FLIP script the

lesbian, gay & bisexual[1]

Words reflect workplace culture. Even when we have the best intentions, our words can reinforce negative stereotypes around sexual orientation. We must recognize that our words matter and take action by using words that create inclusive environments where people feel both that they are valued and that they belong.

IMPACT ON LGB EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

Not being able to bring their whole selves to work can isolate LGB employees and chip away at their ability to forge valuable relationships with co-workers.

"Talking about your sexual orientation is not professional."

RESEARCH SAYS

Non-LGB workers often make casual references to their sexual orientation with colleagues during routine small talk. Similar sharing by LGB individuals can be unfairly deemed inappropriate or unprofessional.[2]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Use inclusive language such as "partner" or "spouse" rather than "husband" or "wife."

IMPACT ON LGB EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

Depending on the situation, outing LGB colleagues can have serious repercussions on their emotional and/or physical well-being, employment, economic stability, personal safety, and/or religious or family situations.[3]

"You know they're gay, right?"

RESEARCH SAYS

Coming out is a deeply personal individual choice and process that rarely happens just once. Approximately three-quarters of all LGBT workers hide who they are in the workplace to some extent, with nearly half choosing to be open with some colleagues but not others.[4]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Ask LGB colleagues how you can best be an ally for them while respecting their privacy.[5]

IMPACT ON LGB EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

This phrase can demean LGB employees, make them feel unsafe and unwelcome, and may lead them to become less engaged at work.[6]

"That's so gay."

RESEARCH SAYS

Over 40% of LGBT employees have experienced some form of discrimination on the job[7] or take actions such as hiding who they are to avoid it.[8]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

Interrupt derogatory language, offensive comments, and "jokes" to let people know that this kind of language is not okay.[9]

IMPACT ON LGB EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

Stereotyping can exacerbate bias and discrimination[10] and may heighten experiences of "otherness" for LGB employees.[11]

"He's gay, so obviously he's not right for this."

RESEARCH SAYS

Stereotyping may limit employees' ability to innovate and perform to their full potential. LGB stereotypes that conflict with prevailing leadership norms may cause LGB employees to be overlooked for opportunities,[12] resulting in downsized aspirations and loss of talent.[13]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Focus on objective standards of performance, not assumptions or subjective preferences such as "style" or "fit."

IMPACT ON LGB EMPLOYEES IN THE WORKPLACE

Implicitly asking LGB employees to cover or downplay aspects of their personality or presentation to conform to heteronormative standards (i.e., "gender performance"[14]) prevents them from bringing their authentic selves to work.

"Can you tone down the gay?"

RESEARCH SAYS

Over 60% of employees of all backgrounds, including LGB individuals, report actively hiding an aspect of themselves at work. Covering can lead employees to feel unable to fulfill their potential and can damage their sense of self and commitment to the organization.[15]

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
Get to know colleagues who are different from you, and engage in courageous conversations to broaden your perspectives.

HOW TO FLIP THE SCRIPT

EDUCATE YOURSELF
Learn the terminology[16] and ask LGB colleagues about their experiences.

PAY ATTENTION
Be cognizant of your word choices, assumptions, and level of personal sharing.

DEMONSTRATE ALLYSHIP
Affirm the experiences shared by LGB individuals, and challenge assumptions and behaviors that can lead to prejudice and exclusion.

CATALYST
Changing workplaces. Changing lives.

ENDNOTES

1. The common nomenclature (LGBT) refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. While those who identify as part of the LGBT community share many common challenges, sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct concepts with unique implications in the workplace. This tool focuses specifically on lesbian, gay, and bisexual inclusion in an intentional effort to highlight the need for inclusive communication regarding sexual orientation.
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15. Kenji Yoshino and Christie Smith, *Uncovering Talent: A New Model for Inclusion* (Deloitte, December 2013); Catalyst, *What Is Covering?* (2014).
16. Catalyst, *LGBT Inclusion—Understanding the Terminology* (2014).