



LGBTIQA+ Inclusivity

every connection matters™



What does LGBTIQA+ Mean?

The acronym LGBTIQA+ is ever growing and evolving, that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual. It is an inclusive term that includes all people in the queer community. New terms are regularly added, which is why the plus exists at the end of the acronym. The LGBTIQA+ community is a spectrum of unique people. The LGBTIQA+ acronym gives room for each person to identify, feel safe in their own journey, and express themselves in the world.

We all have a need to feel connected, respected, and accepted. LGBTIQA+ people's safety has often been compromised because of fear, violence, and a lack of understanding of what it means to be gay, lesbian, or trans. Queer people have been historically hurt by laws, words, and actions, because of their sexuality and gender.

53% of lesbians and gay people experience workplace harassment and discrimination

Organisations that have successfully established a diverse and inclusive workforce experience the proven benefits that it provides. This includes a wide variety of perspectives, professional experiences, and safety that help drive business initiatives and organisational strategy. An inclusive culture is an environment where employees feel like they are valued and accepted for who they are, regardless of their background, culture, sexuality, or gender.

These environments can be described as professional communities where diversity is celebrated, accepted, and welcomed.

LGBTIQA+ inclusivity exists when a person can come to work and be themselves without having to fear that their sexuality or gender will be an issue, rejected, or used against them. A supported and accepted employee will be a productive and loyal team member.

50% of LGBTIQA+ employees experience homophobic remarks/jokes in the workplace

We all play a part in creating a safe and inclusive work environment. The words we use, the jokes we tell or laugh at, and the way we treat others establishes work culture and safety. We have the power to create environments that are safe, give employees the space to be authentic, and promote leading with love. When we create safe work environments, we promote a productive and connected workforce.

Safety is built through organisational authenticity, management/leadership willingness to grow, and the acceptance of each of our individual team members. We can become an ally to LGBTIQA+ employees by being open to a change of heart. LGBTIQA+ inclusion is not about ticking a box. It is about being okay with the fact that people may look, think, act, and show up differently than we do. And that it's okay for our employees to do so.

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When we take the time to hear our team members stories and give people a place at the table regardless of their sexuality, gender, or expression, we create a safe workplace full of diverse and united voices. There is strength and power in difference and in respecting our different experiences.

"Queer people don't grow up as ourselves; we grow up playing a version of ourselves that sacrifices authenticity to minimize humiliation and prejudice. The massive task of our adult lives is to unpick which part of ourselves are truly us and which parts we have created to protect us." – Elon Green

How to develop a LGBTIQ+ inclusive work culture – It starts with us

- Lead by example. Board and Senior Management set the expectation and provide direction.
 - Remember a supported and accepted employee is a productive and loyal team member.
 - Focus on inclusive recruitment strategies, ongoing engagement, and welcoming of team members from day one.
 - Meet your people where they are and take the time to see them. It fosters a healthy work environment.
 - Provide safety and set the tone. Show employees that you want to know who they are and that it's okay to be who they are.
 - Provide safe spaces for employees to connect, share their stories, and be heard. Training is not enough.
 - Leadership has a responsibility for ongoing connection with employees in a kind, connected, and non-judgmental way.
 - Give employees multiple ways to provide feedback and take it on! (Managers and the organisation as a whole)
 - Be mindful of the words you use. If you don't know someone's story or how they identify, use "they" instead of "he" or "she" and "partner" instead of "wife" or "husband."
 - Ask people what their pronouns are. Put pronouns in email signatures and create a culture of acceptance and support. What are your pronouns?
- Don't use outdated words/phrases like transsexual, homosexual, or sexual preference. Keep up to date on the queer experience and choose your words wisely.
 - If you hear discriminatory comments or jokes don't laugh and join the crowd. Make it known that it's not acceptable and stand as an ally of LGBTIQ+ employees/people.
 - Understand some of the sensitivities for LGBTIQ+ people and that not all queer people are OUT. Someone may have felt comfortable telling you they are gay, and it's not ok for you to assume that they want you to tell others. Maintain confidentiality and don't tell someone else's story for them.
 - Set a goal to reflect on the ways you present as a team member, leader, and person. (Are you inclusive and accepting? What type of work culture have you created? What ways do you need to grow/challenge yourself?)

Final Words

We all deserve to live in world where we feel respectful and accepted for who we are. Everyone is unique in their own way, and it is important that we take time to celebrate our differences and recognise the positive impact that diversity has both in the workplace as well as our broader community.

