LGBTQ and Career

SECTION 1 - 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 disclose your sexual orientation and under what circumstances. For many people, their sexual orientation is such an integral part of their identity that it would feel incongruent to not share that with co-workers. Others, however, might prefer to maintain separation between their personal and professional lives and are okay with not disclosing their sexual orientation to others. Concealment of identity could lead to feelings of lowered self-esteem and frustration at leading a dual life; being openly non-heterosexual or trans could lead to discrimination, harassment, or even the loss of one’s job. There is no "right" answer. Only you can decide what is best for you now.

Feel free to make an appointment with a career counselor, if you would like to explore in more depth about coming out in the workplace.

SECTION 2 - 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. The resources on the back of this handout can help you look up 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 and/or gender identity (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. Take advantage of local LGBT networks by searching for LGBT centers, organizations, non-profits, and meet up groups online.

SECTION 3 - Resume Writing - How Much To Include?

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 LGBQ related job (e.g., lobbyist for the NGLTF), 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.

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. 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. Another approach is while highlighting skills, you might "downplay" the nature of the organization in which you developed those skills. For example you can list the organization as an "Anti-Discrimination Organization," and then document your accomplishments from this experience.

Adapted from: http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/affinity/LGBTguide.php
SECTION 4 - Coming Out On The Job

Coming out to a potential supervisor and coworkers might seem even more intimidating than coming out during the hiring process; after all, you will have to spend a majority of you 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?

Again, the coming out process is a personal choice and is not necessary for everyone to live happy and healthy lives. One approach to coming out on the job is to get to know your co-worker first. It may be a good strategy to come out to the safest person first to build ally ships before coming out to everyone. Also, the coming out process can evolve from day to day interactions and discussions such as answering the question, "So, what did you do this weekend?"

Again, accessing your own values in relation to “outness” will help guide your decision about coming out at work.

SECTION 5 – LGBTQ Career Resources

Local Resources:
- UCSB Career Center – http://career.ucsb.edu
- Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity- http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/sgd/home
- Pacific Pride Foundation - http://www.pacificpridefoundation.org/
- Santa Barbara Trans Advocacy Network - http://www.sbtan.org/

Rights in the Workplace:
- Out and Equal Workplace Advocates- http://www.outandequal.org/

Job Search Resources:
- Out for Work - http://www.outforwork.org/
- LGBT Career Link - http://lgbtcareerlink.com/
- Pro Gay Jobs- ProGayJobs.com

Networking Resources:
- LGBT-GLBT- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning and Allies Networking - https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3094099/profile

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