

Member's Quarterly

Summer 2026 Edition

Feature

Helping 2SLGBTQI+ Employees Feel Welcome at Work

It's time to walk the talk



Members
Quarterly
Staff Writer

Words are important when it comes to helping employees feel welcome at work. However, actions are even more crucial for 2SLGBTQI+ workers. This will require a continuous effort and commitment, especially by senior management, so that everyone can work and feel valued in a workplace that values and respects them. So, what can employers do? Here are a few suggestions.

Review Training and Policy Frameworks

You are probably doing some things great right now. In other areas, not so much. Review your HR policies through an inclusivity lens. Involve some of your 2SLGBTQI+ employees to ensure that your anti-harassment policies go far enough by including their insights and concerns. Ensure that your benefits policies are not discriminatory to 2SLGBTQI+ workers and even take a look at things like a dress code if you have one, to make sure that you are welcoming to the full range of gender expressions.

Take a look at your training and development programs to ensure that there are no barriers to the participation of 2SLGBTQI+ employees. There are also plenty of educational programs that offer in-person or online expertise on building and fostering an inclusive workplace. Many organizations make this type of training mandatory for senior executives and those who aspire to join the management cadre.

Create Safe Spaces

One of the most successful ways to ensure that employees feel welcome is to give them a voice and a place to speak. As noted above, 2SLGBTQI+ employees should be given an opportunity to comment on current HR policies and asked for their input in developing future policies. This is particularly important when it comes to crafting employee benefit and incentive programs. They can provide valuable insights that can head off problems down the road. Some organizations also choose to formalize these opportunities through employee networks and employee resource groups.

Employee resource groups are created based on shared interests and identities. They were first popularized for black and racialized employees but have now expanded to include all equity seeking groups like 2SLGBTQI+ employees. Their goal is to give common-minded employees a voice and a seat at the table and to help foster a sense of community and belonging within an organization. The basic idea is to create a safe space where 2SLGBTQI+ employees can bring their whole selves to the discussion.

Make Your Communications Inclusive

There are many other ways to make 2SLGBTQI+ workers feel comfortable at work. One is to encourage the use of personal pronouns in employee email signatures or other written materials. This shouldn't just be limited to 2SLGBTQI+ employees. All employees can be encouraged to follow suit to show their support for their colleagues and to foster a more inclusive communications style and approach. You can also remove gender-based pronouns from any employee manuals or handbooks.

Using 'they' as an alternative to 'he' or 'she' will also be seen as supportive by many 2SLGBTQI+ employees. There are several online resources that can assist your organization to become more inclusive

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in your communications. The Government of Canada has a glossary of non-discriminatory terms that you can reference when it comes to 2SLGBTQI+ terms and terminology.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/2slgbtqi-plus-glossary.html>

Don't Just Start... Keep Going

In order to continue to be successful in helping 2SLGBTQI+ employees feel welcome at work, you have to build this inclusivity into all your planning, training and hiring objectives. It has been shown that employers who do this are more positively viewed as a place of employment by 2SLGBTQI+ workers and that they tell others that the organization is pro- 2SLGBTQI+. In the US, this has been reviewed by the Human Rights Campaign and they found that companies are over four times more likely than those that do not include them to be rated as inclusive to current and prospective 2SLGBTQI+ workers.

2SLGBTQI+ workers are an important and valuable part of the current workforce. To hire and to keep them, employers have to walk the talk when it comes to inclusion. This is not just the right thing to do. It is an essential and important element of doing business in the modern world. Being welcoming to 2SLGBTQI+ employees will also show that your organization is welcoming and supportive of 2SLGBTQI+ customers and clients. They actively support businesses that welcome them and like your own employees, they tell others. Being open and welcoming is a win-win for any organization, so start and keep going.

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