is because all team members will feel less stressed and more satisfied and productive as a respected part of a cohesive team.

The following are effective practices employers can apply to build a culture of inclusion in the company. As with any diverse group, LGBTQ+ people are not monolithic, so you should consider these practices with empathy, engaging the individual and encouraging their well-being.

1. Create a strong, inclusive policy

Review your policies to ensure your workplace policies explicitly support LGBTQ+ people within the organization. Workplace policies are a great strategy, but what matters more is developing a growth mindset, real ambition, and commitment to becoming a truly LGBTQ+-inclusive workplace.

Having inclusive policies in the workplace is important for setting clear guidelines on how to avoid discrimination. You could also create LGBTQ+-specific policies, for example, a policy on work transitions with guidance for those who are transitioning, human resources, and line managers.

Having an LGBTQ+-specific policy is a more explicit way to demonstrate your commitment to dealing with discrimination at work.

2. Create a strong, inclusive policy

Pay attention to your workplace language because it matters. Language can make people feel protected, empowered, and included.

Therefore, it is another crucial way to actively show your support for a healthier, more inclusive environment. Misused language can leave employees feeling lost, alienated, and stigmatized.

It is important to recognize potentially offensive terms, address them, and help your team use acceptable language. It's common for non-inclusive or derogatory language to be overlooked as a joke during casual conversations.

Ensure you clarify that this language is not welcome as it can be hurtful. This is essential in building a workplace culture of mutual respect.

You could also include pronouns and allow people to use their choice of pronouns. This makes it clear that you respect different gender identities and normalize conversations about gender.

You can display other pronouns in staff bios, Slack profiles, HR and payroll software, Zoom participant names, business cards, and name tags.

3. Create support programs for LGBTQ+ employees

Employee networking groups, mentoring, conferences, and seminars are crucial in making the work environment more inclusive for LGBTQ+ employees. You can use supportive measures such as LGBTQ+ competency training, climate surveys, and employee resource groups.

Many successful organizations work with an executive leader, someone who connects employee resource groups to the upper management for actionable plans, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

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Develop open and consistent communication with the LGBTQ+ resource group to improve company culture and employee engagement and provide essential information on strategies to make the workplace more inclusive.

4. Offer LGBTQ+ inclusive benefits

Employee benefits packages are some of the most crucial considerations for various job seekers. However, these can unintentionally exclude LGBTQ+ individuals.

Offer equal employee benefits regardless of people's sexual orientation, including adoption policies, parental leave, and time off.

Remember, non-inclusive language can unintentionally cause benefits such as parental packages to exclude LGBTQ+ individuals. Ensure your benefits are inclusive by including all employees and being conscious of the words you use to describe the coverage.

5. Create an LGBTQ+ network

There are many approaches to creating this network. But the goal is clear - to support your LGBTQ+ employees.

It should have clear aims, resources, responsibilities, and support from executives at the highest level. Those in your organization can help make clear what works well for them and areas in the workplace that may need adjustments or a new approach.

However, this is about giving those in your organization a voice and representation. The burden of making your organization inclusive should not fall on their shoulders.

Including people in the LGBTQ+ network, whether they are LGBTQ+ or not, is vital.

Staff members who don't identify as LGBTQ+ can work with the network to champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

It also helps establish a valuable organization-wide culture and shows that everybody can take action on inclusion as staff can show their visible support through LGBTQ+ ally's mugs or lanyards.

Creating an LGBTQ+ network is especially important if your organization operates in countries that criminalize LGBTQ+ families.

6. Communicate and engage with employees

Information about the company's policies and guidelines supporting LGBTQ+ inclusive practices and behavior should be readily accessible to all employees, managers, and supervisors.

Speak regularly with non-LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ staff about what diversity and inclusion look like in the organization, how you should address various issues, and how employees can help nurture it.

Engaging with staff should be an ongoing process where you consider the action taken, assess the impact through staff feedback, and make adjustments where necessary.

7. Provide LGBTQ+ Inclusion Training

Training staff to recognize and avoid discrimination in the workplace is vital for every recruiter, and updating the company's presentations to cover LGBTQ+ employees is crucial to providing equal opportunity to all individuals.

Such training should be developed for both new hires and ongoing offerings. You could also include employee testimonials and workplace allies to demonstrate the inclusive workplace culture.

Various support groups can provide speakers or sample training presentations that can be used to educate and prepare a workforce on nondiscrimination and inclusion expectations in general.

8. Include inclusive hiring practices

When building a work culture of wellbeing, it's essential to consider what your company sends to the public. If you are hiring for a vacant position, include LGBTQ+ professionals in your search through LGBTQ+ recruitment events and job boards.

According to various studies, diverse organizations are more likely to outperform the competition during hiring and lead in innovation. So building a more diverse and inclusive culture is great for your organization's overall wellbeing.

9. Promote your company as LGBTQ+ inclusive

Authentic representation is a practical, simple way to create a more inclusive workplace. Show your support without using tokenism or stereotypes.

Companies that apply tokenism make symbolic efforts giving the appearance of supporting the minority groups without truly upholding those values. In other words, avoid "rainbow washing".

Ensure your LGBTQ+ inclusive details is accessible on your social sites, especially on pages where you post job

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adverts or have employee testimonials.

Communicate your LGBTQ+ news stories on social media pages. This public show of support signals to existing and new employees that your organization supports LGBTQ+ clients, employees, and community members.

10. Allow individuals to choose their own labels

Some individuals find labels like trans, bi, gay or queer acceptable and empowering. But for others, labels feel oppressive and painful.

Allow people to choose the terms they want to be referred to. If you are using an HR software or central employee database, avoid anything that puts people in a fixed box, such as preventing them from changing their names or pronouns on their official record.

Wrapping Up

Diversity and Inclusion are beyond programs, policies, or headcounts. Successful and equitable companies outpace their competitors by recognizing and respecting their staff's unique perspectives, needs, and potential.

As a result, diverse and inclusive workplaces build deeper trust and greater commitment from their employees.

In today's workplace, inclusion efforts that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals are crucial for business success.

Organizations that ensure inclusive practices for LGBTQ+ people gain the respect and support of the community and other minority groups that recognize such efforts as an indicator of an inclusive workplace.

Furthermore, employers benefit from the positive impact of inclusion in almost all business aspects, from employee hiring and retention to profits and revenue.

References:
https://recruitee.com/articles/lgbtq-inclusive-workplace#14

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