

# Global Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Inclusion:

## Advocating Change Across Contexts

**Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees constitute a sizeable and dynamic workforce population, and leading companies recognize their contributions and insights.** As evidenced by increases in domestic partner benefit offerings and non-discrimination policies for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, LGBT issues are critical priorities in workplaces around the world,<sup>1</sup> and many global organizations have prioritized building an inclusive culture where all employees feel engaged and valued.<sup>2</sup> When LGBT employees feel comfortable coming out at work there can be significant benefits both to the business<sup>3</sup> and to the individual.<sup>4</sup> Global LGBT studies show positive associations between companies' inclusive policies and consumer brand selection.<sup>5</sup> This is critical: it is important that diversity and inclusion (D&I) programming address the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce as well as diverse consumers.

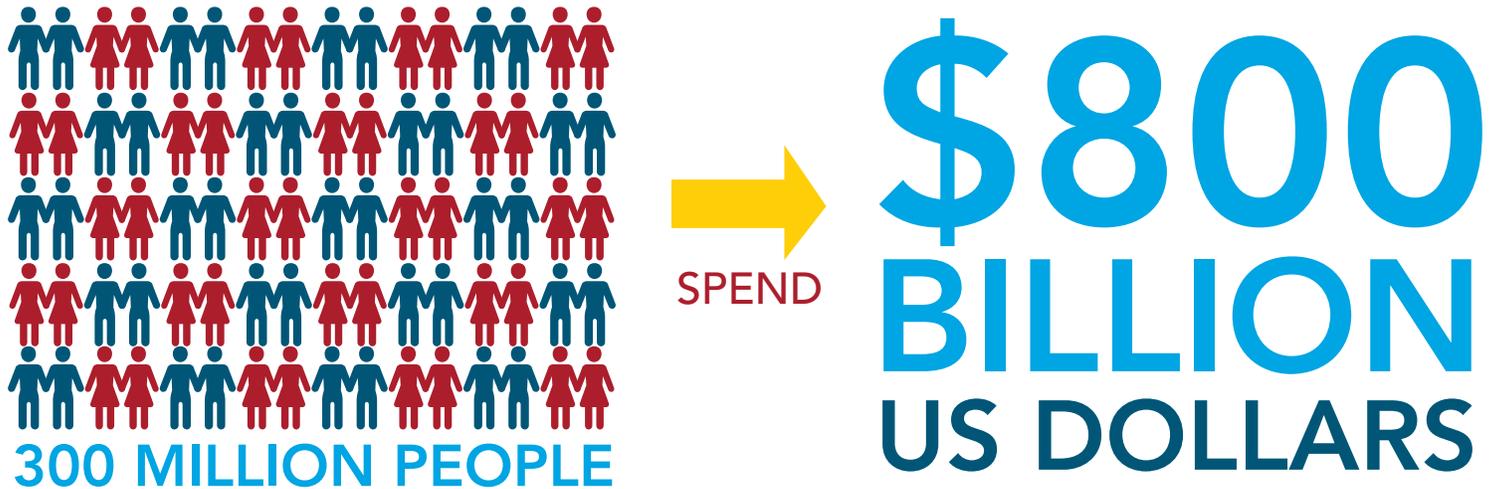
The topic of LGBT inclusion has been a focal point for organizations for some time, but more and more organizations are focusing on going beyond employee networks or discrete LGBT programs to aligning strategies with overall business plans and supporting LGBT employees from recruitment through development to advancement. In addition, just as workplaces have become more global, organizations have begun to expand LGBT policies and programs to include employees from all regions in which they conduct business.

The purpose of this tool is to help individuals inside organizations consider how to evolve their global LGBT policies and ensure that their work environments are inclusive. It is essential for any organization looking to expand LGBT inclusion efforts globally to understand local cultures, legal frameworks, beliefs, knowledge, and norms across different regional contexts. When equipped with knowledge and understanding of potential challenges, leaders and implementers will be better able to tailor global LGBT inclusion policies and practices to meet unique regional needs. Users can work through a series of questions to help assess the current level of LGBT inclusion within their organizations and provide critical points for consideration in the development of future, globally focused LGBT inclusion programs and policies. A suite of D&I practices highlighting cutting-edge LGBT inclusion efforts from global organizations (e.g., Australia, China, India, U.S.) are available on the Catalyst website. These practices provide users with real-world examples of how leading companies have addressed LGBT inclusion challenges across cultural and geographic borders, demonstrating a range of creative and successful approaches to the questions posed.

# Global LGBT Policies and Programs: Key Statistics



Survey of LGBT individuals who report a company's D&I practices definitely influence their brand selection decisions.<sup>6</sup>



Across Asia-Pacific, it is estimated that the LGBT population is more than 300 million, with spending power equivalent to more than USD \$800 billion per annum.<sup>7</sup>

## DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS



The number of *Fortune* 500 companies (most of which are large, global organizations) that provide domestic partnership benefits for same-sex couples increased from 95 (19 percent) in 1999 to 300 (60 percent) in 2012. Further, at least 95 major employers (19 percent) report offering transgender-inclusive health benefits.<sup>8</sup>

## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES



430 (86 percent) of *Fortune* 500 companies include non-discrimination policies protecting sexual orientation.



## GENDER IDENTITY AND/OR GENDER EXPRESSION

The number of *Fortune* 500 companies that included non-discrimination policies for gender identity and/or gender expression rose from two (0.4 percent) in 1999 to 250 (50 percent) in 2012.<sup>9</sup>

# Key Considerations for Organizations Developing or Expanding LGBT Inclusion Globally

## Understand Local Norms and Laws

### Norms

- What are the country-level norms in which you are operating? How do these norms impact the organizational culture across different geographies?
  - Are there local norms around gender and/or family roles that may influence the work environment for employees who do not ascribe to “traditional” roles?
  - What is the predominant religion(s) in the region? Do these beliefs affect the treatment of the LGBT population?
    - Are these norms and/or religious beliefs addressed in your LGBT workplace-inclusion efforts?

### Laws

- Are there specific laws that employees and staff should be aware of, especially during relocations/international assignments?
  - Is homosexuality illegal?
  - Is same-sex marriage or domestic partnership legal?
  - Are there legal restrictions on collecting demographic information on sexual orientation?
  - Is there antidiscrimination legislation specific to LGBT individuals in the workplace?
- In what ways do local norms and laws impact opportunities for LGBT staff advancement?
  - Does your organization have an established policy for managing international assignments for those employees who would be relocating with same sex partners?
  - In what ways has your organization addressed possible barriers?
- If laws are inconsistent with your company culture, how can you ensure inclusivity?

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## Be Sensitive to Heteronormative Actions and Language

- What LGBT-specific terminology is used in different country or cultural contexts where your organization operates? Are managers and employees educated on these regional differences in appropriate terminology?
- Does your organization use inclusive language in invitations and for social/business networking functions? For example, words such as “partner” rather than “husband” or “wife?”
- Do LGBT employees see highly visible success stories throughout the organization? For example, are there any LGBT role models at senior or executive levels who are open about their sexual orientation at work?
- Do senior leaders in your organization model inclusive behavior towards LGBT staff? Are there strong, visible, LGBT allies?

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## Evaluate and Live Your Values

- What behaviors and actions are valued in your organization? Do any of these exclude the LGBT population?
- Do values vary regionally? Are there forums in which employees can safely and comfortably discuss or provide input into the values if they feel they are not inclusive?
- Have you engaged LGBT employees to influence and/or contribute to policy-making and program design (e.g., through focus groups or meetings with executives)? Does this vary regionally?
- Has your organization engaged in community outreach or participated in or sponsored LGBT events? Do you integrate your values on LGBT inclusion into your public image (e.g., through your consumer marketing approach or your recruitment strategies)?

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## Review Your Policies and Practices

- Do you have LGBT antidiscrimination policy statements? Are they made publicly available on your intranet? Via your website and in external communications?
- Do you participate in benchmarking or other forms of public evaluation of your organization's LGBT demographics and/or inclusiveness?
- Does your company compensate employees in same-sex relationships to cover the additional tax burden they face for receiving domestic partner benefits?
- Do you provide transgender-inclusive healthcare benefits?
- Are managers and human resources staff educated and trained on any of the following:
  - Understanding LGBT benefit offerings and how to describe benefits to staff?
  - Knowing the rights and managing the concerns of transgender employees transitioning at work?
  - Managing backlash or non-inclusive behavior displayed toward LGBT individuals?
  - Handling sensitive employee information?
- Do you support LGBT resource groups? Networking activities? Mentoring programs? Are these initiatives funded and otherwise supported in the same way as activities for other key groups?
  - Are there opportunities for employees to participate in such activities without publicly self-identifying as LGBT?
  - Do you encourage the support of allies in your global LGBT work? Is there a formal way for them to get involved?

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# Endnotes

1. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Corporate Equality Index 2012: Rating American Workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality* (2012); Stonewall, *Stonewall Top 100 Employers 2012: Workplace Equality Index* (2012); Amnesty International, *About LGBT Human Rights* (2012); Lucas Itaborahy Paoli, *State Sponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Laws Criminalising Same-Sex Sexual Acts Between Consenting Adults*. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) (May 2012).
2. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Corporate Equality Index 2012: Rating American Workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equality* (2012); Out and Equal Workplace Advocates, "Past Outie Award Winners."
3. Catalyst, *Making Change: LGBT Inclusion-Understanding the Challenges* (2007).
4. Shalini Mahtani and Kate Vernon, *Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBT Employees: A Resource Guide for Employers in Hong Kong*. Community Business (June 2010).
5. Ian Johnson, Darren Cooper, Susann Jerry, and Lottee Jeffs. *Out Now Global: LGBT2020 Next Level Thinking*, Out Now Global (2011).
6. Ibid.
7. LGBT Capital and Fridae, "LGBT Capital announces its first impact investment in Fridae—Asia's pre-eminent LGBT social networking company." LGBT Capital and Fridae press release, September 16, 2011.
8. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *Corporate Equality Index 2012: Rating American Workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality* (2012); Human Rights Campaign Foundation, *The State of the Workplace for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Americans 2007-2008* (2009).
9. Ibid.