Inclusion & Diversity.

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The BIMA Tech and Inclusion Report (2019) found out that mental health, stress and anxiety are challenges within the industry and for marginalised groups, such as the neurodiverse, the figures are deeply upsetting with incidences of anxiety and depression appearing much higher at 84%. The report also revealed that 40% of Afro-Caribbean and those of mixed heritage, 31% of Asian and South East Asian and 35% of women have reported experiencing discrimination. Whilst we make efforts to bring people from diverse backgrounds into the industry, we are also driving them away.

These insights compel us to action and for the first time provide a clear sign-post on what to do next.

Introducing the BIMA Inclusion & Diversity toolkit – a playbook made up of a number of guides to get you started. Each guide, focuses on a different aspect of Inclusion & Diversity and is backed up with compelling research, outlining why you should tackle this topic within your organisation. The guides provides essential ‘What you need to know’ information and ‘How to get started’. They give practical assistance to get you going on your I&D journey, the rest is down to you!

Due to the intersectional nature of a person’s identity (how the combination of their gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability etc impacts their experience of discrimination and/or privilege in the workplace) we would recommend that you take a broad view of diversity by reviewing a number of the guides in this toolkit (rather than viewing each guide as a siloed topic).

I’d like to thank all of the BIMA Inclusion & Diversity Council team and their networks in realising this vital toolkit resource for all BIMA members. The guides will be reviewed and updated annually but if you’d like to make suggestions for improvements please reach out to diversity@bima.co.uk.

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How to get Started

The business case for Inclusion & Diversity is, by now, hopefully well understood. Like any change management programme we recommend organisations take a strategic approach to inclusion and diversity in order to drive the desired outcomes. We recommend the desire for change is discussed with those who set the culture, primarily your leadership team, but also employees across the business. Like all business imperatives, you should establish a clear view of the current state (through primary and secondary research) before establishing a vision for the change you want to see and the priorities that are right for your business along with the key performance indicators (what you will measure) over time. Inclusion & diversity is a long game but it is proven to drive both employee engagement, innovation and performance so having a long term plan is not only the right thing to do but also makes good business sense!

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Sexual Orientation

Inclusion & Diversity Toolkit: Sexual Orientation

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The Business Case

Stonewall research shows that 38% of LGBT people aren’t out to anyone in their workplace in the UK, and there is compelling evidence that shows people perform better when they can be themselves. Homophobia, transphobia and lack of allyship can also lead to an increase in bullying and harassment, and 21% of trans people do not feel they are able to report transphobic bullying in the workplace. Uniform policies can also cause distress if managed poorly. 31% of non binary people and 18% of trans people don't feel they are able to wear the clothes that represent their gender expression.

Creating an open environment without prejudice, in which members of the community can be “out to all " will help to retain LGBTQ+ talent. The estimated cost of losing these employees is significant. The OutNow report in 2015 estimated the cost to large businesses of around 100,000 to be upwards of 4.9million through lost talent.

What you need to know

The terminology

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression—not to be confused with sexual activity or behaviour—are personal characteristics that everyone has. Including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) employees is a vital component of a comprehensive diversity and inclusion strategy. [1]

1. Who are the LGBTQ+ community?

L - Lesbian
G - Gay
B - Bisexual
T - Transgender
Q - Queer
I - Intersex
A - Asexual

Something to remember is that the LGBTQ+ is not only about sexual orientation but this also includes gender expression and gender identity which is something that is different to sexuality.

There are a growing number of ways people identify, and organisations should encourage everyone to be open to listening with empathy to people's reality and experiences regardless of the labels.

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How to Get Started

01. Transitioning/Coming out work policy

Bringing in a transitioning at work and coming out policy is a great step for any organisation, no matter the size. Having the policy and guidelines in place, and everyone trained on them will mean that when you have an employee transitioning or who comes out, they do not feel like they are having to educate the business and “be the first”. This sends a powerful message of acceptance in the workplace.

02. Genderless policies and documentation

Go through all policies and procedure documentation, look for any gendered language and reword it to be neutral. Look to move parenting policies such as maternity, to become genderless where possible, and incorporate surrogacy and adoption. Policies around toilets should also be prioritised, and making them unisex is preferable.

03. Reporting and systems

Collecting data to understand the demographic of your team is a great way to help identify any blind spots the business may have. For instance, are you losing a lot of LGBTQ+ talent within the first few months? It is important to start by ensuring your HR system has inclusive fields for gender expression and identity so that employees can self report. Make sure there is always the option for “prefer not to disclose”Use the Stonewall taxonomy in their “Do ask, do tell” toolkit for capturing data.

04. The power of pronouns

Asking someone their pronouns, or them needing to correct your assumption can be embarrassing or awkward if the individual was not intending on coming out at that particular moment. By committing to pronouns as part of email signatures, or HR systems you can normalise statement of pronouns. Encouraging a norm of asking for everyone's pronouns when you meet them without assuming is also a useful way to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.

05. Health & wellbeing

If you offer health care benefits, check to see if your providers offer same sex couples cover for their spouses. Gender reassignment surgery can have huge waiting lists on the NHS, consider finding a provider that can offer this as part of your health care package. LGBTQ+ community members, like all of us, can struggle with emotional wellbeing from time to time. Consider offering specific LGBTQ+ therapy resources as it can help to speak to people who have shared experiences when asking for help. See links below.

06. Allyship

Running allyship training, alongside implicit bias training is a powerful way to teach colleagues how to be good allies for the community. Stonewall offer training as part of their diversity champion program (below). Additionally there are lots of resources for people to read. Allyship can be signalled through displaying the trans and LGBT pride colours, having unisex toilets, through offering financial support such as benefits programs (see above) and through inclusive policies and behaviour. Often, LGBTQ+ people can feel nervous about raising non inclusive language or hurtful language because they feel their jobs are more at risk than their colleagues. Calling out non-inclusive behaviour is a powerful way allies can help to create a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ people.

Signpost to other sources of information

Mind Out
https://www.catalyst.org/research/lgbtq-inclusion-resources/

The stonewall index

LGBTQ+ Mind

Stonewall diversity champions program

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Thank you.