

# Making it real – globally

A practical guide for advancing  
lesbian, gay, bisexual and  
transgender diversity and inclusion  
across global companies





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# The challenge: a complex world



Global companies have made great strides over the past decade in developing and adopting inclusive corporate values statements, personnel policies and codes of conduct regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people. They also have made significant progress in putting policy into practice – in areas such as creating safe and supportive workplaces, enhancing recruitment and benefits packages, and backing employee groups and ally networks (allies being individuals who are openly supportive of their LGBT+ colleagues).

Progress on LGBT+ inclusion has been most noticeable in the principal centers of business in the US, Canada, Australia and the UK. There are also locations, such as Japan and Taiwan, where governments have introduced some form of antidiscrimination legislation regarding sexual orientation in the workplace. Yet, in major business centers such as Dubai, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Mumbai and Mexico City – not to mention less prominent locations – it's commonplace to hear that corporate LGBT+ inclusion policies “don't

apply” for one reason or another. This occurs despite the fact that firms promote global brands and strive for a uniform, global approach to their business.

Extending LGBT+-inclusive policies and practices beyond corporate hubs raises a number of legal, cultural and organizational challenges. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) leaders, HR practitioners and allies, not to mention LGBT+ people, can easily become frustrated, if not overwhelmed, by the complexity of the legal and regulatory landscape across scores of jurisdictions. In addition, they must navigate and manage different cultural and corporate environments across those geographies. Meanwhile, conditions on the ground around the world for LGBT+ people are changing quickly – both for better and for worse.

Having a strategy for implementing global D&I policy is doubly important today because companies are expanding rapidly in faster-growing emerging and frontier markets, where LGBT+ equality and inclusion are not well-institutionalised

and the concepts often are seen as downright foreign and unacceptable. Yet, global companies are in a war to attract and retain the best talent in these geographies.

These issues are of importance to local staff responsible for human resources and LGBT+ D&I, LGBT+ transferees moving across geographies, and allies and stakeholders who want to know the company is true to the values expected of a leading global firm.

What are global companies doing to implement their corporate policies on a global basis? What impacts are they having for LGBT+ people on the ground, especially in those geographies where various aspects of LGBT+ life are not supported by the legal system or the culture? Global companies and D&I practitioners are just beginning to grapple with these issues in a systematic manner, and the accumulated wisdom on best practices remains thin.

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**Just like our operations, SAP's commitment to LGBT Inclusion is global. This is why we are among the early supporters of the UN Standards of Conduct for Business on Tackling Discrimination against LGBTI People.**

**Miguel Castro**

Global Lead for Culture and Identity at SAP

# The roundtable: ideas into action



EY puts great importance on creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace for our people worldwide. We also believe it is important to share ideas and best practices with others.

With this in mind, we hosted a small think tank with organizations working on the global agenda, with the aim of identifying the key challenges that we were facing and sharing the leading practice that we had seen working on the ground. The outputs from that meeting are summarized in this document, which aims to offer practical thoughts and solutions that can be used by D&I leaders, HR professionals and allies as they navigate the challenges of implementing their organizations' global LGBT+ vision and policies worldwide.

While this document was for international practice, many of the concepts and recommendations are applicable for extending LGBT+-inclusive practices in a company's home territory, from the main hubs to local hubs – to Leeds from London or to Mumbai from Delhi, for example.

We would like to thank the following companies and not-for-profit organizations that participated in the discussion with members of EY, which was both lively and



informative. We certainly didn't find all of the answers, but we do believe that we achieved some impactful insights:

- ▶ Barclays
- ▶ EY
- ▶ GSK
- ▶ Herbert Smith Freehills
- ▶ IBM
- ▶ Norton Rose Fulbright
- ▶ Stonewall
- ▶ Thomson Reuters

In January 2019 EY joined seven other organizations to form the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality, an effort focused on LGBTI social and economic inclusion in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (WEF). It will focus on helping companies activate their implementation of the UN standards of business conduct around LGBTI inclusion.

EY are proud to have signed up to support the United Nations LGBTI Standards of Conduct.

# The setting: key drivers shaping D&I implementation across global firms

The work and social environment for LGBT+ people around the world varies tremendously today. This variation is driven by three factors: the legal environment, societal cultures and the culture

**Table 1: Drivers of variation in D&I across global companies**

Driver	Situation	Example
<b>Legal environment</b> (provisions for transgendered people, such as legal recognition of name changes and workplace protections, often do not align with protections for LGBT+ persons)		
	Marriage and other legal rights and protections are equally extended to LGB people.	England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Sweden, France, Cayman Islands, Colombia, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Germany, Australia, Austria*
	Domestic partnerships are legal and clear protections exist.	Switzerland, Chile,
	Some aspects of same-sex relationships are legal and some protections and benefits exist.	Mexico, Peru, Japan, South Korea, Israel, Taiwan, Thailand, India
	Same-sex relationships or other aspects of LGBT+ life (e.g., adoption and advocacy) are banned, but are not routinely enforced or have significant legal gray areas.	Russia, Nigeria, Jamaica, Malaysia**
	Same-sex relationships and other aspects of LGBT+ life are illegal and the law is enforced (if selectively).	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Ghana
<b>Societal culture</b>		
	Candid and direct conversation about LGBT+ professional and personal life is encouraged. "Authenticity" is praised.	Canada, US, UK, France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Taiwan

\* New legislation that will become active on 1 January 2019

\*\* Some acts involving same-sex relations are illegal

and practices within a company. See Table 1 (which is intended to be illustrative, not definitive).

Driver	Situation	Example
	LGBT+ life is accepted or tolerated, but not considered relevant, in the workplace.	Germany, Italy, Thailand, Switzerland, Taiwan
	Legal protections exist, but discussion of sexuality or personal matters in the workplace is taboo ("don't ask, don't tell").	Japan, mainland China, South Korea, Malaysia
	LGBT+ advancement runs against political, religious or colonial sensitivities.	Russia, Uganda, Nigeria
	There is a tradition or language of other sexualities that does not align neatly with the Western LGBT+ framework.	India, Pakistan
<b>Company environment</b>		
	Global leadership demonstrates commitment to global implementation.	Outspoken CEO and executive LGBT+ sponsor outreach
	Global LGBT+ resources exist.	Unified LGBT+ networks, social media platforms, communications
	Regional business units have significant autonomy to interpret and implement global policy.	Partnerships, franchises, organizations with heavy reliance on subcontractors
	Local LGBT+ champions and resources exist.	Networks, allies, "out" role models, external LGBT+ support organizations
	There is support for LGBT+ individuals.	Mobility and benefits policy, duty of care procedures

Created by: Longview Global Advisors



## Legal environment

The legal and regulatory environment for LGBT+ people across the globe can best be described as a patchwork, and varies from being affirmative to mute or restrictive. This tenor applies to the personal realm (i.e., same-sex partnerships, parenting and adoption, freedom of expression and protection from hate crimes) and to the workplace (harassment and discrimination protections, and benefits). This creates a broad range of operating environments, offering employers varying legal latitude to implement corporate policies (see the map on page 8).

To complicate matters, the rules often are unclear, partial or not enforced consistently – leaving large legal gray areas for LGBT+ people and their allies and companies to navigate. Some countries, such as Singapore and Sri Lanka, outlaw male-male sexual relations, but do not have corresponding bans on lesbian relationships. In a number of European countries (including Poland, Denmark and Finland), lesbians, gays and bisexuals are protected from workplace discrimination, but transgender individuals are not. In Nigeria, the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, adopted in January 2014, criminalizes public displays of affection between same-sex couples and restricts the work of organizations defending LGBT+ people and their rights.

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For companies new to this topic, the challenges can seem overwhelming. The key is to engage locally and take one visible step at a time.

**Nancy L Ngou**

Ernst & Young Advisory Co., Ltd.  
Executive Director

### Turkey

LGBT+ trends in Turkey are mixed. Over the past decade, the number of out people and signs of support by LGBT+ allies has risen in the major cities – especially cosmopolitan Istanbul. However, in the world of politics, rights for LGBT+ citizens failed to be incorporated into the law (although same-sex relations are not banned). The year 2017 saw

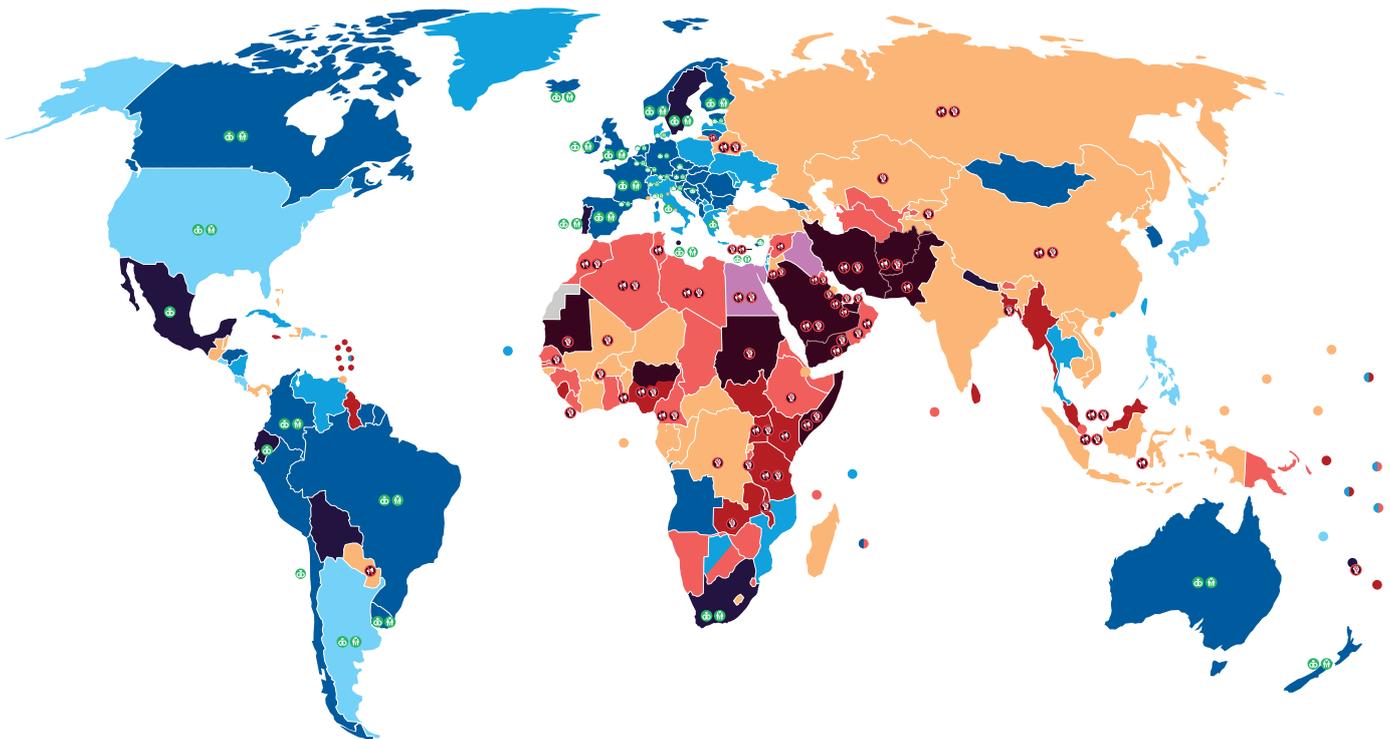
some deterioration of the situation against the LGBT+ community who were protesting the banning of LGBT+ events in Ankara. The legal situation is unlikely to improve for the LGBT+ community in the short to medium term.

# The setting: key drivers shaping D&I implementation across global firms



## Sexual orientation laws in the world – overview

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)



Protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation

Constitutional Protection	9	Broad Protection	52	Employment Protection	73	Limited/Uneven Protection	8	No Prot./No Crim.	55
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Legal recognition of families

- Marriage or other forms of legal union for same-sex couples
- Adoption open to same-sex couples

Criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults

De Facto Criminalisation	2	Up to 8 Years Imprisonment	31	10 Years to Life in Prison	26	Death Penalty	6 (E) Effective (P) Possible
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Legal barriers to the exercise of rights

- Legal barriers to freedom of expression on SOGIESC issues
- Legal barriers to the registration or operation of sexual orientation related CSOs

The data presented in this map is based on State-Sponsored Homophobia, an ILGA report by Lucas Ramón Mendos. This map can be reproduced and printed without permission as long as ILGA is properly credited and the content is not altered. [ilga.org](http://ilga.org)



## Societal culture

The cultural setting of a country is important – it provides a frame for the legal environment and often also determines how influential the law will be compared with other drivers, such as tradition and informal relations and connections. In some markets, the rule of law is less well established, and informal norms play a central role in governing social and business interactions.

Given their informal nature, culture varies greatly across geographies, and change can be unpredictable. Within a country, one may find urban and progressive metropolitan areas alongside rural and conservative areas (as is the case in Turkey and mainland China). Many emerging market countries (such as Indonesia, India and South Africa) are breathtakingly diverse, with many different languages and cultural traditions. As a result, what might work in one office might not work in another office in the same country.

Moreover, emerging markets are undergoing significant cultural shifts driven by rapid economic growth, migration, the spread of traditional and social media, and globalization. In South Korea,

Taiwan and most of Latin America, attitudes toward LGBT+ people have changed for the better very rapidly over the past decade – especially among younger generations. What might not have been possible a few years ago could be possible today.

Globalization is undoubtedly driving changes in attitudes toward LGBT+ people around the world – but not all countries follow the steps of London, Sydney and New York. In much of Europe, for instance, the deeply engrained cultural boundary between what is “public” and what is “private” makes sexual and gender orientation topics considered as irrelevant to the workplace and none of an employer’s business.

Indeed, globalization is driving cultural backlashes as people reject the idea of imposing specific cultural values (often Western or “Anglo” values) on others. Across much of Africa and Southeast Asia, in countries that have a recent history of colonialism, LGBT+ initiatives often are perceived as Western and can be construed as part of a “neo-colonial” agenda. Such negative associations can be a detriment to local D&I initiatives.

### Singapore

According to Section 377A of the Penal Code, homosexual male sex is a crime with a jail sentence of up to two years (homosexual female sex is not covered). In 2015, the Court of Appeal declared that Section 377A of the Penal Code is not unconstitutional. While a number of LGBT+ restrictions remain in place, there has been some forms of tolerance on visual expression, such as the annual PinkDot event.

In May 2014, Goldman Sachs was reprimanded for advertising an invitation to LGBT+ students to a recruiting event. The Minister of the Ministry for Social and Family Development department issued a formal Facebook post in respect of this event stating that Singapore is a “largely conservative society. While different groups may express their different points of view, everyone should respect the sensitivities of others and not create division. Singapore and Singaporeans

will decide on the norms for our society. Foreign companies here should respect local culture and context. They are entitled to decide and articulate their human resource policies, but they should not venture into public advocacy for causes that sow discord amongst Singaporeans. Employment in Singapore is based on one’s merit and ability. Discrimination – be it positive or negative – whether based on race, language, religion, or sexual orientation is not aligned with our social ethos, and has no place in our society.” A decree issued in May 2017 barred foreigners from participating in PinkDot as it was deemed to be a political event. Moreover, non-Singaporean companies could not sponsor the event. Nevertheless, more than 20,000 Singaporeans and permanent residents turned up. While the public’s views about gender, family, and sexuality have become more liberal, the government has preferred to move more cautiously.

# The setting:

## key drivers shaping D&I implementation across global firms

### Company environment

Many companies aspire to being “global,” with a corporate frame in mind, e.g., a single and powerful headquarter (Western) culture reflected across all geographies, but in reality, most are multinational companies, e.g., a single brand operating in various local markets. Consequently, corporate culture often varies greatly across geographies, and the same is true for LGBT+ advancement. Headquarters can talk forcefully about equality and inclusion, but the pace at which regional business units implement global LGBT+ policy and initiatives depends on a number of variables.

One factor is the level of autonomy business units enjoy. Some business forums and practices, such as partnership networks, franchises and organizations that rely heavily on outsourcing, can militate against top-down efforts to implement global LGBT+ policies.

Another driver is the priorities of local leaders and the perceived risks they are willing to take on behalf of LGBT+ personnel. A local manager who has positive feelings toward LGBT+ people, or who aspires to a global leadership role, may be personally motivated to align themselves with and promote global LGBT+

#### Japan

In Japan, same-sex relations are not banned, but marriage is not legal, and protections against discrimination and harassment are lacking. The Japanese hold a strong belief in the homogeneity of society; people that are perceived as different (such as out LGBT+ people and foreigners) are typically treated as outsiders.

Some public opinion polls indicate increasing acceptance of LGBT+ people and same-sex marriage, with public support over 50% for the first time in 2015. There was also anti-sexual harassment legislation put through in December 2013 that is inclusive of abuse and conduct between individuals of the same gender. In the past decade, several LGBT+ people have been elected to public offices at local and regional levels.

The current Government has instructed the Ministry of Justice to recognize the married status of Japanese citizens who have entered into same-sex marriages where it is legal. The LGBT+ community also gained an important ally when First Lady Akie Abe, marched in Tokyo's annual pride parade in April 2014. At the parade, and on her Facebook page, she said all forms of discrimination are unacceptable, and the public and media reacted positively to her comments. Most recently, several towns in Tokyo, as well as a number of other cities across the nation, introduced local legislation to register same-sex partnerships and introduce disciplinary actions to companies and organizations that do not comply (e.g., housing, hospitals, service and employment agencies).



policy and practice. In emerging markets, where managing growth can be all-consuming, LGBT+ inclusion may drop down on the list of management priorities.

Change often emerges spontaneously from the grassroots. Out and enterprising LGBT+ staff or HR personnel may take the initiative and form a local employee resource group (ERG) and network, call out perceived bias or engage in reverse mentoring.

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Diversity often is a ‘London’ conversation in the UK. It needs to be taken outside of the capital.

**Jean Balfour**

Leadership Coach and founder of Bailey Balfour

## Uganda

In Uganda, the Anti-Homosexuality Act, signed by President Yoweri Museveni in February 2014, called for life imprisonment for gay people and banned companies from supporting LGBT+ rights. The law elicited significant criticism in the West and among Western companies and investors, and subsequently invalidated by Uganda’s Supreme Court. However, according to reports, the episode led to an increasingly threatening environment for the local LGBT+ community, including 7 deaths and 65 people fleeing the country. While Museveni has not tried to impose the Anti-Homosexuality Act, the situation in Uganda has remained poor, with thousands of LGBT+ Ugandans having fled to Kenya over the past several years.

## Russia

Homosexual relations are legal in Russia, but a federal law passed in July 2013 bans “propaganda regarding nontraditional sexual relations toward minors.” Offending organizations, including businesses, may be fined and have their activities suspended for up to 90 days. Adoptions by gays and lesbians have been banned as well. Such policies and related statements by officials have created a more hostile environment for LGBT+ people. Western companies have found themselves in a challenging position. It’s worth noting that the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2017 that Russia’s “Gay Propaganda Laws” are discriminatory and violate freedom of expression. Yet, government officials are not receptive to anything that could be construed as moralizing or meddling in domestic affairs by outsiders.

# Nine

## ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice

### Summary

1. Conduct an opportunity and risk assessment and identify priorities for action
2. Set policy globally, calibrate implementation locally
3. Keep making the business case for diversity, promoting 360 education and storytelling
4. Engage LGBT+ advocates and allies at all levels of the organization
5. Build out strategies supporting successful career growth
6. Create opportunities for reverse mentoring and education of management
7. Utilize social media and other technology, locally and globally
8. Develop LGBT+ networks and unify globally
9. Measure, solicit input and celebrate success



# 1. Conduct an opportunity and risk assessment and identify priorities for action

The first step is to look beyond the corporate hub and gain an understanding of the reality on the ground. One effective way is to consider using NGO local rating systems.

As Table 2 indicates, global companies need to consider a “multifaceted, multispeed” strategy to implementing D&I policy globally.

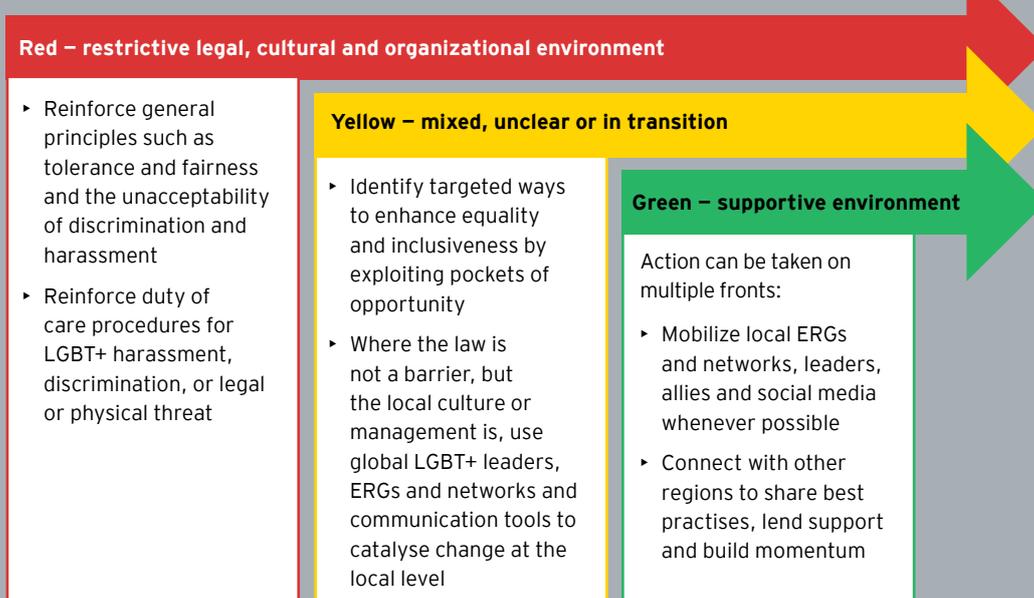
Red does not mean stop. News headlines often draw attention to the challenges facing LGBT+ people around the world and can act as a deterrent to taking action. The reality in most geographies is that there are ways to improve the working environment for LGBT+ people in meaningful, if subtle, ways, regardless of restrictive codes

and culture. For example, Thomson Reuters offers same-sex partner benefits in Saudi Arabia.

In 2013, a new law in Russia banning LGBT+ “propaganda” aimed to deter organizations from taking affirmative public stances on same-sex issues. The move also led to an increase in antigay harassment and hate crimes in the country. In such situations, management, allies and sponsors can quietly signal to LGBT+ staff that they have the organization’s support and that harassment will not be tolerated.

One good reference point is the UN’s LGBTI Standards of Conduct for Business that was released in 2017 and can provide a good starting point (<https://www.unfe.org/standards/>).

**Table 2: Classification of the LGBT+ environment**



Created by: Longview Global Advisors

# Nine

## ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice

## 2. Set policy globally, calibrate implementation locally

While starting with a global LGBT+ vision and policy is important, implementation on the ground must be calibrated to local conditions:

- ▶ Use alternative language and historical references that are relevant to the local culture. The concept of a “third gender” has currency in South Asia, for instance. In 2014, India’s Supreme Court legalized this gender and mandated affirmative action measures.
- ▶ In geographies where diversity is perceived as a less relevant, or foreign, topic, alternative approaches emphasizing respect of all people, inclusion or authenticity may work. Pose questions such as: “what is it like to not be able to discuss your partner or your weekend?” and “what would it be like to have to lie about yourself at work?”
- ▶ In the US and Canada, talking forthrightly about LGBT+ issues often is used as the first step in an awareness and inclusion campaign. This direct approach can be perceived as offensive

in many Asian countries (such as Japan and South Korea), where discussing personal issues of any kind in the workplace is taboo and “don’t ask, don’t tell” cultures prevail. In these settings, more indirect and slower-paced approaches are required. Often, an effective approach in Asia is to include LGBT+ in to the broader D&I agenda alongside gender, work-style/flexibility, culture/nationality, generations and other diversity aspects.

- ▶ In territories where direct references to sexual orientation and gender identity in policy, codes of conduct or communications are not advised, it is possible to emphasize universal principles such as tolerance, equality and fairness, and the fact that harassment and discrimination are not permitted.

For all of these situations, it’s imperative to obtain the guidance of local LGBT+ personnel to build support for initiatives and identify the right language, tone and approach.

### Case study

#### When visible senior leadership meets LGBT+ role modeling



Global law firm Herbert Smith Freehills has a powerful combination of senior visible leadership and LGBT+ role modeling in its Global Head of Disputes and Asia Managing Partner Justin D’Agostino. Justin was promoted to the global role in 2014 and is the firm’s most senior out executive on the Global Executive. He was also ranked in the OUTstanding in Business

Top 100 LGBT+ Role Models in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Often referred to as the founding father of LGBT+ in the firm, he established the LGBT+ network in the UK and Asia, and supported the launch of the LGBT+ network in Australia. His meteoric rise in the firm has blazed a trail for diversity, along with joint CEO Sonya Leydecker, one of the few women heading a global law firm.

Justin has positioned inclusion at the heart of his leadership and he role models openness, an interest in nurturing the best talent and a commitment to increasing the gender balance at senior levels in line with the firm’s target of 30% women in the partnership by 2019. He uses international business trips to engage with LGBT+ networks and individuals across the firm’s international network of offices, readily sharing his career trajectory and inspiring others. He is the firm’s Gender Champion on the 30% Club in Hong Kong and is ranked in the OUTstanding in Business Top 100 LGBT+ Role Models in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Known for his high energy and drive, Justin leaves people feeling anything is possible.



### 3. Keep making the business case for diversity, promoting 360 education and storytelling

LGBT+ equality and inclusion can be wrapped in a broader economic or business agenda that may be viewed as less personal and more value-neutral:

- ▶ Around the world and especially in emerging markets, global companies are constantly fighting a war for talent. A welcoming, inclusive and supportive environment is central to recruiting and retaining the best talent and an effective way to be more inclusive is to encourage your LGBT+ community to tell their story.
- ▶ In a US survey, one-quarter of LGBT+ workers reported staying in a job specifically because it had an inclusive environment.<sup>1</sup> Because attitudes in many countries are changing quickly, especially among younger generations, having an LGBT+-positive environment is a powerful tool for recruiting junior staff in particular.
- ▶ LGBT+ equality and inclusion can help improve the bottom line. A review of 36 workplace studies found that LGBT+-supportive policies and workplace climates were associated with greater job satisfaction and commitment, less discrimination and improved workplace relationships, and better health outcomes among LGBT+ employees.<sup>2</sup> In scientific endeavors, studies indicate that more diverse research teams produce better results.<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ Promoting equality and inclusion can be portrayed as tantamount to building an innovation culture and to promoting economic competitiveness. Richard Florida, for example, has written about how communities with sizable gay and lesbian populations often enjoy higher rates of creativity and economic development.<sup>4</sup> A UBS economist has observed that countries with populations that are more tolerant of LGBT+ people tend to score higher in the World Economic Forum's annual competitiveness ranking.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Some companies, such as IBM and Barclays, actively work through the LGBT+ community as a buyer channel.

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Policy does not equal culture. While more than 90% of firms have articulated inclusive policies, more than 40% of LGBT+ people are still not out at work. Out leaders can make all the difference.

**Todd Sears**

Founder & Principal, Out Leadership

<sup>1</sup> Deena Fids, *The Cost of the Closet and the Rewards of Inclusion*, Human Rights Campaign, Washington, DC, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> M.V. Lee Badgett, et al., *The Business Impact of LGBT+-Supportive Workplace Policies*, UCLA Williams Institute, May 2013.

<sup>3</sup> David Feitler, "The Case for Team Diversity Gets Even Better," *Harvard Business Review Blog*, 27 March, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent*, HarperCollins, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Donovan, "Same sex marriage boosts the economy," *Financial Times*, June 25, 2013.

# Nine ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice



## 4. Engage LGBT+ advocates and allies at all levels of the organization

Individuals can be engaged to advance LGBT+ equality in a number of ways: as inclusive leaders, allies, sponsors and role models (see Table 3).

Active support for LGBT+ inclusion from global leadership and strong and visible LGBT+ role models play an important role in the implementation of global policy:

- ▶ For senior managers around the world, having the backing of the global leadership can be an important element in their decision to come out or demonstrate that they are LGBT+ allies and ambassadors.

**Table 3: Four functions to fill**

<b>1.</b>	A <b>leader</b> is a manager who knows how to lead a diverse team or organization effectively and inclusively.
<b>2.</b>	An <b>ally</b> helps individual personnel manage issues specific to being LGBT+ in the organization – allies can serve as public advocates on LGBT+ issues, an especially important role in locations where being out is challenging.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Sponsors</b> are senior leaders who work with an individual to advocate for their professional advancement in the firm. The sponsor uses their own political capital on the individual's behalf.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Role models</b> demonstrate exemplary performance on LGBT+ D&I. Having senior out LGBT+ role models is valuable for demonstrating leadership and the possibility of advancement. Straight people who set a high standard of care and inclusiveness can also be effective role models.

Some organizations are trying to merge these roles, for example, by asking managers to serve as both sponsors and allies, in an effort to promote LGBT+ advancement through the ranks.

- ▶ Inclusive and out leaders and role models can be particularly powerful in many Asian cultures, given the high esteem they invest in seniority. For example, by not tolerating insensitive remarks about the LGBT+ community and other actions that affect the productivity and working conditions of LGBT+ employees. Also, it is important for global leaders to engage local leadership in making it safe for local LGBT+ and advocate employees to feel empowered as part of the global LGBT+ community as well as for the local teams to create a local chapter. In fact, the impact from senior and out leaders engaging middle management on awareness and embracing LGBT+ inclusion can be effective in creating a truly inclusive environment across every strand of diversity:
- ▶ Even in places where open discussion and advocacy of equality is not possible, subtle messaging and demonstrations of tolerance and inclusivity can be compelling.
- ▶ At times, it is important to create room for people to say “no” to becoming highly visible and vocal allies, as long as they are leading inclusively on their teams and creating an inclusive environment for all.

Many cultures around the world, especially those in emerging markets, put a high value on and invest in, trusted personal relationships and, as a result, tend to rely less on formal institutions, such as the law, to enable or drive change. As a result, leaders, allies, sponsors and role models can encourage change through dialogue and relationship-building – over dinner, or while collaborating on a project.

Allies, sponsors and role models are needed at all levels of seniority in the organization. While preferable, it's not imperative that these individuals be located in the target region to support LGBT+ staff effectively. Social media, video and teleconferences, and travel can be used to overcome distance. The only qualifications required are that they care and people can relate to them. Having clear expectations also is important so that, when people are asked to take on a function, they have a solid understanding of the task and expectations.



## 5. Build out strategies supporting successful career growth

In most global companies, the relevant question is no longer “can I be out at this company?” It is “can I be out and progress at this company?” – and progressing to senior management often involves taking challenging postings abroad. This raises many questions about mobility policy and practice:

- ▶ LGBT+ individuals being seconded should have the ability to learn about the location and voice their interests and concerns. The cultural brief is as important as understanding the legal landscape. Informing people of the potential challenges they may face in certain geographies can be challenging itself. IBM offers LGBT+ mentoring for secondees before departing and when they return. The London-based law firm Simmons & Simmons has amassed a collection of LGBT+-focused city guides written by returning secondees.
- ▶ When secondments are being discussed, there should be sensitivity if the location might be challenging for LGBT+ employees and their family. Create flexibility regarding secondments to more challenging locations. Are they able to turn the opportunity down without damaging their career? Can they get more flexible remote-working and home-leave allowances in consideration for a partner or family that remains behind, because the latter cannot get a visa, for example?

- ▶ At the same time, managers should not presume that an LGBT+ person does not want to go to a more challenging post. The candidate should have the option of considering the opportunity and the potential benefits and risks entailed. At the same time, the company needs to make sure that, within the walls of all of their offices, the culture is LGBT+ inclusive.
- ▶ Closeted staff asked to relocate face a special challenge: how can they ask questions or express concerns without outing themselves? How does management respond to their queries and concerns without outing them?

Conversely, LGBT+ staff in hardship locations may request posting elsewhere. This raises questions about evaluating the merits of the case as well as responding to their request without outing those in the closet.

In some cases, going overseas with a supportive LGBT+ environment and where one isn't known can facilitate an individual being more open about their sexuality. This may present challenges for how one decides to present oneself when returning home.

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Companies can be respectful of local cultures and inclusive – they are not mutually exclusive.

**Karyn Twaronite**

Ernst & Young LLP Partner and EY Global Vice Chair - Diversity & Inclusiveness

# Nine

## ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice



## 6. Create opportunities for reverse mentoring and education of management

Generational gaps exist around the world, and the younger cohorts in many countries are becoming more open to LGBT+ issues and inclusion, even in more traditional environments. This creates opportunities for reverse mentoring and for educating senior management:

- ▶ Some regions (such as Latin America) are changing quickly, especially among younger cohorts, and it's possible for individuals to engage openly and educate leaders.
- ▶ In some geographies, opportunities for reverse mentoring are limited. This is particularly the case in societies in Asia and other parts of the world, where greater emphasis (than in the

West) is put on the hierarchical dimension of relations and where people are more sensitive than elsewhere to levels of seniority.

- ▶ Managers, allies and HR personnel can seek out local LGBT+ resources (such as NGOs, consultants, lawyers and professional networks) for advisory support. In Italy, for example, Parks is an NGO that offers LGBT+ coaching, training, advisory and advocacy services to both Italian and multinational companies on issues such as local labor codes, benefits and best practices.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See [parksdiversity.eu/english/what-we-do/](https://parksdiversity.eu/english/what-we-do/).

### Case study

#### The power of reverse mentoring



Susan Thomas, who focuses on the health care sector at EY, found her experience as a mentee invaluable in becoming more aware of the issues faced by LGBT+ colleagues. Her mentor was a senior manager, and they met for a couple of hours every three or four weeks to talk about his experiences in the workplace.

"I remember," says Susan, "One of the things that came up was feeling the need to use neutral language – to refer to your partner as 'they,' rather than 'he' or 'she.' It might sound like a small thing, but try to imagine what it would be like to live with that fear of revealing your true self. That's precisely what we need to tackle, so that people feel free to be their authentic selves inside as well as outside work."

When the mentoring officially came to an end, the UK&I chapter of Unity, our global LGBT+ network, approached her and asked her to become their first ally Partner Sponsor. The role is wide-ranging. She meets with Unity's leadership team, giving them advice and guidance and helping to shape their strategy. She acts as an advocate upward in the business for them, making sure they have a voice at every level. She also speaks externally on Unity's behalf at workshops and conferences.

"My involvement in the reverse mentoring program and subsequently with the Unity network, has really brought home to me that we all have a significant part to play in building a more diverse workplace. I believe that 90% of the culture of an organization comes from the attitudes and behaviors we display on a daily basis, and that has to start from the top. If we make a conscious effort to engage with people across the board, to listen to them and to give them opportunities, we will create high-performing teams."



## 7. Utilize social media and other technology, locally and globally

Because of the vast distances global companies span, strong communications channels across the enterprise are important for advancing LGBT+ diversity globally. For people in locations without local resources, having access to global resources – conference calls, webinars and social media – is important.

When getting started, post information centrally for ease and make sure access is anonymous. Many will watch before deciding to get involved. Consider the use of a bcc (blind copying) mailing list. It's helpful to have multiple levels of communication tailored to the target audience – by platform, topics, tone and confidentiality. This helps convey the messages “join us in any way you can” and “we can reach out to you”:

- ▶ Social media, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Yammer (an internal enterprise social networking tool), are good for sharing news about events such as pride rallies. Barclays has a One Million Stories campaign, where staff from around the world can go online and talk about themselves and their situation. Whether in the Philippines, Brazil or China, social media is the most effective channel for engaging younger cohorts.

- ▶ LGBT+-themed webcasts and video conferences that feature top-level executives can set an example for regional managers to model. News from the headquarters in London or Paris, or a webcast involving a global executive, can set an example for offices in China, for example. The US-based law firm Baker & McKenzie hosts a periodic network call and invites all staff to participate. Thomson Reuters has a strong global virtual network.
- ▶ Company intranets tend to be less active and are best used to archive articles, videos and other information resources.
- ▶ Informal and confidential channels – such as hotlines and ally networks – are valuable. Baker & McKenzie's Listening Ear program makes a team of individuals visible and available for confidential consultations concerning the firm and its culture.

Global D&I managers should give thought to their information distribution policy. Some companies do not publish LGBT+ news on global platforms and restrict distribution to countries that are considered “safe.” Other companies, such as Barclays, push their information out globally but calibrate the message and the language.

“

Business to business is considered passé;  
the new model is human to human.”

**Roland White**

Director of Global Diversity and Inclusion at Microsoft

# Nine

## ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice



## 8. Develop LGBT+ networks and unify globally

Many global companies have LGBT+ ERGs and networks in their hub communities. For a new network, consider initial off-site meetings to allow for open discussions and identifying any concerns or barriers. The next steps are to unite them into a global network with a focused mission and leadership, and to encourage the development of new ERGs and networks beyond the hubs. LGBT+ network access can be most valuable in places where LGBT+ D&I are least developed.

LGBT+ networks play many important roles:

- ▶ At the most basic level, networks help share news, information and leading practice.
- ▶ A global network brand also boosts visibility and strength. EY renamed its network “Unity” across the globe to convey solidarity, strength and cohesiveness and added the “A” to LGBT+ to convey openness to allies.
- ▶ Networks can help LGBT+ personnel who feel isolated to connect with peers, role models and allies. When closeted personnel engage with the network, they often gain the confidence to come out at work and in their private lives.
- ▶ An ERG and network can be very powerful for recruiting allies—many straight people want to demonstrate their support of their LGBT+ colleagues. Seeing that there is a large number of visible allies, in turn, can make closeted people feel more comfortable about coming out.
- ▶ Regional LGBT+ allies often need access to global resources so they can serve as a bridge to local LGBT+ personnel, especially those in the closet.
- ▶ Network members in partnership with their organization can connect and work with other companies on this shared journey.



- Networks enhance connection to the market and clients. They can strengthen existing and create new relationships, business opportunities and provide a source of industry information through intra-company events.

As ERGs and networks grow and evolve, they need to define their goals and build their leadership capacity. They should not just be a social group, but have a meaningful function in the organization, such as enhancing D&I globally and advancing LGBT+ personnel through the enterprise. These definitional tasks should not be undertaken by LGBT+ members in isolation.

Rather, the process needs to include participation of company management and assure that the network's mission is tied to the objectives and values of the wider enterprise.

Finally, LGBT+ networks should not be expected to fight LGBT+ inclusion battles around the world on their own. The whole organization needs to be behind them.

## Case study

### Building LGBT+ networks globally

EY has, historically, had LGBT+ networks that have grown organically in different locations across the world, including the UK, Ireland, America, Australia, Japan, Germany, South Africa, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. All of these networks operated organically, and many had different names. It was agreed that they wanted to develop a more consistent brand globally, so the first challenge was to agree on the one name.

This was done through a global campaign that invited network members and interested parties to submit suggestions. A total of 58 were received and then each network was asked to select their top 5 names. These were reviewed by an executive panel, and Unity was chosen. It was also decided to purposefully add the "A" to the LGBT+ moniker to make it explicit that allies are a key and integral part of the networks.

This approach is different to the way that most other organizations create global networks. Having a single global network is not practical for EY and, therefore, Unity's network of networks operate autonomously at a local level, but are able to share the same brand and ethos.

All of the networks now communicate more effectively using tools such as Yammer to share best practice and collaborate. Globally, if there is a requirement for all network heads to talk, this is also possible. This change has re-energized existing networks and, now, when a new chapter is set up, there is an immediately available support group that can offer advice and guidance.

# Nine

## ways to advance LGBT+ policy to practice

### 9. Measure, solicit input and celebrate success

While there is often much energy given to the programs, communications and activities of these efforts, it is important to also take care that the results are measured, shared with others and celebrated. What gets measured, gets done and what counts, gets counted. There are a number of ways this can occur, whether a company is in the early stages or further in their journey. When getting started it is best to;

- ▶ Identify two to three goals to measure, execute well and celebrate. While it is easy to identify a long list of things to do with many possibilities, focusing on just a few enables people to clarify goals and work together to facilitate their initial success.
- ▶ Try and solicit input through survey tools with employee satisfaction surveys or network membership surveys to benchmark employee engagement and member interests. This is a great way to involve members in identifying their needs, fresh ideas for making the most impact and who may help to lead efforts in which they are most interested. This input can also be used to identify goals and benchmarks.
- ▶ Evolve self-identification of LGBT+ employees in HR information systems for talent analysis and trending. Much

of the analysis that has been done to understand hiring, retention, promotion and exiting our workplaces for other diversity demographics, such as women, can also be leveraged to analyze LGBT+ D&I.

- ▶ Identify initial and ongoing benchmarks and targets – these can be connected to goals or even use measures external to the organization such as NGO rankings and ratings. There are many D&I and NGO surveys and recognitions that can help a company gauge how it is doing in comparison with other companies and identify gaps that can provide opportunities for improvement.
- ▶ Celebrate the successes – whether goals or milestones being met – to show progress and attract others to work with you – no matter how small or large the success. Even celebrating the little things, such as hosting your first meeting, can give visibility to the efforts.



## Longview Global Advisors

Longview Global Advisors is a consultancy that helps business leaders make sense of a complex world. Drawing on a global network of experts, the firm advises on global trends and the complex connections between business, politics and society. The firm works in a range of settings from strategic planning to issues monitoring and management, stakeholder relations, thought leadership and executive positioning.

## Bailey Balfour

Bailey Balfour is a consultancy that offers organizational consulting and executive coaching. Successful organizations embrace a people-centered approach to change and development and, at Bailey Balfour, we believe that relationships are central to healthy organizational life. By assessing and enhancing the connections with your company, we provide change management, facilitation and team development services that will help your organization maximize its potential.

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