Best Practices for Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBTQ Employees

Creating safe and inclusive workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) employees has been shown to increase productivity, workplace satisfaction and retention. When employees can bring their authentic selves to work, more time and energy is spent on doing their jobs and creating healthy relationships with coworkers.

The Data:

While progress is slowly being made to create more welcoming and inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ employees, there is still much to be done. Below are some eye-opening statistics.

- 53% of LGBTQ employees hide who they are at work. -2014 Human Rights Campaign's *The Cost of the Closet*

- 20% of LGBTQ employees report looking for another job specifically because their workplace environment isn't accepting of LGBTQ individuals. -2014 Human Rights Campaign's *The Cost of the Closet*

- 15% of transgender employees report being verbally harassed, physically attacked and/or sexually assaulted at work within the last year because of their gender identity or expression. – 2015 National Center for Transgender Equality's *US Transgender Survey Report*

Best Practices for Workplace Inclusion:

Below are some best practices to help create safe and supportive workplaces for all employees regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

- Welcome and support the creation of an LGBTQ Employee Resource Group. They offer a safe space, have an overall positive impact on workplace climate, allow for on-going educational opportunities, and help LGBTQ employees identify supportive allies among their coworkers.

- Ensure that your organization's non-discrimination policy includes sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and display it prominently and proudly in a high use area. Add LGBTQ statements of inclusion to mission statements, service literature and policies.

- Create inclusive workplace forms and office announcements that reflect everyone's identity, sexual orientation and family structure.

- Schedule mandatory professional staff development trainings on LGBTQ identities and creating safe and inclusive workplaces.

- Hold optional annual SafeZone trainings so staff can earn their SafeZone stickers and pins and increase workplace visibility around LGBTQ inclusion.

- Reduce gender segregation whenever possible, including bathrooms, locker rooms, dress codes, employee sports teams, etc. Offer single use "all gender" facilities.

- Consider showing your support of LGBTQ equality as an agency by marching in the local Pride parade or creating an LGBTQ exhibit during Pride month (June).

- Include LGBTQ magazines and newspapers among your reading material in your waiting area.

Other Considerations:

In our effort to create safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ employees we do not want other employees to feel that we are not respecting their values and beliefs. Below are a few tips to keep in mind while having these critical conversations.

- There are certain workplace standards that all employees are expected to follow, but it is also important to let employees know that no one is asking them to change their personal values or beliefs. You are simply asking all employees to be courteous and respectful to each other.

- Much of the information people have about LGBTQ individuals comes from the media, where they are often represented inaccurately using extreme stereotypes. Some of people's discomfort may be related to these false images. Allow people to share their fears and concerns, as some of these myths may come out in conversation and then they can be addressed.

- Remember that being LGBTQ is not just about the bedroom. It is about being authentic and not having to lie or hide who we are. It's about living, loving and expressing ourselves freely and openly, and that affects us all.

www.gayalliance.org