



bcw PRIDE BEYOND PRIDE

THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONSISTENT COMMITMENT TO LGBTQ+ EQUALITY

While Pride Month will always be an important moment in time to support the LGBTQ+ community, authentic, meaningful change can only be accomplished through lasting, consistent commitments that seek to remedy the global challenges being faced by the community. In this document, our team at BCW has highlighted key themes and research findings that paint a stark picture of the realities facing the LGBTQ+ community. You will also find key considerations to keep in mind as you navigate communications, programs and activations for the LGBTQ+ community throughout the year.

An Evolving Community Facing Global Challenges

STATE OF THE WORLD

Currently, 71 countries still criminalize LGBTQ+ people, while legal challenges globally prevent LGBTQ+ people from being safe and accepted in countries around the [world](#). Across the U.S., anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and legislation have swelled over the last year, with recent efforts targeting younger members of the LGBTQ+ community. This includes legislation that limits the ability of transgender youth to access appropriate medical care and participate in sports, and laws that prohibit mentioning LGBTQ+ topics at school. **This discrimination has created a devastating reality with recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) research showing that nearly 25% of LGBTQ+ youth attempted suicide in the first half of 2021.** It is clear that the most vulnerable members of the community need support more than ever before.

SHIFTING IDENTITIES

Against this backdrop, the demographics of the LGBTQ+ community have continued to evolve. Research suggests that LGBTQ+ people now comprise at least 11% percent of the population globally, with the U.S. LGBTQ+ population at over 7%. That includes 10% of millennials and 20% of Gen Z identifying as part of the community in the United States. It's also estimated that, by 2030, at least 7 million LGBTQ+ people over 50 will reside in the U.S. alone.

We are also witnessing an increase in intersectional identity as a leading signifier of the community—the idea that no individual is just one “thing” but a plethora of demographics and experiences that are all connected to create each individual’s truly unique identity.

THE RISING SPENDING POWER OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

With representation and visibility continuously on the rise, and younger, more diverse members of the community getting older, the implications on the global marketplace are becoming profound. **It is estimated that LGBTQ+ consumers have an annual global spending power of \$3.7 trillion.** This number is expected to grow, just as the number of those who identify as part of the community are also expected to increase as LGBTQ+ representation in the media and acceptance among younger generations continue to rise.

CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS OF BRANDS

Facing these challenges and presented with new opportunities, consumer expectations and demands of brands are skyrocketing. **It is estimated that 41% of America’s Gen Z population wants to see companies challenging LGBTQ+ discrimination and half of U.S., British and French LGBTQ+ consumers indicate they would stop supporting a company they believe is non-inclusive.** Conversely, higher levels of LGBTQ+ representation and inclusion from a company can lead to an estimated 30% increase in consumer trust in a brand.



Engagement Best Practices

There are many ways brands and companies can engage the LGBTQ+ community — internally and externally — throughout the year, among them:

MEET EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS THROUGH INTERSECTIONALITY

Younger job seekers and current employees have different expectations for their employers. **Beyond salary and benefits, Millennials and Gen Z want to work for companies that support LGBTQ+ rights and champion the community internally and externally.** Even at the entry levels, employees are searching for workplaces that are vocal in their support for DE&I (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) efforts across race, gender and identity, sexual orientation, and disability, among others. According to data from Glassdoor, more than three in four employees say a diverse workforce matters when reviewing and considering a job offer.

The employee push for DE&I is partly a result of a growing percentage of the workforce that identify as LGBTQ+ themselves, and a more diverse makeup of that group of LGBTQ+ employees. Recent [research](#) from Boston Consulting Group found that 28% of LGBTQ+ employees under 35 are people of color, compared to just 2% of those over 55. This rapidly diversifying segment of the workforce expects intersectional identity to be a central component of any DE&I plan.

DEMONSTRATING A CONSISTENT COMMITMENT

Accounting for all these factors (and more), the LGBTQ+ community is turning to businesses to activate beyond just Pride Month and to demonstrate a consistent, year-round commitment to supporting the LGBTQ+ community. As companies continue through Pride Month, they must also have an eye toward what comes next.

When planning for any future external communications efforts, first consider looking inward to assess and acknowledge where you are in your DE&I journey, and if the appropriate foundational elements are in place. Doing so helps ensure that when you activate externally, you can mitigate potential pushback by pointing to existing policies, practices and internal benchmarks to showcase credibility in your efforts. To effectively build trust among internal stakeholders, consider:

- **Ongoing educational programming to upskill your workforce.** Employees may not understand why the organization is advocating for LGBTQ+ equality. By strategically building ongoing education, trainings and resource sharing into your DE&I strategies, employees will begin to feel more comfortable and confident in the organization's decision to take a stance.
- **Finding key moments beyond Pride Month to demonstrate support for the LGBTQ+ community.** Deepening trust and securing buy-in from your employees for your ongoing support of LGBTQ+ equality requires finding natural moments on the calendar outside of Pride to support LGBTQ+ equality. Times to consider include LGBTQ+ Ally Week in September, or LGBTQ+ history month in October.

LEAD WITH AUTHENTICITY, NOT SYMBOLISM

There is a fine line between allyship and marketing companies should be wary of crossing. As you consider engaging the LGBTQ+ community around Pride Month — rainbow flags and “love is love” slogans aside — ask yourself:

- What are the limitations of these symbolic gestures?
- Is my brand/company making a meaningful contribution to the LGBTQ+ community?
- Are we prepared to take a consistent position beyond one moment in time?

Living out your commitment to the community should start with a bigger stance around your organization’s business strategy and its ties to inclusion and belonging. This includes

auditing and adopting LGBTQ+ inclusive internal policies, such as healthcare and domestic partnership benefits. It also requires evaluating your company’s stance on political and policy contributions. Stakeholders care more than ever if you have a history of making political contributions to PACs, politicians, or candidates with a track record of supporting anti-LGBTQ+ policies and politicians. Similarly, are you using your brand capital and dollars to support LGBTQ+ issues? The efforts that will make the most impact are those rooted in long-term allyship—leveraging current product offerings and services as part of a larger force for good.

If your commitments are meaningful and real, it will be easy to show your accomplishments and ROI.

PROMOTE INTERSECTIONAL VOICES

Intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, sexual orientation, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. **When considering an engagement with any community, it is important to recognize the intersectionality of its members and why those voices are integral to the success of a project or program.**

By championing those who live at the intersections of overlapping systems of privilege and oppression, we ensure brands and companies are advocating for voices often disproportionately impacted by societal inequalities. Internal examples include inclusion of intersectional voices in important business, strategy, operations and HR policy discussions. And external examples include employee spotlights, social media call outs and inviting specialists to discuss their expertise in the media.



BUILD THIRD-PARTY CREDIBILITY THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

To demonstrate authenticity in your support for the LGBTQ+ community, always consider partnering with local or national LGBTQ+ nonprofits that are aligned with your commitments. These partnerships demonstrate a true understanding and awareness of the challenges being faced by the community and show you are willing to make a public commitment to a more inclusive future.

Organizations to consider include:

- [Ali Forney Center](#)
- [Athlete Ally](#)
- [Anti-Violence Project](#)
- [CenterLink](#)
- [COLAGE](#)
- [GLAAD](#)
- [GLSEN](#)
- [GMHC](#)
- [Harlem United](#)
- [Hetrick-Martin Institute](#)
- [Matthew Shepard Foundation](#)
- [Movement Advancement Project](#)
- [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- [Out & Equal](#)
- [PFLAG](#)
- [Straight for Equality](#)
- [The Trevor Project](#)

See [here](#) for a comprehensive resource list.

Additional Resources

The LGBTQ+ community is a loud and proud one but with so many identities, BCW understands that those unfamiliar with labels and lack thereof may need additional resources to reference time and again. **These terminology websites provide an overview of common terminology used when referring the to LGBTQ+ community** but it is important to echo back to our notes on intersectionality—these are generalized terms and if you're ever unsure of a word or phrase to use, do not be afraid to ask...respectfully, of course.

- [The Human Rights Campaign's Glossary of Terms](#) provides a high-level dictionary of frequently used terms
- [PFLAG's Glossary](#) provides a slightly longer list of terms that help describe gender, sexual orientation, and relationship "labels" in even greater depth

Have questions or looking for additional guidance? Contact BCWPrideLeadership@bcw-global.com.