



Professionalism & Productivity: LGBT “Safe Spaces”

EVENT, MM/DD/YYYY

Presenters

- D'Arcy Kemnitz, Executive Director, National LGBT Bar Association
- Shannon Minter, Legal Director, National Center for Lesbian Rights
- Lori Lorenzo, Deputy Director, Leadership Council on Legal Diversity

Agenda

- What is a Safe Space?
- Workplace discrimination
- Using appropriate terminology
- Transgender concerns
- What allies can do



Objective

Create a **professional environment** where all employees, **regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression**, can be most productive and best able to serve their clients' diverse needs.

What is a “Safe Space”?

An **environment** in which **everyone** is **respected** and **valued** without regard to **sexual orientation, gender identity** or **gender expression**

- An entire workplace or campus can be labeled a “safe space” based on its **commitment** to this core principle.

In Practice...

In practice, a safe space takes the form of **a particular person or office that has committed to being a resource and advocate for LGBT needs.**

- Human Resources
- Career Services
- LGBT affinity group leader
- A partner or diversity officer



Why is it Necessary?

- Meets demand for diversity.
- Helps take the step from recruitment to retention.
- Leads to happier, healthier and more productive employees.



A Safe Space Requires...

- **Trustworthiness**

- Employees need to know that concerns will be taken seriously and that privacy and confidentiality are respected

- **Commitment**

- A true “Safe Space” is a long-term presence and resource
- Needs to have the support of organizational leadership

- **Knowledge**

- Willingness to learn and ability to direct others to appropriate resources

- **Visibility**



Scenario 1

You are an ally and are giving a presentation and have substituted the word “partner” for “husband.” Afterwards an audience member comes up to you and asks you if you are gay.

What do you do?



Employer Investment in Equality

- Nondiscrimination policies
- Domestic partner/spousal benefits
- Active recruitment of LGBT talent
- LGBT workplace affinity groups
- Support for the National LGBT Bar Association and Lavender Law
- Participation in LGBT advocacy coalitions
- Creation of “safe spaces”



Ongoing Challenges

Creating a comfortable, professional workspace for all.

- Appropriate terminology
- Coming out and being out at work
- Gender identity and expression
- Addressing bias in interactions with LGBT coworkers, applicants and clients

Activity

- What has your organization done to create a safe space for LGBT employees and clients?
- How should companies promote safe spaces?



The TOOLBOX: What Allies Need to Know to Create a Safe Space

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We Are Lawyers: Words Matter

Understand and Use Appropriate Terminology

- **Sexual Orientation:** Describes an individual's emotional, physical and/or romantic attraction to another person.
- **Gender Identity:** A person's deeply held internal sense of being male, female or somewhere else on the gender spectrum.
- **Gender Expression:** How a person chooses to communicate their gender identity to others through clothing, hair, styles, mannerisms and social interactions that are perceived as masculine, feminine or somewhere else on the spectrum.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender expression is non-conforming and/or whose gender identity is different from their birth-assigned sex.
- **Gender Transition:** Refers to the process through which a person modifies their physical characteristics and/or gender expression to be consistent with their gender identity.