EMPOWER AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE THROUGH PRIDE AND BEYOND



June is Pride Month, the annual, global event that recognizes and celebrates the historical impacts of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ+) communities. As many businesses evolve their planning for where and how their people work, it's a good time to check in and see how they're doing in creating a more equitable life for their LGBTQ+ workforce.

LGBTQ+ at work

In the business world, ensuring equity for LGBTQ+ workers is an important part of an organization's overall diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)'s annual Corporate Equality Index (CEI), Fortune 500 companies and CEI-rated companies are actively working to approach parity, and many are succeeding. We're proud that BMC scored 95 out of 100 on the 2022 Index for our efforts in this space.

The 2022 CEI found that 93 percent of Fortune 500 companies include sexual orientation and 91 percent include gender identity in their formal nondiscrimination policies (down from 96 and 94 percent in 2021), and that rises to 100 percent for both categories among CEI-rated employers. Fifty-six percent of the Fortune 500 offer benefits to domestic partners, regardless of how they identify their sex and gender, with 66 percent including transgender benefits (down from 57 and 71 percent);

for CEI-rated employers, it's 74 and 88 percent (down from 75 and 93) percent.

And the 500+ US business leaders—employing over 15.4 million in the US and generating a combined $7.4 trillion in revenue—that support The Business Coalition for the Equality Act are rallying behind the federal Equality Act legislation that would provide the same basic protections to LGBTQ+ people that are provided to other protected groups under US federal law. BMC is proud to be part of this collective.

Championing diversity

As organizations strive to do better, employees are working harder to find their voice and push for change, too. Ninety-three percent of CEI-rated employers support organizational LGBTQ+ diversity competency and have an employee resource group (ERG) or diversity council that includes LGBTQ+ and allied employees. I am proud that BMC is one of them.

We have a dedicated Pride ERG to promote LGBTQ+ diversity, inclusion, and allyship among our employees, partners, and customers. Our ERGs also pay it forward. One of the best ways to create equity is through economic empowerment, and each of our ERGs participates in microlending through Kiva. Our Pride ERG supports LGBTQ+ recipients, allowing us to give back and work together by investing in the community. BMC supports many organizations, including several that foster LGBTQ+ advocacy, job placement, awareness training, and tech program initiatives:

- The Humsafar Trust—an LGBTQ community-based organization that provides resources, workshops, medical screenings, and treatments in India.
- La Alianza Social LGBTI de Antioquia—a youth, social, and community-based organization in Colombia that promotes actions and develop strategies aimed at the recognition of diversity as a common heritage of humanity.
- Visual Echoes for Human Rights Advocacy (VEHRA)—a non-profit promoting and advancing LGBTQ rights in Uganda through sports, visual arts, and culture.
- Arte de Amar Project—an organization dedicated to expanding and strengthening the LGBTQIA community in Brazil through family sheltering activities in education, health, culture, sport, and leisure.
- Out in Tech—the world's largest non-profit community of LGBTQ+ tech leaders that creates opportunities for its 40,000 members to advance their careers, grow their networks, and leverage tech for social change.

Making real changes

For LGBTQ+ workers facing a return to office, or entering the office for the first time if they were hired while remote, there can be valid concerns about losing some of the freedoms of expression and identity of working from home, or the emergence of unconscious biases in face-to-face settings. According to Out Leadership, an LGBTQ+ employee who doesn't disclose their identity at work can lose up to ten percent of their productivity.

Today's leaders need to be intentional in the vigorous pursuit of all avenues to dismantle bias, discrimination, and inequity on a micro and macro level to embrace a multi-generational workforce—and especially those now entering the workforce. According to a 2021 Gallup poll, roughly 21 percent of Generation Z Americans who have reached adulthood (born between 1997 and 2003) identify as LGBT.

A great first step is getting educated. The web is teeming with resources to help you get up to speed on LGBTQ+ and celebrate Pride. If you're not a member of the LGBTQ+ community, are you as supportive as you think you are? In a previous blog, we explored unconscious bias, which is a good litmus test. PFLAG has a whole section on being an ally to the LGBTQ+ community here, including a 52-page guide. YouTube has a variety of TED Talks. LinkedIn Learning also has several courses on fostering a workplace that supports LGBTQ+ workers.

Respect is a cornerstone of how we all engage with each other, and we addressed the evolving concept of pronoun usage here. The HRC has a glossary of LGBTQ+ terminology, and this is a handy, all-ages deep dive with additional resources. Social media is catching on, too. You can now add pronouns to your LinkedIn profile.

Year-round inclusivity

Beyond the month of June, you can work with your human resources team to help build an inclusive organization. Advocate for inclusive policies. If you don't have a dedicated DEI resource, internal diversity council, or ERGs, suggest them—and offer to lead a group.

Request guest speakers on LGBTQ+ topics. Here at BMC, we have a monthly diversity speaker series with thought leaders on a variety of DEI topics, including LGBTQ+. Review your employee volunteerism opportunities—are they diverse? If not, suggest additions that are. And look for opportunities for your organization to support and engage the LGBTQ+ community year-round as suppliers and partners.

It's also important to be more inclusive in hiring LGBTQ+ people into your workforce—and promoting them. There are currently only four openly-LGBTQ+ CEOs on the Fortune 500, and of the 5,670 board seats in the Fortune 500, only 25 seats are held by out LGBTQ+ people.

Providing equal benefits across your workforce to all types of families is imperative, as is ensuring access to LGBTQ+ mental health resources like the LGBTQ Psychotherapists of Color Directory or the National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network—and expanding coverage to help pay for them.

Get involved

These are some of the ways BMC employees are supporting the LGBTQ+ community, and we invite you to support them, too.

- StartOut—Volunteer to mentor an LGBTQ+ founder.
- The Trevor Project—Volunteer with crisis intervention services and provide a safe, secure connection for LGBTQ+ youth.
- MindOut LGBTQ Mental Health Service (UK)—Volunteer to help online or by phone as an LGBTQ+ youth counselor.
- Pride in STEM—Support LGBTQIA+ scientists and engineers across the world.

Building a more inclusive and diverse workforce makes each of us and our businesses stronger. By encouraging, embracing, and honoring each other's diversity, we can acknowledge, address, and defeat inequities in pay, leadership, and psychological safety and ensure that the Autonomous Digital Enterprise includes everyone.

#DEI