

LGBT Inclusion at Work: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Managers

1 Make the Right Assumptions & Avoid Making the Wrong Ones

DO assume that LGBT employees and their allies are listening to what you're saying (whether in a meeting or around the proverbial water cooler) and will read what you're writing (whether in a casual email or in a formal document), and make sure the language you use is inclusive and respectful.

DON'T assume all employees are (or a particular employee is) heterosexual.

2 Use Inclusive Language

DO use words and expressions that are considered welcoming, and avoid those that are not. For example:

DO use inclusive words like “partner,” “significant other” or “spouse” rather than gender-specific terms like “husband” and “wife” (for example, in invitations to office parties or when asking a new employee about his/her home life).

DO use a transgender person's chosen name and the pronoun that is consistent with the person's self-identified gender.

DO talk in staff meetings about why diversity is important to you as a manager, and make it clear you define diversity to include both sexual orientation and gender identity.

DON'T use words and phrases like “gay lifestyle,” “sexual



“Ideally, I'd love to hear and see support from supervisors, so it's clear that there aren't just policies on paper. Silence seems like disapproval. There's still an atmosphere of LGBT issues not being appropriate for the workplace (particularly for transgender people), or that people who bring it up are trying to rock the boat.”

— DOJ employee

preference” or “tranny” that are considered by many as offensive. For more information on offensive terms, see www.glaad.org/reference/offensive and www.glaad.org/reference/transgender

3 Speak Up When Appropriate

DO communicate a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate jokes and comments, including those pertaining to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity or expression (e.g., saying “he's too sissy to go on raids,” or calling opposing counsel a “pansy” or “dyke”).

DO speak up against derogatory jokes or comments when you hear them. See dojnet.doj.gov/diversity/lgbt-inclusion.pdf (“Tips for responding to anti-LGBT jokes or derogatory comments,” p. 9).

DO deal with offensive jokes and comments forcefully and swiftly when presented with evidence that they have occurred in the workplace.

DON'T gossip or allow others to gossip about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity, or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

4 Acknowledge and Engage With LGBT Employees

DO ask LGBT employees about their weekend, their spouse/partner, or their family/children, the same way you would ask non-LGBT employees about their spouse or family.

DO acknowledge important events in an LGBT employee's



“Some of my colleagues are out lesbians. Both my management and colleagues spoke well of them, and it assured me that I would be judged for my abilities and effort, not my sexual orientation. My colleagues and managers also occasionally expressed favorable opinions of LGBT rights, which also increased my confidence in them.”

— DOJ employee

life – e.g., same-sex marriage, birth of a child, illness of a spouse, or death of a partner's parent – in the same way you would for a heterosexual employee.

DO speak to employees, including LGBT employees, about their experiences at work, and solicit their ideas for how to make the workplace more inclusive.

5 Come Out

DO let your employees know they'll be treated with fairness and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, by “coming out” as a straight ally. For example:

- Display a symbol in your office (DOJ Pride sticker, copy of this brochure, etc.) indicating that it is a “safe space.”
- Attend LGBT events sponsored by DOJ Pride and/or the Department, and invite (but don't require) others to join you.

• Talk openly and positively about your colleagues, friends and family who are LGBT.

• Request that your office receive follow-up training on gender identity in the workplace and/or DOJ Pride's “Allies in the Workplace” training.

DO consider coming out of the closet if you are LGBT and not out at work. The presence of visible LGBT managers communicates that your office is open and accepting.

6

Ensure that Advancement, Development & Mentoring Opportunities are Fair and Effective

DO provide explicit, verbal reassurance that advancement and development opportunities are based strictly on merit.

DO work with your component’s mentor program administrative point of contact to ensure that mentors understand and address the needs of diverse employees, including LGBT employees.

DO allow and encourage employees to participate in LGBT-focused professional development opportunities, such as the LGBT Bar Association and Out & Equal Workplace Advocates conferences.

DON’T let your discomfort with an employee’s failure to conform to gender stereotypes (how you think he or she should act or look) – e.g., feminine man, masculine woman – affect whether he or she gets a particular assignment or works with a particular client.



“As a transgender woman, I want people to understand that I’m real. I want to be recognized as the gender I really am. Yes, there was awkwardness with pronouns at first for folks who knew me before the transition. But it hurts when several years later people still use the wrong pronouns. And just imagine if people were constantly debating YOUR bathroom privileges. Imagine how humiliating that would be.”
— DOJ employee



“I joined DOJ as an honors program attorney, and I’ve been out since the moment I joined. Not that I fly a rainbow flag in my office, but it comes out when I candidly discuss my boyfriend of 4 years, our plans to get married, our favorite restaurants, etc. I’ve never received anything that I would call a ‘reaction’ — just follow up questions such as ‘where did you two meet?’ ‘how long have you been together?’ ‘did you spend the holidays with his folks or yours?’ and so on.”

— DOJ employee

Exactly how to respond will depend on the circumstances. For example:

- If an employee comes to your office, closes the door, and says “I’ve been meaning to tell you this for a while: I’m gay,” **DO** thank them for trusting you enough to tell you, ask if they’ve been made to feel safe and welcome in the workplace, and let them know about DOJ Pride.
- Sometimes the best reaction is a “non-reaction,” meaning not silence but a matter-of-fact, don’t-skip-a-beat response. For example, if an employee mentions her same-sex partner in passing, as in “My partner Janet and I saw the best movie this weekend,” **DO** react the way you would had she said “My husband Jeremy and I saw the best movie this weekend.” Ask about the movie, where they saw it, if they went out to dinner beforehand, etc.

Resources

DOJ Pride, www.dojpride.org (please feel free to contact a member of DOJ Pride’s Board of Directors with any questions you may have).

DOJNet diversity web page, “Promoting LGBT Inclusion, dojnet.doj.gov/diversity/lgbt.php (multiple resources).



Members of DOJ Pride’s Board of Directors

LGBT Inclusion at Work: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Managers

A resource from DOJ Pride, the Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Employees of the U.S. Department of Justice and Their Allies

Managers are essential to creating a workplace climate that is welcoming to and inclusive of all employees, and thus maximizes performance and productivity. In fact, managers have a more direct impact on workplace climate for employees, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees, than nondiscrimination and EEO policies and even co-workers.

Creating a work environment in which LGBT employees feel welcome and included has been shown to boost the performance and productivity of LGBT and non-LGBT employees alike. It also allows LGBT employees to build the kinds of open and trusting relationships with coworkers and managers that are necessary for professional success.

So, what can a manager do? Here are seven practical tips to help managers create a truly inclusive workplace climate for *all* employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.



7

Know How to Respond If an Employee Comes Out to You

DON’T judge or remain silent. Silence will be interpreted as disapproval.

DO respond with interest and curiosity. Asking respectful questions will set a positive, supportive tone.