



Creating an LGBTQ inclusive workplace

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people (LGBTQ), “coming out” is the term -used to refer to the process of revealing sexual orientation or gender identity for the first time. Far from being a one-time rite of passage or overnight change, coming out is something LGBTQ people must do over and over again: to friends, family and indeed almost every time a new person, group, or situation is encountered. It is a process that is different for everyone - some people come out to everyone in their lives’ immediately, others take their time and others’ choose to protect their sexual orientation and or gender identity and not come out to certain people or groups. One thing that coming out has in common for most LGBTQ people is that it is not easy and may elicit anxiety and fear of being ostracized and excluded.

The workplace can be a particularly sensitive and challenging environment for employees to come out. At work, the line between what is professional and what is personal is often blurred and employees regularly discuss their families and even bring their partners to holiday parties or events.

As a manager, you will want to do your best to make your workplace a safe and comfortable environment for employees to come out. Here are some tips to encourage inclusivity and diversity when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Make your workplace’s discrimination policy available

Your workplace should have an anti-discrimination policy in place to cover sexual orientation and gender identity. Make sure this policy is up to date and readily available to your employees.

Don’t make any assumptions

We often assume people are straight and our language conveys these assumptions. Replace questions like “do you have a husband” with neutral language like “do you have a partner” and demonstrate this to your direct reports and their colleagues so it becomes the norm.

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Celebrate LGBTQ pride

Many cities around the world dedicate specific days, weeks, or months to celebrating gay pride within their communities. Bringing the celebration into the workplace can help you demonstrate to your team and organization that you value acceptance, respect, inclusiveness and diversity. Displaying symbols of pride like a positive space sticker or flag in your workspace shows everyone that you are committed to a LGBTQ positive workplace and will make employees more comfortable in coming out. Check online for what Pride events are happening in your community and for other resources like videos and stories to share with your team.

Bring education into the workplace

Educating yourself and your workforce is of vital importance in keeping current on the best practices to foster diversity and inclusivity. Invite a local LGBTQ organization to lead workshop for you and your staff.

Though visibility of LGBTQ people has increased and there have been gains in formal rights, discrimination still exists and it is possible that your workplace will include people who are prejudiced against these identities. Make it your mission to have a zero tolerance policy towards any harassment, homophobic or transphobic language in the workplace. Encourage anyone who has a problem or feels uncomfortable coming out to talk with you.

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Managing different personality types

As a manager, one of your most important responsibilities — perhaps even more important than overseeing schedules, resources and finances — is managing people. It is your job to help cultivate and maintain a high functioning team. However, like any sample of people, your team is sure to be made up of different personality types — you will have introverts working alongside extroverts and some people who fall somewhere in between. It can be difficult to adapt your management style to suit everyone, but once you recognize that having a diverse range of personalities and working styles on your team is an asset, you will be able to gracefully incorporate everyone's different skills so they complement each other rather than conflict. Here are some ways to go about identifying and integrating these different personalities into your management methodology.

Learn about introverts and extroverts

Take some time to educate yourself about the traits of introverts and extroverts. While it may be commonly understood that introverts are quiet and shy and extroverts are loud and talkative, it is actually a little more complicated than this. Rather than how they act outwardly, what really defines an introvert or an extrovert is what they need to do to recharge, and how they prefer to work. Most introverts need alone time to refuel or recharge and prefer to work alone while most extroverts gain energy in groups and love to think out loud. Learn more about these types [here](#).

Get to know your team

As you have spent a lot of time working with the members of your team already, you probably have a pretty good sense of who might be an introvert and who is likely an extrovert. But sometimes identifying someone's personality type is not so easy; some people work contrary to their natural personality to try to fit into what they believe is an ideal or expected. To really find out what each member of your team is like, talk to them. Ask them what they need, and how they really like to work and feel most comfortable. Do they prefer to spearhead meetings and give presentations, or methodically think through problems and write detailed reports? It can also be a fun and informative exercise to have everyone take a personality test and discuss their results - just be sure to communicate that the results will not have any bearing on how team members are evaluated and that one type is not more desirable than another.

Bring balance to the workday

In addition to maintaining some balance of working collaboratively and working alone, allow for flexibility so that each person can work the way that they know will allow them to reach their potential. This means that if someone knows their best work will be done solo, make space for them to work alone, or if they know they can give their best performance in a presentation, give them the chance to speak up.

When it comes to personality styles in the workplace, diversity is invaluable. Introverts and extroverts both add value to a thriving work environment as their differing styles can actually harmonize each other. Pair an extrovert who is full of ideas they want to express with an introvert who can hear them and spend the time to think them through. The more you know and understand about your team's strengths, the more you will be able to lead with an assured confidence that will in turn allow people to trust you more since you have demonstrated an understanding of and a desire to meet their individual needs.

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