Unintentional Exclusion: Illuminate Your ERG’s Blind Spots

Workshop at Out & Equal Workplace Summit 2018 by Air Products

These are the Inclusion Ideas we brainstormed during the workshop on how to make our ERGs and organizations more inclusive of less visible portions of the LGBTQA+ community including Bi, Pan, Asexual, Trans, Non-binary, Questioning, Unlabeled...

**Bi/Pan and Asexual Inclusion Ideas**

* Celebrate Bisexual Visibility Day (September 23)
  + Have panel, roundtable discussions
  + Hold Events for Parents
* ERG can talk about the lack of Bi/Pan voices in ERG and signal that their voices will be appreciated
* Set up ERG Bi/Pan Sub-committee (formal or informal) and regularly ask them for their input and whether they feel included or excluded
* If ERG has no Bi/Pan members, then designate a Bi/Pan “representative” whose job is to educate the ERG and always represent that community until it gets Bi/Pan members to represent themselves
* Don’t wait until ERG has Bi/Pan members – do programming first to create a space that will feel welcoming
* Be specific and intentional about which orientation/gender identity is discussed – don’t lump everything into “gay” because this makes Bi, Pan, asexual, nonbinary, trans feel excluded
  + Intentionally include Aromantic and Asexual on ERG websites, in mission statements, everywhere so they know they are valid and welcome

**Trans Inclusion Ideas**

* Celebrate Transgender Day of Remembrance – November 20
* Get input from Trans members of ERG
* Don’t focus too much on transition – trans people are who they are and physical transition is a short time period overall
* Include Nonbinary
* ERG should advocate for gender neutral bathrooms which serve all genders (include menstrual products, urinals)
* Include preferred pronouns on every email and communication for awareness
* Don’t make assumptions about who is in the room
* Ensure there are Gender Transition Guidelines and advertise them
* ERG can encourage establishment of inclusive language guidelines for the company

**Closeted/Questioning**

* Promote NCOD as much as Pride
  + LGBTQ 101 training on terms, definitions, the spectrum, fluidity
  + Show movie and breakout sessions with popcorn ie *Love, Simon*
  + Share stories
* Make it clear that attendees do not have to identify at ERG meetings, it is not part of the format, meeting agenda or expectation. Have visible non-LGBT allies so people won’t feel they will be identified as LGBTQ+ when attending
* Make sure that sign-ups for the ERG do not require identification as LGBT/ally
* Anonymous Surveys – this was successful at one company which found 40% of members were willing to share their story anonymously about why they don’t come out at work
* Model behaviors – have pictures of family and friends on desk
* Challenge your assumptions that everyone must be out and visible – not everyone is comfortable being the “token”
* Talk about safe workplaces without labels

**Queer/Unlabeled**

* Learn about why some people feel constrained by labels and prefer unlabeled
  + Have listening sessions with younger employees
  + Watch videos as a group on Queer and unlabeled and discuss

**General Bi/Pan/Trans/Queer/nonbinary/A Inclusion Ideas**

* Rename ERG if the name is excluding member of LGBTQA+. Make sure to discuss with many opinions considered, across multiple regions if applicable.
* Have an ERG mission statement that makes inclusiveness a top priority – to the whole LGBTQA+ community. Explicitly include Bi, Pan, Asexual, Trans, Nonbinary, Questioning, Unlabeled, Queer
* During Employee onboarding openly explain all letters of LGBTQA+
  + Have D&I landing page with photos and stories and contacts
* Ally Stories – share their “coming out” stories
* Hold events outside work for LGBTQA+ and Allies – sometimes you get more participation and different audience
* Intersectional Mentoring – across ERGs
* Optional self-id can help with checking inclusiveness
  + Need to separate sexual orientation from gender identity
  + Ensure nonbinary is included
  + Don’t use term “other”, use “something else” or another term
* Have a “Lunch & Learn” and replicate this Unintentional Exclusion activity/workshop
* Encourage “Site Champions” for ERG. Local leaders for chapters are critical to success of ERG network beyond one site.