ENGAGING THE MAJORITY TO CREATE AN LGBT INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE
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Stonewall is here to let all lesbian, gay, bi and trans people know they’re not alone. Our work with employers is integral to this mission. Companies working across the UK – and the world – can have an enormous impact on the well-being of their LGBT employees. They can also play an important role in raising awareness of LGBT issues within the wider population.

Accenture have been a partner to Stonewall for many years and have a well-established commitment to LGBT equality. They have been consistently recognised in our annual ranking of employers, the Stonewall Top 100. Following three years in the Top 10 of this highly competitive list, we recognised Accenture as a Stonewall Star Performer. This exclusive accolade celebrates the very best employers for LGBT people.

Each year, we challenge our Star Performers to find new and innovative ways to advance LGBT equality. This year, we asked each of them to share what they have learned, in the form of a best-practice guide on a topic where they have shown significant progress.

Accenture, as a very large employer with more than 384,000 staff globally, recognise the opportunity they have to engage the non-LGBT majority in their diversity and inclusion work. The innovative ways Accenture have reached out to staff and created a community of LGBT Allies are a valuable example to others. We welcome this guide and hope that it inspires employers to do more to engage staff in equalities initiatives right across their organisations.

We invite you to join with us, and with Accenture, in working towards acceptance without exception for LGBT people everywhere.

Ruth Hunt,
Chief Executive, Stonewall
At Accenture we have realised the true value an inclusive workplace can bring to our employees, clients and brand and that is why we are aiming to be the world’s most inclusive organisation by 2020. One of the diversity areas we are committed to achieving this in is LGBT, which is crucial for the wellbeing and performance of our LGBT employees.

Our journey to achieve this started 12 years ago and we still have more to do. Initially, our efforts focused on establishing a foundation to support our open LGBT colleagues with an employee network, inclusive policies and role models. However, latterly we realised this was only the first step to achieve our aim and that we could only truly support our LGBT colleagues by engaging the majority through a culture shift.

This paper explores the actions taken to date to achieve our aim, none of which would have been possible without the support of Stonewall, who have been integral to helping us in our LGBT efforts, as well as the people who have contributed within Accenture and other organisations, who we have listened to and taken guidance from along the way.

We hope the following is helpful to other organisations trying to achieve LGBT inclusivity in the workplace and we wish them luck on their journey.

Patrick Rowe,
Executive Sponsor of Accenture’s UKI LGBT Network
INTRODUCTION

HOW DO YOU CREATE A TRULY LGBT INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE?

For over a decade, Accenture has been on a journey to find practical answers to this question. As one of the world’s leading consulting and technology organisations, our employees work across a broad spectrum of clients, industries and projects. Engaging only with the LGBT minority within our own walls will never be sufficient: we need to engage the majority with our values and behaviours.

Working in partnership with Stonewall, we have identified and implemented initiatives to transform our organisational environment as well as the work cultures beyond our office doors.

As a result we have achieved real change for all our employees and had the opportunity to shift the wider culture through on-going discourse with partners and clients.

This paper charts our progress so far, the approaches we have used and the learning we’ve taken. We hope it sparks a whole new set of conversations with organisations joining us on this path to support their future practice and our own.
OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

Our ambition is simple: to be the most inclusive and diverse organisation in the world by 2020. We believe there is a difference between talking about diversity and delivering a real and sustainable impact. Since our first formal Global Inclusion and Diversity Strategy launched in 1995, we have continually adapted and evolved to achieve the greatest inclusion possible within our workplace.

BACKGROUND

1995: Our first formal Global Inclusion and Diversity Strategy launched over twenty years ago

2000: Sexual orientation included in global non-discrimination policy

2004: First UK LGBT Network launched

2007: First openly LGBT UK Executive Committee board member

2011: Compulsory global inclusion and diversity training for all employees

2020: Aim of becoming the most inclusive and diverse organisation in the world

2020: First openly LGBT UK Executive Committee board member

2007: First involvement with Stonewall

2006: Sexual orientation included in global non-discrimination policy
WE RECOGNISED THAT STRENGTHENING OUR LGBT STRATEGY HAS BENEFITS ACROSS THE WHOLE ORGANISATION:

- Maximises our employee's health and wellbeing
- Ensures staff can be fully productive in their day-to-day job
- Allows our people to collaborate effectively - internally and with clients
- Helps us to successfully recruit and retain the best staff
- Presents a positive brand image

OUR VISION FOR LGBT

Creating and maintaining an LGBT inclusive workplace is a cornerstone of our strategy. Where an employee ‘self-edits’ and is not comfortable in bringing their whole identity to work, there is a risk both to their own performance and to the strength of the teams they’re in.

In the past, even where LGBT employees were performing well, they weren’t able to be as open in the work environment as their non-LGBT peers – limiting the potential of individual and organisation.

OUR PROGRESS

Since the inception of our first UK LGBT Network in 2004, Accenture has been working both internally and externally to make these benefits a reality. Critical to our success has been our relationship with Stonewall. Their Workplace Equality Index helped us to define a development path and a list of target projects and changes we could make.

Throughout this process, talking to other organisations has been vital in giving us insight, ideas and a sounding board for our approach. Today, as a Stonewall Star Performer, we have reached a reflection point at which to share our accomplishments so far. As we go on to uncover new priorities and refine our practice, we know that this mutual support is essential to achieving our ultimate vision of LGBT inclusivity everywhere.
The primary stage in our drive to build a truly inclusive workplace began at home: building firm foundations within our own community. To achieve this we identified three main areas of focus:

- **ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK**
- **ENGAGING OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE ROLE MODELS**
- **PERFECTING EXISTING POLICIES**

In the following section we explore these approaches, how and why we implemented them, the challenges encountered and the results observed.

**ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE NETWORK**

**BEGINNINGS**

Our UK LGBT Network was founded in 2004 as a response to an internal need for a social and networking hub for the LGBT community. For two years this network successfully curated support and collective spaces for its members.

In 2006 Accenture started to work with Stonewall on evolving our LGBT strategy. Our first action was to assess the effectiveness of our existing network. Stonewall assisted us in benchmarking against other approaches drawn from across the public and private sectors.

This exercise emboldened us to transform our network from a socially-focussed initiative into a professional body capable of creating concrete change. We noted that the majority of effective LGBT initiatives had begun with ‘organic social networks’ like our own, but those that had been truly transformative had done so by maturing into more formal bodies with wider-ranging remits.
TEN YEARS ON...

Today our LGBT Network has over 250 members in the UK. The network’s activity balances the provision of a safe and supportive environment for employees to connect, with the identification and delivery of initiatives that support LGBT staff more broadly.

Varied programmes and events are organised throughout the year including Pride celebrations, client networking events, community sponsorships, webcasts, educational events and recruiting activities. In conjunction with these the network harnesses a variety of channels to build awareness, offer leadership support, foster a sense of community and educate.

The network is a beacon for our employees, signalling not only that there are LGBT staff members, but that they have an active forum through which they can be heard.

OUR LEARNING

• A functioning network with clear aims, objectives, responsibilities and internal support is the crucial first step to engaging the majority within an organisation. It provides a structure towards which a wider group of employees can contribute. Without it there will be engagement but it will be ad hoc and unfocussed.

• Take the time to carefully define a network’s overall ambition and set simple, targeted aims and objectives. An early focus on items which are either initially achievable or have maximum impact helps galvanise members whilst demonstrating to a wider organisation that you are serious and effective.

• Engaging passionate and committed people is key to a network’s success: their leadership is the driving force in a busy organisation.

• Harness the energy of open and supportive sponsors from key areas of a business (e.g. Human Resources). Their input can be maximised through specific and frequent requests.

• Never stop asking: there are always more people who want to help than it first seems.
Alicia Hill

Accenture’s LGBT Network has provided me with the wonderfully reassuring knowledge and confidence that I can be 100% myself at work. It has fostered a huge amount of pride in my employer and above and beyond that it has been the largest contributor to my personal development in my career to date, predominantly owing to the various network committee and mentoring roles I have taken on over the last few years.

ENGAGING OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE ROLE MODELS

Role models are consistently recognised for their powerful influence within the LGBT community and effective enrolment and engagement is a genuine game-changer in organisations.

WHAT DO OUR ROLE MODELS DO?

It is important that role models are not just ‘in name’ but have clear actions. At the most basic level our role models contribute in the following ways:

• Act as visible and accessible points of contact within our organisation so that employees have someone to talk or relate to;

• Bring individual authenticity to promote an LGBT inclusive agenda throughout the organisation, articulating clear messages and objectives and monitoring the organisation’s ‘tone of voice’ on that agenda;

• Help to challenge existing observed behaviours which do not promote inclusivity;
SOME ROLE MODEL MILESTONES

• In 2007 we had our first openly LGBT board member on our UK Executive Committee.

• Accenture leaders Andrew Wilson and Sander van ’t Noordende appeared in the FT’s 2016 Top 100 LGBT Role Models, bringing global recognition to our LGBT work.

• One of our transgender role models invited open questions from anyone who was interested in their experience. This ‘no question is too stupid’ approach genuinely changed the culture around transgender in a personal yet potent way.

OUR LEARNING

• Role models should be diverse and drawn from every area of the organisation, regardless of level.

• Use LGBT Network newsletters to profile role models in a creative and fun way, ensuring their approachability.

• Using a range of role model speakers at LGBT and wider organisation events keeps the message fresh: every individual approach and experience will resonate differently with an audience.

• Role models can and should be both LGBT employees and Allies (explored further on page 17); they act as a beacon for the majority, showcasing success and relevance to all.

• Role models are at their most impactful when combined with a formal mentoring programme.

• External validation of LGBT role models has a multiplier effect – making them even

Natasha Wright
As the network co-lead, I have experienced first-hand the focus Accenture places on supporting inclusion and diversity programmes – this has come in a variety of forms. Firstly, transforming the diversity of my everyday team with targeted female recruitment via programmes such as STEM for Women in Technology. Secondly, transforming my career through formal recognition of my involvement in the network in our performance processes, ensuring I have the protection to use my time in this way and get rewarded for it despite not dedicating 100% of my time to client focused work. Finally, transforming my future with Shared Parental Leave policies, meaning "should" my partner and I decide to start a family regardless of who actually gives birth I’ll be able to be there!
PERFECTING EXISTING POLICIES

THE POWER OF POLICIES

A company’s policies send a powerful message to staff about its values and commitment to inclusivity. When formalising our network, a core objective was the capacity to work effectively with HR and Legal teams to ensure policies were LGBT inclusive.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Our LGBT Network partnered with internal HR and Inclusion and Diversity functions to update maternity, paternity and partner, and adoption policies with appropriate and inclusive language.

We used network volunteers to review all internal policy documents to identify improvements and draft recommendations for approval. In doing so we demonstrated what the issues were from an LGBT perspective and defined concrete solutions.

Refining policies for everyone within the LGBT umbrella is continuing, extensive work. Recent progress in this area includes the establishment of gender-neutral dress code, all-gender bathrooms and work to explore healthcare coverage for transgender employees.

OUR LEARNING

• Changes to policies are often easy to make and represent quick wins in cultural transformation: they form the bedrock upon which to build real change for the majority.

• Making policies LGBT inclusive with updated language and terms clearly demonstrates to staff and any potential future talent that the organisational culture has official backing.

• Practically these changes can be as simple as ensuring that wording is inclusive, such as adjusting policies to refer to partner / spouse, rather than just father.

• Refining policies is an iterative process as understanding deepens of barriers that employees face.

• As a global company it’s important to ensure policies extend as effectively as possible across borders: share best practice internationally and provide tailored support to traveling employees. For example, LGBT-specific travel information.
ENGAGING THE MAJORITY
BUILDING ON YOUR FOUNDATION

After creating a robust foundation for employees who were already out and sending a clear signal about our commitment and intention, we knew there were still employees we needed to reach. In addition, we had yet to address the barriers faced by employees working outside Accenture’s own offices at client sites, where a workplace had yet to embrace this diversity and they may be the only LGBT member of the team.

This generated a new set of challenges:

- How could we make things significantly better for those on the margins as well as those in the centre?
- How do you move from being LGBT friendly to being fundamentally LGBT inclusive at every level of the organisation?
- How do you export that inclusivity elsewhere?

To truly transform we needed to bring the rest of the workforce into the scope of our project. We needed to target every employee, every manager, every supplier that works with us and every client site we work on. This approach would enable us to truly integrate and embed the right behaviours, attitudes and outcomes to influence change.

WE IDENTIFIED FOUR MAIN STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING THIS:

- CREATING THE CONTEXT FOR MAJORITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MAJORITY POLICIES
- PUTTING AWARENESS INTO ACTION THROUGH OUR ALLIES PROGRAMME
- STRONG AND COMMITTED COMMUNICATIONS
- REINFORCING CHANGE THROUGH TRAILBLAZING TRAINING

Nabil Alizai

In my interview for Accenture, I mentioned that one of the key reasons I was applying was their consistently high ranking in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. I’d researched companies leading the way for LGBT people, and as a gay man, it was a huge part of my decision process. During my Accenture career I’ve worked with three clients, in five different teams and not once have I had reservations about coming out and being true to myself.
POLICIES FOR THE MAJORITY

Accenture believes that employee conduct counts – for our people and our business. Every Accenture employee is responsible for fostering a positive work environment. Mutual respect, fairness, and a commitment to ethical behaviour are at the centre of our core values and Code of Business Ethics.

We recognise that respectful, ethical and fair behaviour helps to drive growth (as an environment where people operate at their full potential) and differentiation (as a culture that enables us to attract and retain top talent).

CRITICALLY, ACCENTURE’S PRACTICAL APPROACH TO EMBEDDING THESE VALUES TRANSCENDS EXISTING HARASSMENT LEGISLATION:

Rather than stating the minimum expectation of the law by outlining what is prohibited, our policy articulates clearly and confidently the behaviour that is expected from everyone. Where issues arise employees are both encouraged and supported to report them.

Values are integrated into our performance achievement process, actively encouraging employees of all identities to behave in an inclusive way. The process rewards them for positively reinforcing these values and holding their teams to account.

OUR LEARNING

• Combining a genuinely inclusive set of policies with a process of individual accountability prepares the perfect ground for majority engagement.

• Reflect core values and respect for the individual across existing policies.

• Refer to these values across all communications, training and line management conversations.

FROM AWARENESS TO ALLIES

All Accenture employees are aware of the importance we place on inclusion and diversity – through compulsory and on-demand training at all levels, local and global communications and high profile LGBT Networks. We have built on this awareness with our Allies programme. Establishing a formal programme with non-LGBT colleagues has helped to foster support, developed deep and often emotional understanding of the challenges the LGBT community faces and created a framework for advocacy.
ALLIES PROGRAMME

Allies act as role models. In the first instance we sought “Super Allies” – a first wave of influential individuals identified from every level and area of the business, to form a foundation membership.

Together they presented a good spread of quality influencers with a clear and consistent message able to promote the basic principles of what Allies say and do.

RAINBOW LANYARDS

Being visible is essential. We devised a simple but brilliantly effective approach – bright, rainbow lanyards for employee security passes for all everyone who signed up.

Admired by colleagues, clients and partners they became a consistent reminder of the Allies programme and were quickly sought after. Today not having a rainbow lanyard in the UK is far more unusual than owning one.

EXPECTATIONS

We followed the buzz created by the lanyards by cementing our expectations of those who wear them: training, talking to colleagues and promoting a sense of responsibility and obligation. We ensured continued engagement by:

• Designating an Ally Lead to mobilise the community.

• Constructing communications with engaging content, combining emotional connection with a clear educational message.

• Developing and regularly updating Ally training assets and tools.

• Mobilising Super Allies with greater purpose to inspire action as well as visibility.

• Partnering Allies with ‘reverse mentors’ from our LGBT Network to enable more personal and impactful interaction.

• Partnering leading Allies from different parts of the business with inclusion and diversity professionals so they can feed through the latest initiatives and project a wider brief.
BEYOND

Our UK Allies programme has had global impact. Rainbow lanyards are used by most of our international offices with a LGBT programme and all Allies include their status as part of their signature on international communications. When Indian colleagues started to adopt our UK Allies signatures despite the absence of a local programme (and the criminalisation of same-sex relationships in India), a member of the Indian community came out to his colleagues as a result. When he attended Bangalore Pride the next weekend, not only did he find colleagues there with their families, but all were wearing supportive T-Shirts.

OUR LEARNING

- An Allies programme creates safety and inclusion within every part of an organisation. It has a reassuring impact for LGBT staff working in new teams and locations.

- A visible, core group of Allies at all levels creates buzz and is a powerful way to embed the programme.

- Allies become a locus of support as a visible, nominated person whose responsibility it is to uphold inclusive behaviours, supporting teams and influencing organisational culture.

COMMITTED COMMUNICATION

Strong communications are crucial to maintaining the LGBT programme and general majority engagement. In large organisations everyone is communicating all the time: to be effective, communications must land at the right time with the right content. Historically Accenture LGBT communications were distinct and separate from standard business communications. Today we embed LGBT content into a variety of messages, from company newsletters to team updates. The result is LGBT communications that no longer seem like a side-topic, but are embedded in business-as-usual, much like it is in our culture.

GETTING ENGAGEMENT

The second evolution has been a transformation of language and messaging. Language is open and honest. Messaging incorporates personal stories to make tangible connections, leading to understanding rather than instruction. Whatever our communication we strive to keep it fresh and clear, ensuring that it offers learning and opportunities (not just updates) and has a strong visual identity.

DARE TO SHARE

‘Dare to Shares’ are 30 – 40 second videos featuring colleagues from the LGBT and Ally community offering their own personal lens on current topics of conversation. Not only does this have the advantage of varying the message but it also stimulates active debate.
TRAILBLAZING TRAINING

Training delivers and reinforces our LGBT message across all employees. Re-imagining it within a company context has been the fourth key approach in engaging the majority.

INTEGRATION AND INTERSECTIONALITY

We have integrated LGBT training into all our business training, on-boarding, promotion milestones and any online courses we offer, enforcing the message that LGBT inclusivity is part of our culture. We recognise the importance of intersectionality across all our inclusion and diversity work. Within the LGBT community, for example, intersectional training has been important in helping gay employees understand the challenges their bisexual or trans-colleagues face.

Other examples include LGBT fertility events run in conjunction with our family networks and shared events with religious groups and our African and Caribbean Network. Our high uptake of same-sex couple Shared Parental Leave demonstrates the impact of leading intersectionality, policy provision and cultural enablement.

EXTERNAL TRAINING

Our training commitment extends externally from our UK practice to other UK organisations and the global Accenture community. We are formally coaching clients in LGBT inclusion and offer pro-bono best practice calls to support other organisations on their journey. We set inclusion and diversity standards for all our suppliers and have a dedicated team to manage this.

OUR LEARNING

• Integrate LGBT training into all company courses to ensure inclusivity. The more employees are equipped with understanding, the greater the impact on the majority.

• Recognise the importance of intersectionality to grow understanding and connect.

• Have regular calls and touch points with global counterparts to share initiatives and best practice.
CONCLUSION
THE NEVER-ENDING JOURNEY

SO FAR, OUR PROGRESS TOWARDS ENGAGING OUR MAJORITY HAS RECOGNISED TWO PHASES:

The first phase built a strong foundation for an LGBT supportive organisation through a formalised network. To achieve true inclusivity the second phase built on this foundation to engage the majority by embedding an understanding of LGBT perspectives into the culture of our organisation. Through individual accountability of core values, outward facing Allies, creative communications and intersectional training we have inhabited the change we want to see in all the places our employees work.

But the journey towards an inclusive workplace is never-ending. At the time of writing we are engaged in devising a new set of approaches to further refine our LGBT work including: mapping an employee’s journey from an LGBT perspective so we can be sure of inclusivity at every touchpoint; expanding our understanding of gender and the support we offer our trans and non-binary colleagues; and working towards inclusivity in the wider world of work by extending our mentoring of other organisations and inviting clients into training with us.

This work cannot be done in a vacuum. Only through sharing with, learning from and giving support to others will we achieve the engagement of the widest majority of all. We hope that by sharing the details of our approach we have offered you both ideas and practical ways to make the changes you wish to see. Now, we hope you’ll get in touch and do the same for us.
About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialised skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions – underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network – Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With approximately 384,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.

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