



## LGBT @ Work: Building the Business Case for LGBT-Positive Workplaces: Part 2

BY ANNEMARIE SHROUDER

In Canadian companies like IBM, TD, Ernst & Young and KPMG, education, awareness, openness, and strong leadership are helping to create LGBT-positive environments. This change is significant for LGBT employees. According to Brad Salavich, Diversity Program Manager at IBM Canada, time previously spent worrying, keeping a low profile, and avoiding engaging with colleagues can be redirected to corporate responsibilities, creating friendships and stronger work relationships, and furthering one's career.

Instrumental in creating an LGBT-positive and inclusive workplace in these organizations is the presence and work of an LGBT-specific Employee Resource Group (ERG). Many companies committed to diversity already have ERGs for ethnocultural groups and for women. The names and approaches of resource groups for LGBT employees vary, but their mandates are all similar – to create safe and inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees, clients, and customers.

Pride@KPMG “provides internal education, community outreach and sponsorships, networking and new business development, as well as informal mentoring to LGBT employees,” says Michael Bach, KPMG's Director of Diversity. At Hewitt Associates, Richard Cote is just starting the Canadian chapter of the Pride Alliance (which already exists at Hewitt Associates in the USA). This ERG will also provide support and a social aspect.

ERG work impacts all employees. “As a non-member [of the LGBT community], it's all about the education,” says Marcia McDougall of Hewitt Associates. “Hewitt has done a good job of providing good internal education, a chance to learn about other diverse parts of our employee culture. [I have] certainly appreciated that opportunity.”

Creating allies and adding an A to LGBT resource groups brings another opportunity for employees to show support. In fact, Bruce Goudy believes that allies are a key component of success, helping to bridge the gap and confront some of the stereotypes and misconceptions that still exist.

An LGBT-positive workplace also impacts retention and recruitment. Richard Carson, partner of Monitor Group (a consulting firm in the USA and Canada), and the head of their Gay Network ERG says: “We wanted to make sure Monitor is a great place for LGBT people to work. If other firms are reaching out and we are not, conclusions could be drawn that Monitor is not gay friendly.”

Some university and MBA graduates “are out and are not willing to go back into the closet when they come to work” Brad Salavich explains. “Employers need to create that environment.”

Orrin Wolpert agrees. As a 2007 MBA student at the Rotman School of Management (University of Toronto) and the director of its Gay-Straight Alliance, he organized a panel discussion at Rotman about LGBT inclusion in the workplace last fall.

“I felt Rotman has a role in making business leaders more comfortable with gay issues,” he said. “The responses were overwhelmingly positive.”

As a recruiter, [you're] looking for top employees. [You want to] make sure they can be who they are, be fully productive, and show loyalty to the company,” Brad Salavich says.

Recruitment, retention, productivity, satisfaction, and workplace morale all impact the bottom line. But it doesn't happen overnight, and it's not without its challenges.

Regardless of whether your company's journey and commitment to LGBT inclusion begins as an LGBT-employee led initiative (like at KPMG), or from the top-down (like at TD), leadership on this issue must be “obvious and direct” explains Scott Mullin, TD's VP, Government and Community Relations.

It's as simple as having a clear position. “While we respect people's personal views, in the workplace, these are our corporate values and views,” IBM's Client Executive Richard Branston says. “If your personal views can't get around this, maybe this isn't the right company for you to work at.”

An LGBT-positive and inclusive workplace means you can acknowledge and even celebrate Pride with your employees. “On all fronts it's about doing the smart thing,” says Scott Mullin. “The business case didn't take too much work at TD.” **DI**

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