



UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO Career Development Center

GAY AT WORK

“Workplace equality is improving, but some employees, unfortunately, still face discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity... Of course, from a job seeker’s perspective, there are many good reasons to seek out employers with diverse workforces... But the most important one is the way the employees are treated... Everyone should feel like their workplace is a safe space.”

- Lily Martis, Monster Jobs

“Some LGBTQ employees are completely closeted at work and fully out at home... For them, everyday is a demanding, energy-draining balancing act... Still others are fully out in all facets of their lives... Their experiences range from joyful to miserable... For some being out at work has been easy... For others, coming out on the job remains the most frightening thing they have ever done.”

-Dan Woog, Book, Gay Men Straight Jobs

“The workplace is full of mixed messages for LGBTQ people... Studies tell us that openness at work is a good thing, but outing oneself on a résumé could jeopardize getting an interview... Companies have LGBTQ recruiting and outreach, but there is a shortage of out people at the top tier of companies.”

-Kyle Knight & Todd Sears, Huffington Post

LGBTQ CAREER SUCCESS STORIES

Despite the “Lavender Ceiling” (Discrimination and oppression against LGBTQ people in the workplace that impedes their professional advancement and career success) and the “Glass Closet” (Organizational culture and policies that cause LGBTQ managers and executives who hide their sexuality for fear it will impede their professional advancement and career success), there are a significant number of examples of LGBTQ career success stories...

John Browne - CEO of BP Oil

Tim Cook - CEO of Apple Computers

Alan Joyce - CEO of Qantas Airlines

Rachel Maddow - MSNBC

Elton John - Pop Music Star

Anderson Cooper - CNN

Duvall Patrick - Governor (Mass)

Caitlyn Jenner - Olympic Runner

James Baldwin - Author

Don Lemon - CNN

Chely Wright - Country Music Star

Robert Hanson - CEO of American Eagle Outfitters

Joseph Evangelisti - CEO of JP Morgan Chase

Peter Thiel - Co-Founder of PayPal

Michael Sam - NFL Football Player

Billie Jean King - Tennis Player

Jim Parsons - Actor

Cole Porter - Composer

Christian Dior - Fashion Designer

Neil Patrick Harris - Actor

Alan Turing - Mathematician

Ricky Martin - Pop Music Star

Wanda Sykes - Comedian

BD Wong - Actor

Janet Mock - People Magazine

Robin Roberts - Good Morning America

Jim McGreevy - New Jersey Governor

Greg Louganis - Olympic Swimmer

Tammy Baldwin - US Senator (Wis)

David Rae - Financial Expert

Gene Robinson - Episcopal Bishop

Louis Vega - Senior Executive at Dow Chemical

Alex Schultz - VP of Facebook

Inga Beale - CEO of Lloyd’s of London

Annie Leibovitz - Photographer

Tennessee Williams - Playwright

Truman Capote - Writer

Giorgio Armani - Fashion Designer

Suze Orman - Financial Expert

Jason Collins - NBA Basketball Player

Sally Ride - Astronaut

Shepard Smith - FOX News

Antonio Simoes - CEO of HSBC Bank

Claudia Brind-Woody - VP at IBM

Beth Brooke-Marciniak - VP at Ernst & Young

Beth Ford - CEO of Land O’ Lakes

Martina Navratilova - Tennis Player

Ellen DeGeneres - Television Star

Patricia Todd - Alabama Legislator

Tammy Smith - Army General

LEGAL PROTECTION

In 2015, the US Supreme Court determined in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that same-sex couples have a Constitutional right to marry nationwide... With that ruling, businesses must provide marital benefits to an employee's same-sex spouse as marital benefits (not a different system of coverage).

Federal laws offer protections from workplace discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, and disability... but do not offer these same protections on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Some states have passed laws to establish workplace protections for LGBTQ employees... but only 22 states explicitly provide workplace protections on the basis of sexual orientation... and 20 on the basis of gender identity.

Despite this patchwork of state laws and federal guidance... private sector employers have far outpaced lawmakers in the implementation of fully inclusive non-discrimination policies.

BEST AND WORST STATES

LGBTQ Most Friendly States

Based on percent of companies receiving high marks for LGBTQ equality

- 1 Maryland
- 2 Massachusetts
- 3 Nevada
- 4 Minnesota
- 5 New York
- 6 Washington
- 7 Illinois
- 8 California
- 9 Connecticut
- 10 Kentucky

LGBTQ Least Friendly States

based on percent of companies receiving low marks for LGBTQ equality

- 41 Pennsylvania
- 42 Florida
- 43 Virginia
- 44 Missouri
- 45 Nebraska
- 46 Texas
- 47 Tennessee
- 48 Arkansas
- 49 Arizona
- 50 Colorado

CAREER PLANNING & LGBTQ COLLEGE STUDENTS

As a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer student preparing for entry into the workforce, you may find yourself faced with additional career planning challenges related to your sexual orientation. For the most part, university life has been a supportive environment, with a wonderful LGBTQ resource center, an active LGBTQ student group, lots of LGBTQ-related activities and events, and university-backed non-discrimination policies. The workplace can be quite different, in terms of the openness of and support for LGBTQ employees.

HOW OUT DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Coming out is a personal decision. It is up to you to determine how important it is to be out and under what circumstances. For many people, their sexual orientation is such an integral part of their identity that to remain closeted in the workplace would seem false. Others, however, might prefer to maintain separation between their personal and professional lives, only sharing information about their orientation with close friends. Hiding one's identity could lead to feelings of lowered self-esteem and frustration at leading a dual life; being openly gay could lead to discrimination, harassment, or even the loss of one's job. There is no "right" answer.

What has been your level of involvement within LGBT activities and the community? Are most of your friends, peers and support networks LGBT-connected? If you have a partner, is he or she out in most situations? The strength of your identification and level of past commitment to the LGBT community may be a deciding factor in whether or not to come out in the workplace and how visible to be. Your attitudes about this are likely to change throughout your lifetime. Each time you change jobs, in fact, you will likely re-evaluate your feelings about being out.

Many people believe that the only way to gain widespread acceptance is to be out and visible, whereas others prefer to express their political beliefs in a less direct, more personal manner. The bottom line is that for now you must decide what is best for you.

RESEARCHING ORGANIZATION POLICIES AND CLIMATES

The industry to which you are applying for jobs might be more or less accepting of LGBT employees than others, although you should not generalize prior to researching a specific organization. Prior to the interview, you should try to research an organization's official

policies and resources. Use printed and on-line resources (HRC, PFLAG, ALGBTIC) to look up organizations' LGBT employee groups, non-discrimination policies, and domestic partnership benefits. Contact the employee group and talk to current staff about the organizational climate, which goes beyond the formal policies. What is it really like to work there?

If your job search takes you to unfamiliar geographic regions, try to find out if the future work site is located in a state, county, city or community that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (which sets a general tone of acceptance, or at least tolerance). There might be regional or municipal workplace groups for LGBT individuals, even if there may not be one for a particular organization; these types of associations are invaluable for networking. In the absence of employee groups, contact bookstores, gay-owned businesses, and the like, to learn more about the region you are targeting. Take advantage of the LGBT networks that are widely accessible through Gay Yellow Pages, online, and so forth. You may also try to identify LGBT alumni who are willing to provide advice and information to current students.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I INCLUDE ON MY RESUME?

Should LGBT-related activities be included on the resume? Consider your audience and determine ahead of time how out you want to be. If you are applying for a "gay" job (Lobbyist for NGLTF, Researcher for HRC), then the LGBT experiences can be an obvious advantage. But what about other types of jobs? The skills you developed as a result of participation in LGBT organizations are likely to be of interest to many employers, although the organizations in which you participated may be viewed with less enthusiasm by some. To help evaluate the policies and climates of various organizations and industries, conduct a bit of research prior to writing your resume.

As with any potentially controversial group affiliation, such as political or religious activities, you will want to weigh the pros and cons of including such information. One strategy is to simply omit any reference to LGBT organizations or activities. Some recruiters, even gay ones, have said that such information can be extraneous, especially if social activities are summarized rather than skills and achievements. If you do choose to include LGBT-related information on your resume, be certain to put the emphasis on accomplishments that are relevant to employers. Highlight leadership, budgeting, event planning, public speaking and organizational skills. While highlighting skills, you might "downplay" the nature of the organization in which you developed those skills. One option is to use an acronym rather than spelling it out, but be prepared during an interview to explain what the acronym stands for. Another approach is to list the organization as an "Anti-Discrimination Organization" or "Diversity Group," and then document your accomplishments from this experience.

Another strategy is the use of a "functional" resume, one that groups accomplishments in student organizations together according to functions/skills rather than by organization name. An example of this would be to list things you do well such as money management, fundraising, and bookkeeping under a heading of "Business Skills." This provides a way to highlight leadership, planning, teamwork, and other skills, while de-emphasizing where you developed them. Regardless of which strategy you utilize on the resume, you will still need to be prepared for questions during an interview.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I REVEAL IN MY INTERVIEW?

As with writing a resume, you should think ahead of time about how out you are ultimately willing to be during the interview process. Preparing for interviews is critical. If you have not yet researched the firm, you should do so before walking into the interview. Once you have information about an organization's policies and climate, you have additional information to help make the decision about whether or not to come out during the interview. Because an interview is a process of evaluating you, and because you rarely know the attitudes of an interviewer ahead of time, you do run the risk of encountering someone whom might evaluate you negatively (consciously or unconsciously), regardless of company policies.

Depending on the strategies you have used to present LGBT-related activities on your resume, you might have already given the interviewer some indications that you are bisexual, gay, or lesbian. If that is the case, you should be prepared to talk about how your experiences have developed desirable leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills. You do not want to be caught off guard, appearing unprepared or even embarrassed about your background. An interviewer might ask, "I see you were president of the Allies Student Group for two years. Can you tell me what kind of organization it is?" If you have decided to be out, you can respond with a simple description. If you have chosen not to come out yet, you may want to refer to it as an anti-discrimination organization and then focus on the achievements as a result of your work.

If you have excluded "gay-related" experiences from your resume, then you might not even mention them during the interview; your focus could be mainly on those experiences already highlighted. Many people decide to wait to come out until after receiving a job offer, when candidates have more leverage, or until after starting a new job, where people can come out to coworkers on their own terms.

You could "test the waters" with an interviewer by asking about the organization's diversity initiatives. Does the recruiter's reply include mention of issues pertaining to sexual orientation? To be more direct, you might ask, "Can you tell me more about diversity in the workplace and related policies, as they might deal with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and the like?" These should not be your first questions during an interview. Focus on the job and your capabilities first. Make the company want to hire you. After you have convinced them you are the right one for the job, then make inquiries about policies regarding LGBT issues.

COMING OUT ON THE JOB

Coming out to a potential supervisor and coworkers might seem even more intimidating than coming out during the interview process; after all, you will have to spend a majority of your time with your coworkers. Look for clues around the office. Do you see any same-gender pictures or information on employee bulletin boards that might hint at the office culture? Is the work group diverse in other ways? Will you be working with lots of other twenty-something employees? In general, "younger" organizations tend to be more comfortable with diversity. In addition, even though it is hard to generalize, certain industries (many software companies) and certain geographic locations (San Francisco, Seattle) are known for being gay-friendly.

In general, it may be best at first to focus on the job, learning more about expectations for your performance, and establishing yourself as a professional. Many people believe that when you are coming out to anyone, in any situation, you should just use your best judgment and comfort level. You might prefer people get to know you first, with the coming out process evolving more from day to day interactions and discussions. The question, "So, what did you do this weekend?" might become easier to answer once you have already established some friendships.

Although some coworkers may choose to avoid your company in more social situations, the majority will simply accept you for the value of your work and your contributions. Again, the bottom line is that you must decide what will be most comfortable to you.

LGBTQ FRIENDLY COMPANIES

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) issues its annual Corporate Equality Index to inform the general public about the level of LGBTQ support they can expect from the Fortune 500 companies. Based on their rating system, here are some of the companies that earned a perfect score:

Wal-Mart	JC Penney	Toyota
Chevron	McDonald's	General Mills
Starbucks	Hasbro	Barnes & Noble Bookstore
Apple Computers	Accenture	Anheuser-Busch
General Motors	Ernst & Young	Google
Macy's	Nike	Levi Strauss
Coca-Cola	Dow Chemical	Mattel
Goldman Sachs	Deloitte	Nationwide
American Airlines	Marriott	Ford Motor Company
CVS Health	Johnson & Johnson	Delta Airlines
Toys R Us	UPS	IBM
Hershey	Campbell's Soup	Hewlett Packard
AT&T	Pepsico	Shell Oil
Verizon Communications	Walt Disney	Boeing
Nestle Purina	Hyundai	Colgate Palmolive
Proctor & Gamble	New York Life	MetLife
Sony	General Electric	Glaxo Smith Kline
Wells Fargo	Morgan Stanley	Hallmark Cards
Time Warner	Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream	Netflix
Home Depot	American Eagle Outfitters	United Airlines

COMING OUT AT WORK

How can I come out at work in a way that honors my individuality and works well within my current organization?

Coming out at work does not necessarily mean that you should walk into a staff meeting tomorrow and make an announcement. While making an announcement or even being outed may seem like efficient options, many people have experienced the benefits of working more authentically when they developed a plan with action steps for coming out. It requires planning and persistence, but the result is usually a more effective approach that can enhance your professional development. Like working out at a gym to look good and feel good, merely showing up isn't enough. Coming out at work may always involve some risk, but you will minimize the potential for an adverse reaction if you consider these steps:

Assess your readiness -- How prepared do you feel to come out at work? It's important that you consider your own level of readiness. If you'd love to bring more of yourself to work, but the very thought of coming out paralyzes you, you may need to spend more time coming out to friends and/or family first. Or, if you're nervous because you don't know how to do it, then the steps listed here may help to get you started. It's your journey so no one can assess your readiness better than you can.

Perform at your best -- Make sure that your performance on the job is solid and that your most recent performance evaluation indicated that you are meeting the requirements of your position. Ideally, it is best to be performing at an above average level, since so many employers today expect more than merely doing your job. If you are not sure about performance expectations and/or evaluations at your organization, then establish goals with your manager and ask for periodic feedback. Coming out without a strong track record can make you feel too vulnerable at work.

Gather supporters -- Who can support you through the process of coming out? This would be a good time to talk with friends and loved ones about your decision and ask for their support. Choose your supporters wisely so that they can be confident with you, not nervous for you. Seeking support from affirming colleagues is also often one of the best ways to avoid going it alone.

Choose a strategy -- How out do you want to be? Some people choose to come out initially only to selected colleagues or just to their manager. Others seek to be out to everybody. You could just start responding more honestly to questions from colleagues about your personal life, or you could take a more proactive approach by informing all of your immediate coworkers. The choice is yours, of course, but many people find it easier to start small.

Conduct a trial run -- Find someone you trust within your organization and try a pilot conversation. The person you choose could be a mentor, human resources representative, gay colleague, or a member of a GLBT employee resource group, if your organization has one. In "Straight Jobs Gay Lives," Annette Friskopp and Sharon Silverstein suggest that many others who have sought to come out at work have found a way to "test the waters." So, you might try coming out first to someone you feel safe with at work to "practice" and get some feedback from him or her on your approach.

Consider the timing -- Survey your work environment to determine if the timing of your "news" will be received fully. In other words, don't choose the busiest time of year or the day after the close of an unprofitable quarter. Timing is not everything, but attention to the question of timing will allow you to set yourself up for success. Remember though that there is no such thing as the perfect time, just the first time.

Finally, a word about expectations. If you hope for the best but do not expect a specific reaction, you will probably be better positioned to respond to whatever happens. People often remark that they were not surprised or that they knew all along. Whether you receive affirmation or silence, it is best not to look to your coworkers or manager for the acceptance that you may never have granted to yourself. So, remember that you are providing important information about you, and that this is potentially an opportunity to educate someone who may never have met someone who is GLBT (that they know of!) One point is clear: They certainly have never met anyone just like you, and now they have the opportunity to know you more fully.

JOB MARKET QUICK TIPS

How out do I want to be?

Does your work life and your personal life overlap or are they separate? Does being out at work make you feel more authentic? Does being closeted impact your energy, self-esteem, or motivation?

How much should I include on my resume?

Resumes are about qualifications, technical requirements, experience, and knowledge. Consider your audience and what is relevant to your reader. Highlight functions, skills, accomplishments. Be generic when necessary.

How much should I reveal in my interview?

Interviews are about personality, attitude, disposition, and fit. Highlight your work ethic, positive attitude, and willingness to work with others. Align with the culture of the organization. Display good etiquette and protocol.

How do I avoid discrimination?

Focus on your qualifications and work performance. Do not lead with your sexual identity. First priority should be your dedication to the job and its requirements. Prove yourself as a valued employee first.

How do I find an LGBTQ friendly employer?

Research regions, states, cities, industries, and companies regarding policies and climate. Check reports from HRC, PFLAG, ALGBTIC, and Gay Yellow Pages. Observe companies' advertisements, sponsorships, and community involvement.

EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

Message From President Barack Obama (November 2013): Congress Needs to Pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Here in the United States, we're united by a fundamental principle: we're all created equal and every single American deserves to be treated equally in the eyes of the law. We believe that no matter who you are, if you work hard and play by the rules, you deserve the chance to follow your dreams and pursue your happiness. That's America's promise.

That's why, for instance, Americans can't be fired from their jobs just because of the color of their skin or for being Christian or Jewish or a woman or an individual with a disability. That kind of discrimination has no place in our nation. And yet, right now, in many states a person can be fired simply for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. As a result, millions of LGBTQ Americans go to work every day fearing that, without any warning, they could lose their jobs -- not because of anything they've done, but simply because of who they are. It's offensive. It's wrong. And it needs to stop, because in the United States of America, who you are and who you love should never be a fireable offense.

That's why Congress needs to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, also known as ENDA, which would provide strong federal protections against discrimination, making it explicitly illegal to fire someone because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This bill has strong bipartisan support and the support of a vast majority of Americans. It ought to be the law of the land. Americans ought to be judged by one thing only in their workplaces: their ability to get their jobs done. Does it make a difference if the firefighter who rescues you is gay -- or the accountant who does your taxes, or the mechanic who fixes your car? If someone works hard every day, does everything he or she is asked, is responsible and trustworthy and a good colleague, that's all that should matter.

Business agrees. The majority of Fortune 500 companies and small businesses already have nondiscrimination policies that protect LGBTQ employees. These companies know that it's both the right thing to do and makes good economic sense. They want to attract and retain the best workers, and discrimination makes it harder to do that. So too with our nation. If we want to create more jobs and economic growth and keep our country competitive in the global economy, we need everyone working hard, contributing their ideas, and putting their abilities to use doing what they do best. We need to harness the creativity and talents of every American.

America is at a turning point. We're not only becoming more accepting and loving as a people, we're becoming more just as a nation. But we still have a way to go before our laws are equal to our Founding ideals. As I said in my second inaugural address, our nation's journey toward equality isn't complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law, for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. In America of all places, people should be judged on the merits: on the contributions they make in their workplaces and communities, and on what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the content of their character." That's what ENDA helps us do.

RELEVANT LINKS:

<http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index>
<https://www.cwu.edu/career/coming-out-work>
<https://www.glaad.org/blog/value-lgbt-equality-workplace>
<https://www.velvetjobs.com/articles/insights/lgbt-career-resources>
<https://www.queercafe.net>

RELEVANT BOOKS:

Out In The Workplace by Richard A. Rasi & Lourdes Rodriquez-Nogues
Gay Issues in the Workplace by Brian McNaught
Lavender Road to Success: Career Guide for the Gay Community by Kirk Snyder
The Gay Yellow Pages: The National Edition
Straight Jobs, Gay Lives by Annette Friskopp & Sharon Silverstein
100 Best Companies for Gay Men and Lesbians by Ed Mickens
Lesbian Lifestyles: Women's Work and the Politics of Sexuality by Gillian Dunne
Acts of Disclosure: Coming out Process of Contemporary Gay Men by Marc Vargo
Straight Talk About Gays in the Workplace by Liz Winfeld
Pleasures and Perils of Coming Out on the Job by Richard Rasi
The G Quotient by Kirk Snyder
Your Career Career: Ultimate Career Guide for LGBTQ Job Seekers by Riley B. Folds III
Transgender Workplace Diversity by Jillian Weiss