

Tech Savvy: Out & Equal to Explore LGBT Equality in Technology Sectors at 16th Annual Workplace Summit

By Andrea Shorter



Since the creation of the first silicon transistor in the South Bay over five decades ago, all sectors of commerce, education, medicine, and social life have been forever impacted, defined and redefined by the countless innovations emitting from the Bay Area.

Amidst these transformative impacts, as recent reports suggest, tech companies are striving to achieve greater gender equity and racially diverse workforces. Simultaneously, new century information technology workforces are often perceived as more LGBT-accepting than traditional workplaces. These phenomena in tech workplaces are gaining national attention.

Are existing and start-up technology companies really exceptionally LGBT inclusive? What are the drivers of the inclusive nature emerging in tech companies and other more traditional work environments? What is the role for LGBT employee resource and affinity groups, such as the famous Google Gayglers, in these work environments?

While long, hard fought gains continue to be won for LGBT equality, regardless of how progressive any job sector is thought to be, it remains legal in 29 states for employers to discharge (fire) employees for simply being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. In 76 countries, draconian laws exist or are being promoted to outlaw the very existence of LGBT people altogether.

For U.S. based companies, especially globally connected technology companies, advancing equal treatment and protections of LGBT employees and contractors who have non-discriminatory workplace rights in one American state, but not in another U.S. state or country, presents a series of particular challenges.



These complex challenges to advance workplace protections and global mobility also present opportunities for companies and LGBT employee resource groups to act as key change agents.

For nearly two decades, San Francisco-based Out & Equal Workplace Advocates has been the premier leader in partnership with over 250 companies to advance inclusion and equality for LGBT employees. This includes working closely with name brand Bay Area-based and other technology companies around the world.

In addition to its year round work of providing best practice trainings on achieving workplace equality, and working daily with an international network of leaders, Out & Equal presents a hallmark event. This year, the 16th Annual Out & Equal Workplace Summit will be held in San Francisco, November 3–6. Over 3,000 LGBT employees, CEOs, senior executives, non-profit leaders, human resource professionals, diversity and inclusion experts, and allies from around the world will attend the Summit to participate in 100+ workshops, featured panels, social events, and plenary sessions.

One of the highlights of the Summit will be “Tech Savvy: How Technology Companies Are Working to Advance LGBT Workplace Equality,” a featured panel discussion among technology professionals about the challenges, lessons learned and best practices for creating and maintaining LGBT inclusive workplaces within the high-tech sector. Panelists will include out professionals from LinkedIn, Microsoft, and Apple.

In addition to exploring the challenges and best practices of creating LGBT inclusive technology workplaces, the Summit also intensively explores ways in which to better engage diversity with transgender, bisexual and LGBT people of color. Out & Equal presents the popular Community Engagement Series on the Tuesday and Wednesday of the Summit. The Community Engagement Series provides an opportunity to participate in workshops, panels, and roundtable discussions designed to specifically elevate Summit partners’ efforts to create fully inclusive workplaces. For a special rate of \$75 per day, participants representing, or interested in learning more about, the experiences of these specific communities can attend the Summit for that day.

For more information and to register for the 16th Annual Out & Equal Workplace Summit, please go to outandequal.org/summit.

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