

Including LGBTQ+ employees in hybrid and remote work

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Introduction

Hybrid and remote work (HRW) have transformed the way organisations operate, offering increased flexibility and access to new ways of working. However, this shift has also brought new challenges in ensuring inclusive and equitable workplaces, particularly for lesbian, gay, bi, trans or queer (LGBTQ+) employees. While physical distance can remove some of the daily barriers faced in office environments, it can also obscure visibility, limit social connection, and reduce opportunities for expression and support.

Hence, it is important to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion remains a priority in hybrid and remote settings.

What are the challenges of LGBTQ+ inclusion in HRW?

Hybrid and remote work can unintentionally exacerbate existing inequalities and introduce new barriers for LGBTQ+ employees. Key challenges include:

Fewer opportunities to come out

In remote settings, casual conversations and social cues that help build trust and identity are reduced. Employees who may have chosen to be out in a physical workplace might not feel the same level of comfort or safety online, leading to a sense of invisibility.

Video calls and privacy concerns

For LGBTQ+ employees who are not out at work, participating in video meetings can feel intrusive or risky. For example, they may be anxious about colleagues seeing their same-sex partner in the background or other family interactions.

Risk of isolation and unsafe environments

Remote work can increase social isolation for LGBTQ+ employees, particularly if they lack a supportive network outside of work. For some, home may not be a safe space to express their identity, leading to heightened stress and a reduced sense of belonging.

Reduced visibility of allies and role models

Without shared physical spaces, the informal presence of allies and visible role models becomes less tangible. This can weaken the sense of solidarity and support that LGBTQ+ employees may have previously relied on in the workplace.

Best practices

Internal communication

One of the key issues of LGBTQ+ inclusion in HRW is the decreased visibility of LGBTQ+ employees and allies. By regularly communicating on LGBTQ+ topics, initiatives or news, employers can facilitate discussions among employees and mitigate this visibility loss.

Pronouns sharing

Encouraging employees to include their pronouns in email signatures, user profiles, and when introducing themselves during meetings promotes an inclusive culture. This simple act normalises gender diversity and creates a safer environment for trans, non-binary and gender-diverse employees. Managers and senior leaders should lead by example to embed this practice across teams.

Using virtual background

Virtual backgrounds can protect employees' private life by preventing colleagues to see into their home during virtual meetings. They can also convey supportive messages, remind of the company's inclusion policy and help celebrate pride events.

The roles of HR and managers

Managers



- Lead by example and promote inclusive policies by making sure your team is aware of them and attend related events
- Support employees' initiatives (communication, creation of an ERG...) by allocating time and resources when possible
- Promote role models and allyship to ensure the topic of inclusion is everybody's responsibility

Human resources



- Conduct a situational analysis: analyse complaints on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, use anonymous surveys or create focus groups to gather information on LGBT+ employee's experiences at work
- Formalise the company's commitment to LGBT+ inclusion and appoint executive sponsors to carry it out
- Ensure that company processes are inclusive of LGBT+ employees, whether it be recruitment, career management or mobility



Further Reading

- [Santos, Ronnie de Souza, et al. Benefits and Limitations of Remote Work to LGBTQIA+ Software Professionals. 2023,
https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2301.05379](https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2301.05379)
- [Out Now, LGBT+ WFH: Effective inclusion strategies for remote working, 2021
https://www.outnowconsulting.com/media/56542/lgbtwfh-report-final.pdf](https://www.outnowconsulting.com/media/56542/lgbtwfh-report-final.pdf)
- [AFMD, LGBT+ inclusion in the workplace: A matter of equality, a matter of opportunity, 2022
https://www.afmd.fr/kit-dinclusion-lgbt-au-travail-version-anglaise](https://www.afmd.fr/kit-dinclusion-lgbt-au-travail-version-anglaise)