

LGBTQ~ SHOULD I “COME OUT” DURING THE JOB SEARCH?

All job seekers have choices to make when it comes to seeking employment that is a good fit for them. Those who are also part of the LGBTQ community may also need to factor in how to incorporate their sexual identity or gender identity into their job search. It is important to know that there are resources to help you make smart choices that are right for your individual situation, including the staff members in the Center for Career Development.

DO I “OUT” MYSELF ON MY RESUME OR DURING THE INTERVIEW?

As a member of the LGBTQ community, you need to decide if and how you want to factor the expression of your sexual identity into your resume writing and/or interview process. Although many people have become more open and accepting of the LGBTQ community, you may still encounter challenges in your daily life. This may impact the way you approach your job search and the overall job market. It is important that you make a decision about coming out on your resume or during the interview based on what is right for you.

1. ON YOUR RESUME:

In taking pride in your sexual identity, you may be involved in student groups and organizations that work toward building bonds and gaining equality for the LGBTQ community. Such involvement can provide great experience and you will gain many marketable skills that you would want to include on your resume, but listing this involvement would also announce your affiliation with the LGBTQ community. Below are options for writing about your experience, both with and without announcing your affiliation.

President & Founder S.O.U.L./Rainbow Soul at Morgan State University, August 2013 - present

- Planned and executed many LGBTQ debates and discussions in weekly meetings
- Organized annual LGBTQ campus climate survey; discussed with administrators
- Led executive board which worked toward new students’ smooth transition into the university LGBTQ community

If you are concerned about sharing your affiliation, you may want to modify the statements to focus attention on your role and accomplishments, rather than the organization. The result may look like this:

President & Founder, August 2013 - present

Student Organization at Morgan State University

- Planned and executed many debates and discussions in weekly meetings
- Organized annual campus-wide survey
- Led an executive board which worked toward new students’ smooth transition into the university

Keep in mind that anything you include on your resume can come into question during an interview. If you prefer not to make your affiliation with the LGBTQ community known, you might want to be more general or eliminate such experiences from your resume.

2. DURING THE INTERVIEW:

The manner in which you present yourself is your decision. “Coming out” is an ongoing process. If you’ve already listed experiences or affiliations on your resume that could suggest your sexual

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orientation, you may or may not choose to elaborate on LGBTQ-related issues (i.e. affinity groups) during the interview. Regardless of your decision, the important thing is to focus on your skills and qualifications for the position. With thorough preparation, you should be able to offer an interviewer specific examples of accomplishments that demonstrate that you are the best candidate for the position.

General advice about interviewing is to “be yourself” and interviewers will ultimately have their own ways of evaluating whether they think you are a “good fit.” For many members of the LGBTQ community, however, this is where the question arises regarding whether or not to come out during an interview. Can “being yourself” include coming out during an interview? Again, there is no one answer to this question. If you have researched an organization's policies and culture, you probably have some information to help you. If you are applying for a job in which experience with diverse populations is an advantage, then it might be an advantage to talk about your background in more detail.

Do you want to come out in the interview to test the waters regarding what it might be like to be out in this particular work environment? You may find this approach to be very useful, and then again you may only gain exposure to the interviewer’s perspective (which may not be reflective of the organization as a whole). You can ask questions during the interview if you have not been able to get a sense of the culture and environment: “Can you tell me about diversity in the organization, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender? What sorts of training or other initiatives are taking place in the organization related to diversity?”

WORKING TOWARD WORKPLACE CHANGE

Many organizations sponsor affinity groups as a way to provide support in the workplace for different minority groups. Sometimes LGBTQ affinity group members within an organization are tapped to conduct outreach to prospective employees from their alma maters. When this happens, it signifies that an employer is looking to encourage individuals from the LGBTQ community to seek employment with their organization. This is one example of how some employers are working toward being more LGBTQ friendly when seeking new hires and shaping policies for existing employees. Want to know if a corporation has an affinity group? You can research the human resources pages of that business or look to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) which has done some of the research for you. Read the [Corporate Equality Index](#) for more information.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER

- When looking for long-term employment, it is important to investigate what benefits are allotted to same- sex couples and transgender persons.
- The *Corporate Equality Index* from the Human Rights Campaign Foundation contains information on corporations and the benefits they provide to their workers. This can be found on our website, under “Diversity Resources”.

ONCE EMPLOYED, SHOULD I “COME OUT” AT WORK?

As adults, we spend a large portion of our time at work, with our co-workers, so the decision to “come out” at work (and how) is a common question.

First of all, think about how “out” you have been up to this point in your life. In what situations have you chosen to come out, to whom, how did you do it, and how easy or difficult was that process? As you

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Imagine what it might be like to go to work every day in a full-time career-related position, what sorts of interactions and conversations do you want to have with your co-workers? Do you like the idea of keeping your personal and work lives separated or would it be difficult if you did not share certain aspects of your life with your co-workers?

Second, spend time researching and exploring what it might be like to work in the career field that interests you. Certain careers, industries, or places of employment may be more welcoming and open. It is also important, however, to not operate on stereotypes; do not assume because you want to be an elementary school teacher that you cannot be out, but also do not assume that it won't be without challenges to be out in that setting. Even if a field seems supportive and accepting, you should conduct research for each organization that you are considering employment.

1. **Assess Your Readiness:** How nervous do you feel thinking about coming out at work? Is it something that you could wait on for a while?
 - List 5 professional and personal benefits you seek to realize by coming out at work.
 - List 5 pros and 5 cons of being out at your workplace.
2. **Perform at Your Best:** Do you feel like you have a solid track record at work? If not, you may feel too vulnerable during the coming out process.
3. **Gather Supporters:** Who can support you at work? Ask for thoughts and support from those close to you who will help you feel more confident.
4. **Choose a Strategy:** Do you want to come out to a few colleagues or managers? Would you rather tell everyone at once?
5. **Conduct a Trial Run:** Find someone you trust in the office and start with them. Test the waters and see how the process feels.
6. **Consider the Timing:** Try not to pick the busiest time of the year or when everyone is stressed out about a project. *The attention and caring support may be lacking during certain times.*

RELATED BOOKS

- *Lavender Road to Success*, Snyder, Kirk.
- *Your Queer Career: The Ultimate Career Guide for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Jobseekers*, Folds, Riley.

Source: www.cdc.binghamton.edu