



EMPLOYERS LGBT WORKFORCE TOOLKIT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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Context

During the summer of 2017 the Alliance Network held an event for members and other invited sector representatives interested in recruiting LGBT+ graduates to their workforces. The event was very well attended by representatives from a wide range of organisations and sectors from local to global. Split into four key discussion groups, delegates participated in facilitated sessions that covered the areas of creating an LGBT+ friendly workplace environment, recruitment, induction and retention of your LGBT+ workforce.

The purpose of the event was to open discussions amongst delegates in order to share best practice examples, consider some of the challenges, and identify solutions. We captured the discussion from each of the discussion groups and with additional contributions from some of our Alliance Network Management Committee Members we have created this Employers Toolkit with key tips to consider throughout the cycle of getting your organisation LGBT+ friendly recruitment to retention and progression.

Out of all the tips provided we have listed immediately below the top ten tips we feel can add most value to your efforts to recruit and retain employees from the LGBT+ community. We hope you find the top tips and the additional guidance useful and relevant.

Alliance Network

The Alliance Network is a cross sectoral Midlands based network for LGBT+ professionals. Our vision is to make the Midlands the best place to work for LGBT+ professionals. Through creating a significant network across organisations within the region, we bring them together and enable a greater voice.

The following objectives are derived from three main themes:

- **People** - provide stronger local support and events
- **Business** - drive changes and improvements within business
- **Community** - help relevant local charities and organisations



Top Ten Tips

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| <p>1. Make your workplace a visibly LGBT+ friendly environment through incorporating things like the rainbow flag into lanyards, mugs, pens and other company literature, branding and marketing as appropriate</p> | <p>2. Publicise who your LGBT+ lead contacts are within your organisation and create allies, advocates and role models from amongst your senior managers</p> |
| <p>3. Advertise vacancies in LGBT+ specific media as well as profiling your commitment to the LGBT+ community at recruitment drives such as careers fairs</p> | <p>4. Review your suite of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies and procedures to ensure they are LGBT+ friendly and that they promote non-gender and non-sexuality specific language and workplace culture</p> |
| <p>5. Ensure that both LGBT+ staff and allies are involved in workplace induction processes to ensure LGBT+ information is included for all new recruits</p> | <p>6. Create a communication platform (such as Yammer) for your LGBT+ workforce to have their own safe, LGBT+ friendly 'space'</p> |
| <p>7. Create an LGBT+ Network and (if possible) provide resourcing for activities and events, capacity for network members to attend meetings and generate network work, and if possible, see if staff member engagement can be formally recognised in annual appraisal processes</p> | <p>8. Develop senior management understanding of common mental health issues that may surface for individuals who identify as LGBT+, for those who may be closeted, and for those who may be coming out</p> |
| <p>9. Look at what other companies are doing, reach out, share best practice, and continually develop your own</p> | <p>10. Messaging, language and legislation is changes rapidly, don't be afraid to ask questions if you aren't sure</p> |



CREATING AN LGBT+ FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

One of the first things to consider if you are proactively recruiting graduates who identify as LGBT+ to your workforce is your current workplace environment. Being able to show that your organisation is diverse, open and inclusive is a major factor that will attract LGBT+ graduates.

Visible LGBT+ Champions and Points of Contact

Create roles for points of contact for LGBT+ matters within your organisation and profile the roles, the individuals and their contact details throughout your workforce. If you operate over a number of sites/offices, nominate one or more representatives for each.

To have key LGBT+ contacts and representatives in each of your sites/offices (if you have more than one), provides a very powerful and positive message to your workforce about your commitment to creating a supportive work environment for LGBT+ employees across the board. To attract more talent, having these contacts available externally can help if individual's want to know more and get a feel for what they could be moving into if they joined your company.

Positive Messaging

Positive messaging is another key aspect of creating an LGBT+ friendly workplace environment – it's also a quick, cheap and highly effective mechanism to engage your existing and potential LGBT+ employees. Create a network tag line or slogan, think about how you externally promote your LGBT+ related achievements and messages to your marketplaces. It doesn't have to be an expensive or over complicated, but cohesive, positive messaging can be very powerful.

Some companies have rainbow lanyards that staff can choose to wear instead of standard lanyards, others have things like their corporate merchandise (pens etc) and logos/branding redesigned to incorporate the rainbow colours synonymous with the LGBT+ sector, all of which have become subtle but powerful messages that yours is an LGBT+ friendly organisation.

From rainbow lanyards, to a rainbow flag on your email footer, to senior people within your organisation with a sentence about why they support the LGBT+ community, there are a number of small actions you can take to present your organisation's support and create an LGBT+ friendly workplace. All these little changes make a massive difference and the key is to be visible wherever is possible with constant messaging.

Something small but important is how you publicly acknowledges and reflects their LGBT+ workforce within the workplace itself. If your organisation has artwork on the walls or stock images used in promotional literature does it include LGBT+ representation? On occasions such as Birmingham Pride do you acknowledge and celebrate it with rainbow flags, special messages to staff, participation in the parade or other positive actions?

LGBT+ Inclusive Policies and Procedures

Another key recommendation is to ask if your company Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and HR policies and procedures are inclusive of LGBT+ staff members. Consider whether wording or legislative references need to be refreshed, or if organisation policy and procedure requires updating. Where possible include any case studies or examples that illustrate or explain your policies and procedures cover a broad range (i.e. parental leave to cover adoption, LGBT+ rights as well as 'straight' etc.)

Within your policies and procedures and the work environment, promote non-gender and non-sexuality specific language and culture that doesn't force people to continually come out. For example, use words like 'partner' rather than 'husband/wife'. A supportive culture where difference is valued, and that your workforce can see in action, is really key.



LGBT+ Champions, Role Models and Advocates

Do you have LGBT+ champions, role models and advocates engaged in organisational policy and procedure development? What mechanisms exist within your organisation to enable your LGBT+ workforce a communication channel to have a voice and to influence policy development and positive workplace change? Consider these questions, and how you might address them.

By creating LGBT+ champions, role models and advocates from within your workforce, it empowers those staff to represent the LGBT+ sector of your workforce to actively engage in progressing LGBT+ inclusive policy and strategy development. It also evidences a greater commitment of your organisation to LGBT+ issues, and to ensuring your LGBT+ workforce is valued at all levels within your organisation.

Having openly LGBT+ senior managers and leaders who represent and advocate LGBT+ initiatives, activities and events also sends a very powerful and positive message not only to new recruits, but to your entire workforce and client base.

Identifying LGBT+ staff who are comfortable with being 'visible' as LGBT+ within your workplace or sector, and developing them as informal mentors (if appropriate), is a great way to show new recruits that LGBT+ people are accepted, welcomed and supported within your workplace.

LGBT+ Network

If your organisation has the resources and capacity, creating an LGBT+ network is an increasingly common and incredibly effective way to give your LGBT+ workforce a collective voice to advocate and influence around LGBT+ matters at strategic levels.

A well resourced and active LGBT+ network that has support from your senior management and leadership will also create greater visibility throughout your organisation. It can be utilised as a vehicle through which members can feel part of a community, can generate and participate in activities, and can support policy development and change as appropriate.

From the perspective of a new recruit who identifies as LGBT+ entering your workforce, an LGBT+ network can provide support, informal mentoring, faster integration and the opportunity to engage in workplace and social activities within a supportive environment.

If you have an LGBT+ network already, or you are considering developing one, consider whether you might want to extend membership to include 'Allies'. Allies are people who don't identify as LGBT+ within your workforce but who wish to engage with and further the LGBT+ agenda alongside their LGBT+ colleagues.

Communication Platform

Creating a communication platform for your network or LGBT+ community and widely profiling its existence is an important aspect of engaging your LGBT+ workforce, and will become a useful source of support and information for those of your LGBT+ workforce who, through choice or not feeling comfortable, aren't 'out' in the workplace. Some larger companies will use their intranet to establish an LGBT+ space, others use platforms such as Yammer.

Ask!

Most importantly, don't assume you will get everything right! Ask sensible questions around topics of LGBT+ that you do not understand. Don't worry too much about making mistakes and try to get advice on any topics that you do not feel comfortable with e.g. non-binary messaging. Try not to assume anything but be open to conversations about specific LGBT+ questions.



LGBT+ WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

If your organisation is choosing to proactively recruit LGBT+ staff to its workforce, there are a number of things you can do to better target and reach the LGBT+ community above and beyond your usual recruitment channels and traditional platforms.

LGBT+ Media

Advertising in LGBT+ media is one way of doing this. In the West Midlands publications such as Midland Zone is widely distributed and read. There are a number of other regional and national specialist LGBT+ publications including the Pink News, Gay Times, Diva and Attitude amongst others that can ensure your opportunities reach the LGBT+ community.

LGBT+ Community Networks and Groups

Promoting your advertisement to various LGBT+ organisations who work within the LGBT+ community are often more than happy to support proactive LGBT+ recruitment. Requesting onward distribution to their networks is another good way to access networks that may traditionally have been inaccessible to you.

In the West Midlands charities working specifically within the LGBT+ sector are worth engaging. In Birmingham, the largest local LGBT+ charity is Birmingham LGBT (www.blgbt.org). As well as operating a number of community based programmes they also run an LGBT+ Health and Wellbeing Centre, and have an accessible online community directory where you can search for local and national LGBT+ related organisations and community groups, this directory can be accessed here: <http://blgbt.org/directory/>

Careers Fairs & Recruitment Events:

Attending LGBT+ specific careers and recruitment fairs, and/or making it clear you have a welcoming environment for potential LGBT+ employees at mainstream events by prominently displaying literature about your LGBT+ networks, role models or support structures is a great way to raise your profile as an LGBT+ friendly employer. Having a presence at high profile events such as National Student Pride will begin to generate recognition and interest.

Being able to develop a young LGBT+ person's awareness of your organisation and its proactive approach before they begin their professional careers will give your organisation an advantage when a graduate chooses which organisations to approach when they are ready to enter the workforce.

At non LGBT+ specific events consider including a discreet link to your organisation's LGBT+ network and activities, or your organisation's commitment to LGBT+ workforce on your promotional literature when you're at career fairs, recruitment open days, university visits, client meetings, internal stakeholder meetings and/or other relevant situations where increasing the profile of your commitment to LGBT+ issues could be beneficial to future recruitment and retention.

Sponsoring or supporting LGBT+ educational projects in your local schools, LGBT+ charities and/or community groups is also a positive and proactive way to raise your profile across the LGBT+ community as an LGBT+ friendly organisation.



Profiling Your Support and Offer for your LGBT+ Workforce

When advertising positions vacant within your organisation you can include a statement welcoming people who identify as LGBT+ to apply. Within the literature about your organisation that you send to prospective applicants you can insert some information about how your organisation supports their LGBT+ workforce if you already in fact do. At interview stage, consider mentioning this support to reinforce your organisation's commitment.

It's important not to oversell your organisation's support and commitment to their LGBT+ workforce but to be honest about what your organisation offers and manage expectations. Most LGBT+ graduates will be most interested in what practical support they might receive, what networks and progression opportunities might exist, and ultimately whether they feel they can be comfortable if they choose to be openly LGBT+ in your workplace should they work there.

If your organisation doesn't currently have a strong or practical offer for your LGBT+ workforce be honest about that, and if there is organisational enthusiasm to proactively address the lack of offer and to positively change the culture, it may be that enthusiastic and able graduates/ recruits can support and shape that change.

Develop Awareness around LGBT+ Issues and Legislation

If you are a global organisation, or require your staff to travel globally you should be aware of the laws around the LGBT+ community in different countries, and understand the risks to LGBT+ staff if you are asking them to travel. Have this information to hand and be able to provide support to these employees.

If you have high profile and/or senior leaders who identify as LGBT+, develop case studies or profiles that reflect this diverse leadership and build into your corporate branding and profiling so that graduates can feel that they can progress within the organisation regardless of sexuality.

Developing an understanding of the mental health issues that are linked to being closeted and the danger that it can have on LGBT+ employees is important for senior managers and leaders as well as HR Managers. Not everyone gets this right and each organisation does things differently and we would recommend you speak to specialist support services to get advice, as well as reaching out to learn from other organisations who are doing it effectively.



LGBT+ INCLUSIVE INDUCTION

LGBT+ Inclusive Systems and Processes

A highly effective way to ensure your induction is inclusive is to ensure that within and throughout your organisation's induction policies and procedures and any other relevant company literature and messaging, you clearly detail your organisation's approach to diversity and inclusion, in particular including engagement and support for LGBT+ people.

Including messages from senior managers and leaders increases the effectiveness of these policies and procedures, as well as relevant contact numbers and/or quotes and case studies from some of your existing workforce from a broad cross section of grades, ages and cultural backgrounds, who also identify as LGBT+.

Making sure Managers and Leaders are aware of their own unconscious bias and the effect this can have on their decision making and opportunities they give to people in their Teams is critical.

Training for Broader Workforce

Training should be given to help facilitate this. It can't be a one off conversation but needs to be ongoing. General training and education on diversity and inclusion should also be given to everyone at every level to help support an inclusive culture.

Leaders, senior managers and those with professional duty of care for employees should have a basic understanding of what it means to be 'closeted' and they need to be seen and respected as a role model for diversity and inclusion.

Your Internal LGBT+ Profile

Messages about being inclusive for all including LGBT+ people need to continue after induction so that people feel and believe this is part of everyday working life and not just an aspiration.

Creating pop up video messages, posters or flyers with LGBT Network contact details, or information promoting the full spectrum of equality and diversity support, networks and groups your organisation may have but stating clearly the specific support for people who identify as LGBT+ alongside those with other protected characteristics is important.

This messaging is also critical to communicate how individuals can access support if they feel they need it either because they are experiencing workplace bullying and harassment and/or they are considering coming out but are unconfident in how to approach doing so.

Give some consideration as to whether you need to develop more subtle, or 'soft' messaging for those who aren't 'out', who may work offsite, or who you generally consider 'harder to reach'. How you reach members of your workforce in these positions, share core messages and/or interact with them sometimes needs a different approach.

Also consider running specific sessions on related topics so people are clear what to expect and can take in bite size chunks rather than lots of all day meetings. If your organisation and number of people to induct is large enough, give people choice as to which sessions they attend by running it carousel style.



Deliver a specific LGBT+ Section during Induction Programme

Ensure that both LGBT+ staff and allies are involved in inductions. Ask allies to talk about why they are an ally, their experience in the organisation and their views on the future, and ask LGBT+ staff to outline the support and opportunities available as an LGBT+ staff member, as well as their personal experiences if relevant.

This is also a great opportunity to pitch your LGBT+ and Allies network/s. Highlight who is the Chairperson and network members, the key point of contact, activities, events and plans of the network/s. Talk about the engagement of senior leaders in the business and the frequency of activities and events that happen both internally and externally with other groups.

If your organisation has a detailed induction process a simple way to ensure greater representation and profile for LGBT+ matters is to create an LGBT+ Induction Information Sheet with the contact details of the LGBT+ Network, Chairperson, other relevant network members or, if you don't yet have an LGBT+ network, the point/s of contact within your organisation who can help with any questions around LGBT+ policy.

We would also recommend points of contact for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Resources Managers who can offer support around what steps to take if a staff member is considering coming out in the workplace, or experiencing some forms of workplace bullying or harassment.



TALENTED LGBT+ WORKFORCE RETENTION

Supporting New LGBT+ Recruits

Following on from building LGBT+ into your induction processes, which our delegates stated was one of the best ways to retain talented LGBT+ workforce, ensuring you check in with your new LGBT+ graduates as they settle into their roles is critical.

This can be achieved by their line managers checking whether they are engaging in the LGBT+ network and/or other support networks, services and activities available during their probation period and for the first six months of their placement, and supporting them as and where necessary along the way.

Mentoring

An important factor for all talented graduates to increase engagement and retention is to give people more responsibility. This can be by way of the day job, projects and groups to join. Another way to ensure continued engagement is to support your graduate by providing them with a Mentor in the organisation. This mentor may or may not identify as LGBT+ but if you have the capacity and senior leaders who do identify as such, offering your graduates the option can significantly boost their loyalty and commitment to the organisation as well as their productivity.

A senior manager and/or leader can help guide and inspire graduates to consider their longer term career aspirations as well as offering support as they develop and shape their roles and careers. Again, consider carefully how you match graduates to mentors, but whether they identify as LGBT+ or as allies, having a range of mentors that represent the inclusive and diverse nature of your organisation is essential.

Also consider utilising senior managers and leaders to become more 'visible' in their support of the LGBT+ workforce. It may be through talking about the career progression paths available to all staff including LGBT+, speaking at events about LGBT+ issues affecting the organisation, and/or attending your LGBT+ network meetings on occasion. It creates a culture for your workforce that it's 'OK' to be themselves.

Drive a culture and expectation that everyone in the organisation and all new graduate joiners should get involved with and support internal and external networks/groups. Their impact should then be included and assessed in performance management processes and valued.

LGBT+ Data Capture

Collecting data on LGBT+ people is key and most organisations have very poor data from the recruitment process as people are often sceptical about declaring their sexuality. Measure staff satisfaction, representation and engagement and explaining to your workforce, especially LGBT+ staff who may be reluctant to provide details of gender and sexuality, that the purpose of collecting data is to better shape your support, services, resources etc should slowly build up trust, especially if a need identified through data collection is addressed through positive action.

It's always good to have a confidential suggestion box for those employees who don't feel comfortable speaking in front of a crowd or who aren't comfortable being 'out' in the workplace.



Continued Professional Development

Talented staff are like to be looking for their next move. How do you keep valuable LGBT+ employees at a organisation? Some organisations run a targeted leadership development programmes that could be for top talent and/or LGBT+ top talent. Others who don't have this inhouse resource look for specific LGBT+ training and development programmes. Graduates want to be respected and supported for being talented and not specifically because they are LGBT+ so it's a fine balance between providing the right development support in an environment that is right for the individual and for your organisation.

Direct Dialogue with Senior Management

Arranging for your workforce to meet and hear directly from your leaders and senior managers about organisation equality, diversity and inclusion. This session could be arranged through your LGBT+ network and/or as a general workforce engagement activity to enable your (LGBT+) workforce to learn about the organisation strategy and their senior managements' views on the culture and approach they are taking, as well as an opportunity to ask questions and offer views.

Robust LGBT Network and External Engagement

We also mentioned the critical importance of developing and sustaining a resourced, active and visible LGBT+ network that everyone can get involved in. By continuing to showcase LGBT+ studies, blogs, achievements and staff getting involved with different campaigns and festivals you develop a fantastic channel to ensure your LGBT+ workforce remain motivated and loyal to your organisation.

Allocating resource and capacity, recognising participation in PDR's and other organisation measures shows the value and commitment your organisation places on the network and the individual and is one of the best ways to spread the word that you are inclusive and supportive of your LGBT+ staff and wider community.

Show that you get involved with LGBT+ events that appeal to Graduates. Show that not only do you embrace the LGBT+ community but you support, by being visible with celebrations, campaigns and activities that would appeal to the next generation of talent.

Identifying as LGBT+ in the Workplace

Some employees are not comfortable about openly speaking about their sexuality due to a number of reasons and may be suffering in silence. Having clear and visible information about how individuals can contact support agencies is really important, highlighting particularly those that service the LGBT+ community so that the individuals can speak to someone.

Whilst you can only encourage people to come out and be open about their sexuality, remember not everyone is always ready to do this or able to. This can hold people back from developing honest and deeper relationships with colleagues and hold them back from being themselves and performing at their best.

There didn't seem to be a magic answer to this but it is about acknowledging this point and making sure any selection process or decision making is focussed on fairness rather than other factors which could be subject to unconscious bias.



Evidencing and Practicing Equitable Progression Processes

A way of showing how LGBT+ people have the same chance of being promoted is by using examples of senior people who have developed their career. This can be used for posters around the office, your organisation's internal sites, blogs and even have these advocates speak at graduate events.

To avoid biases from selection boards and to avoid employers feeling like there is a double glass ceiling. Is each person getting a fair trial? Are there external people, or people from different departments that don't know the individual to give a fair external view.

Is there a clear set rules or objectives that individuals can see to achieve the next step. Do their employees feel that there is a fair process? By looking at the selection process and getting views and feedback from those who have been through the process it will help you understand how to put in best practices to avoid bias.

In your organisations supply chain – make it a requirement for your suppliers to demonstrate their strong diversity and inclusion and ask for evidence.

Further Contact

If you are interested in the work of the Alliance Network and would like to know more about our activities, programmes and events, as well as how to get involved, please visit our website (<https://www.thealliancenetWORK.co.uk/>) or contact any of the four contributors who's contact details are provided above.