



'Business of Pride' to showcase Bay Area's LGBT business leaders

By Mark Calvey

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The San Francisco Business Times is starting work on its first "Business of Pride" special edition June 12 to highlight LGBT entrepreneurs and executives in the Bay Area business community.



The Business of Pride edition is making its debut as LGBT issues and challenges hold center stage in the business world and beyond. A landmark Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage is expected in June.

This month saw some of the Bay Area's most successful CEOs, including Salesforce.com's [Marc Benioff](#), Yelp's [Jeremy Stoppelman](#) and Apple's [Tim Cook](#), voicing their outrage over Indiana's new "religious freedom" law that [critics see as providing a right to discriminate](#) against the gay community.

"The Business of Pride is not just one day a year. The Business of Pride is 365 days a year, with LGBT people in the business community as entrepreneurs and executives, customers and workers," said [Mark Ng](#), [Wells Fargo's](#) (NYSE: WFC) vice president of marketing for the Bay Area region.

The Business of Pride special edition will feature the List of the Bay Area's Largest LGBT-Owned Businesses, ranked by number of employees. The Business Times is accepting online [nominations for LGBT-owned businesses](#) that are at least 51 percent owned by self-identified LGBT entrepreneurs.

The Business Times will also profile 10 outstanding LGBT business leaders making a difference in the corporate world, with one executive being honored with a Business of Pride Leadership Award.

Online [nominations can also be made for outstanding LGBT business leaders](#) in the Bay Area who are succeeding at work while advancing LGBT equality and diversity in the workplace.

The newspaper will bestow a Business of Pride Leadership Award to one large Bay Area company for outstanding practices in advancing LGBT leadership and equality. The Business Times is accepting [nominations to recognize such a company](#).

The honorees will be named at a Business of Pride Celebration at San Francisco's Four Seasons Hotel from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on June 11.

The Business of Pride special edition will also look at trends and issues affecting LGBT people in the workplace, including the growth of employee resource groups for LGBT people and their allies; transgender employees pursuing careers at major Bay Area companies; and the growing number of companies asking LGBT employees to self-identify so employers can measure the success of their diversity efforts as it relates to the LGBT community.

"As companies continue to look for ways to celebrate full diversity and an inclusive culture, it is imperative that everyone is counted. If LGBT employees are being counted, then companies are sending the message that we count," said [Selisse Berry](#), founder and CEO of Out & Equal, a San Francisco-based nonprofit that promotes LGBT workplace equality.

(The Business Times is working closely with Out & Equal and the Golden Gate Business Association in producing the Business of Pride.)

In addition to profiling LGBT business leaders in the Bay Area, the Business of Pride seeks to include the voices and stories of senior executives who are openly LGBT as they successfully pursue their careers. Such executives provide valuable role models for younger LGBT people just starting their careers and even LGBT youth who might be inspired to pursue their own careers in business.

[Reza Rahaman](#), a vice president of research and development at [Clorox](#), told those attending last week's Out & Equal Momentum Gala that coming out for him was a slow process, both in his personal life and in his professional life.

"I work for a company where my sexuality is not a barrier to my success," Rahaman said of Clorox, (NYSE: CLX) which he joined 15 years ago at a time when he wanted to be more open about himself. "I was tired of hiding who I was, fudging pronouns and tired of wasting energy on things that really didn't matter."

He shared with the audience that he gained a greater appreciation for his ability to be out in the workplace when a senior Clorox executive, who was also the executive sponsor of the Clorox Pride employee resource group, said she wanted to meet his partner when they attended a fellow employee's birthday party.

"In one blinding moment, the fact that someone that high up in the company was invested in my personal life enough to ask to meet my partner swept away the fog," Rahaman said.

Soon after that, Rahaman said he found other colleagues eager to support his success at the Oakland-based consumer products giant.

"One of my fellow R&D directors told me, 'My eldest son is gay and there's such a lack of positive role models for gay people in the world that I want to do everything I can to ensure your success,' Rahaman recalled.

"So I've come to see being out and living my life with authenticity as not about me but as a responsibility I have to role model and to help others make the journey that I have," Rahaman said.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/blog/2015/03/lgbt-business-of-pride-gay-san-francisco-clx-wfc.html?page=all>