

GUIDE

5 Ways Recruiters Can Be an LGBTQ+ Career Ally



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What makes a great recruiter? There are many styles and personalities out there suitable for every jobseeker. Recruiters should always act as advocates for professionals trying to advance their careers, but for members of the LGBTQ+ community recruiters can play an even more essential role – being a career ally. ▶



Why do LGBTQ+ professionals need career allies?

While great progress has been made for LGBTQ+ rights in recent years, the office is not always the most welcoming space. Too often, LGBTQ+ employees might find themselves overhearing a prejudiced joke or face discrimination when they are 'read' or 'clocked'. In 2018, [Catalyst](#) reported that 53% of LGBTQ+ employees heard lesbian and gay jokes at work, 37% heard bisexual jokes, and 41% heard transgender jokes.

Subsequently, LGBTQ+ employees often feel as though

they need to be discrete about their sexuality, personal relationships, or change the way they present themselves and speak. In the case of transgender professionals, this could also involve the pressure to 'pass' by being perceived as the gender they wish to present as. No wonder that almost half of LGBTQ+ workers in the United States are [closeted in the workplace](#); leading to exhaustion from spending time and energy concealing their sexual orientation or identity.

How can recruiters help?

Recruiters are expert mediators. Their role depends on understanding the needs of employers and potential candidates and matching those who align effectively. They also reduce the emotional labor of job seeking – that is, when a professional has invested time and effort in the recruitment process for a company that, in return, does not see a future with them. For LGBTQ+ professionals, this cycle of investment and rejection can be felt particularly

keenly. Whether real or imagine, they can fear their application was unsuccessful because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Throughout the job seeking process, recruiters can help LGBTQ+ professionals navigate a complex job market to advance their careers. Recruiters can be an LGBTQ+ ally by: ►



Informing employers about the benefits of diversity

Recruiters can help employers understand the tangible benefits of diversity; which has a stronger business case than ever. Research by **Catalyst** shows that diverse teams report higher scores of organisational excellence and increased productivity.

While **McKinsey** reports that companies that employ a diverse workforce having 35 percent higher financial returns than national averages.

Diversity does not just include women and people from diverse racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds; diversity also includes hiring LGBTQ+ employees. Employers

who see diversity as a box-checking exercise will not reap the benefits of diversity however; LGBTQ+ employees need to feel welcomed and included in the workplace.

According to a survey conducted by the **Williams Institute**, LGBTQ+ employees who feel the need to hide their identity in the workplace often feel greater levels of stress and anxiety causing health issues and work-related complaints.

By nurturing a LGBTQ+-friendly workplace, companies can reduce stress and improve the health of LGBTQ+ employees – reducing absenteeism while boosting job

satisfaction and productivity. Employers can also benefit from lower legal costs related to discrimination lawsuits – a study by **OUT NOW Consulting** found that the U.S. economy could save \$9 billion annually if organizations were more effective diversity and inclusion practices for LGBTQ+ employees.

With a unique understanding of how multiple organizations in differing industries operate, recruiters can also share best practices to help employers create a more effective talent acquisition strategy that attracts, retains and motivates LGBTQ+ talent. ►

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Championing LGBTQ+-friendly organizations

It can be hard to truly know a company's culture until you are part of it. A company may present certain values publicly, but may not be committing to do the work behind the scenes. Of course, this is partly due to the influence of individuals – while an organization's leaders may have an agreed to create a safe, accepting and respectful workplace for LGBTQ+ employees, regional offices or departments may not follow their guidance.

Recruiters know the real deal. From conversations with hundreds of job seekers moving from and to an organization, they get a holistic overview of an employer's cultural values, practices and policies, and those of individual departments and teams. These discussions form part of a record that recruiters can share with LGBTQ+ job seekers to help them make an informed choice about the next steps in their career.

Across different industries, countries and states, recruiters can champion the best places to work for LGBTQ+ equality. In turn, this can encourage other employers to step up their game – after all, companies that prioritise diversity are the most attractive to employees from all backgrounds. 67% of active and passive job seekers say the a diverse workforce is an important factor when evaluating companies and job offers. ▶

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Sharing best practices to eliminate recruitment bias

Recruiters are experts in their field. They can help shape a company's recruitment and hiring practices to reduce bias. For attracting LGBTQ+ candidates, something as simple as checking job descriptions for biased language, sharing a company's values, or encouraging applications from diverse applicants can help. For LGBTQ+ job seekers, recruiters can support a successful application by:

- **Blinding resumes in the review process**
Recruiters can strip a resume or application of any personal details. This helps an employer evaluate people on their skills and experience rather than their background or interests.
- **Encouraging validated pre-employment testing**
Pre-employment testing, such as work samples, predict job success. It's vital that these tests are themselves analysed for bias, which involves validating the conclusions made based on test results, that different groups of people who take the test will have similar results, and that the results are consistent.
- **Encouraging a diverse interview panel and hiring committee**
Diverse hiring panels systemically reduces unconscious bias and improved candidate performance. Homogenous groups are more likely to hire candidates they have an affinity for. Having a diverse set of perspectives ensures an LGBTQ+ candidate is assessed fairly.
- **Challenging bias in recruitment and hiring decisions**
As career allies, recruiters can question a hiring manager's candidate shortlists and final hiring decision if they feel bias has crept in. Often biases are completely unconscious and create unfair assumptions about a candidate's ability to perform a role. Recruiter can persuade employers to rethink if they are truly evaluating an LGBTQ+ candidate on their merit and reconsider their decision if not. ▶

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Asking the awkward questions about company culture

Coming out is not something you do once. It's an ongoing part of life. For LGBTQ+ job seekers, this may not be something they want to share early on in the recruitment process. This may be due to fear of reprisal or simply awkwardness. After all, straight or cisgender people do not feel the need to disclose their sexual orientation or gender. In fact, talking about sexual attraction would be an oddly unprofessional choice in most circumstances.

During the interview process, candidates do not always feel comfortable asking questions at the best of times – the pressure is on to perform and to share accomplishments about their professional, not personal, life.

A recruiter can ask the more awkward questions up front, as well as disclose the candidate's sexual orientation or gender identity (with their consent) on their behalf. This also ensures all parties are aligned and relieves pressure for the candidate of when or if they should 'out' themselves – enabling them to present their authentic selves in the recruitment process and give their best performance.

Recruiters can be a career ally by asking vital questions about a company values and policies, such as:

- **Non-discrimination policies:** are employees encouraged to report discrimination or harassment at work and is

it easy for them to do so?

- **Employment benefits:** do benefits include non-conventional families or medical care for transgender employees?
- **Supporting an inclusive culture:** are employee events, support networks, and engagement programmes deliberately inclusive? Are there many 'out' employees, particularly in leadership positions?
- **Public commitment to LGBTQ+ equality:** does the company support philanthropic work to advance the rights of the LGBTQ+ community? ►

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Be a whistle blower if necessary

1 out of 5 Americans have faced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity during their job hunt, according to Catalyst. Recruiters have a role to play by having a zero-tolerance towards discrimination in the workplace or hiring bias.

On a day-to-day basis, this could come in challenging perceived bias in a hiring manager's comments or decisions about

a candidate – recruiters can question why they have made that decision. Hiring for cultural fit can often be a code word for affinity bias. That is, having a preference for a candidate because they remind the interviewer of themselves or share similar traits. As discussed, biases are often unconscious, so having a third party question the reason for turning down a candidate can help.

If necessary, recruiters can report on bad actors to an employer's senior leadership team or HR team. For example, if a candidate feels they were harassed or bullied during the interview process that is a serious allegation that needs to be investigated. Bad candidate experiences are costly at the best of times, so both job seekers and companies benefit from feedback about the recruitment process and should encourage it. ►

Conclusion

While the recent Supreme Court ruling has affirmed the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans in the workplace under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, attitudes will not change overnight and gaps remain. For instance, the federal law doesn't protect those who work at businesses with fewer than 15 workers, and employee benefits may not extend to medical care for transgender people or include LGBTQ+ families.

Recruiters play an essential role in helping advancing LGBTQ+ rights in the workplace. That starts with championing LGBTQ+ job seekers to employers while protecting them from discrimination in the recruitment process. If you are looking for a career ally whose confidence you can depend on, get in touch with LVI Associates today. We are all in this together.

About us

LVI Associates is the leading specialist recruitment agency for the infrastructure sector. We were founded to give professionals peace of mind that the recruitment journey is in expert hands. Our continual investment in best-in-class technologies and consultant training enables us to match candidates and world-leading companies with speed, precision and accuracy. Today, we provide permanent, contract and multi-hire recruitment from our global hubs all over the world.

We pride ourselves in keeping our professional network up-to-date with any changes that will shape the future of work or employment. Visit our website to discover more invaluable insights, including exclusive research, salary guides and market trends.

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