

Supporting Pride In The Workplace

Our Associate Coach, Christopher Hulme, provides expertise on how business professionals can ensure they create an equal and positive workplace environment.

When I think about pride in the workplace, I think about the phrase we often use in HR and wellbeing circles: "Bringing your whole self to work". This can be quite an odd concept for some people. How can you not bring your whole self to work? But like most useful epithets, it's what's not being said that is most important here.

If you've never had to wrestle with the idea of 'toning down' a natural behaviour in the workplace then it can be difficult to understand the meaning of being your authentic self at work. Being an LGBT+ person can often mean having that conversation with yourself on a frequent basis.

Questions of what you got up to at the weekend can raise further internal quandary: "Should I say I thought Crystal Methyd was robbed in the Drag Race Season 12 final?" It may seem glib, but when any level of personal detail can betray something as personal as sexuality, checking yourself becomes a mandatory act of self-preservation. This is true for many minority groups.

Visualise instead, a world where you can be as candid as you like in conversation with colleagues about holiday plans and family matters and what Netflix series you binged on over the weekend.



Further still, imagine a world where your employer acknowledges the systemic inequities of being LGBT+ in the workplace and works collaboratively with you to create a workplace where you can wholly engage with the concept of 'bringing your whole self to work.' Sound good? Now let's look at where to start...

Staff Networks

Depending on the size of your business or place of work, implementing staff equality networks can be a great starting point in assessing the current situation and highlighting areas for development. Initially, there's also a great deal to be said for being in and amongst those who understand what it feels like to be LGBT+ in a professional setting, for sharing experiences and creating friendships.

HR Practices

Once the networks are set up, a great way to instil good practice is to work with your HR team/representative and find out what measures are in place to support LGBT+ candidates in recruitment and job retention.

Would a member of staff who identifies as trans feel comfortable in discussing support measures with HR, and do you know what those measures are? Do interview panels include a diverse representation of the workforce?

Visibility In The Workplace

Whilst it can be tempting to rush to design assets and promotional tools associated with the LGBT+ movement, it's important to have the framework of support and guidance in place first. It's always great to see a venue or organisation visibly supporting the LGBT+ community and other minority groups, but it can be disappointing to find little or no value to actual activity geared toward this. Visibility is one thing, but misappropriation is a whole other. That being said, if the consensus is that the business ethos and action is in support of the LGBT+ community, utilising rainbow pins or lanyards can be a great way to increase visibility and signal to potential customers/service users that this is an organisation that supports the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Engaging With External Groups/Networks

Now your network is a little more established, it's a great time to reach out to other LGBT+ networks within your industry. This has the dual benefit of extending your network reach and being able to share in best practice from other groups who have experience in affecting positive affirmative action in the workplace. There's a wealth of creativity out there – go find it!

Events

Celebrating Pride month and other auspicious events can be a fun and informative way to express your identity authentically in the workplace. It can be as much or as little as you like – from organising staff groups to marching in parades, or bringing in a rainbow cake for the office (this always goes down well).

It's important to look holistically at the LGBT+ experience in a professional setting and work to ensure it's an equal and positive environment. But it's equally as important to enjoy the fun and social aspects at work too. Bringing your whole self to work means being proud of who you are and what you do, and being open to sharing that with others.