
International Day Against Homophobia–May 17

Sexual diversity in the workplace. It pays off! — How?

Montreal, February 2, 2012 – Fondation Émergence launches today its 2012 campaign to fight homophobia as a lead-in to the *International Day Against Homophobia* on May 17.

This year's campaign called *Sexual Diversity in the Workplace, It Pays Off* aims to inform everyone in the working world that sexual diversity is a financial asset. The economic angle is based on a variety of factors related to motivation and staff retention.

Being invisible

Many workplaces claim they have no gays or lesbians working there and that homosexuals work in specific places. Such statements result from ignorance of the realities in the gay community. Gays and lesbians are everywhere – they are just more visible in places that are more accepting. No matter where you are, one out of every ten people identify themselves as gay.

Fleeing small towns

Many gays and lesbians leave their home towns for large cities to pursue their careers because of their sexual orientation. Companies that succeed in creating open-minded workplaces improve their chances of keeping workers and making their investments profitable.

Staff retention

Workplaces that deny the facts of sexual diversity risk losing some of their workers without even knowing why. The employer is left thinking, "What a shame, he was a great employee and hard worker, but kind of kept to himself." Staff turnover, recruitment, and training are very costly for employers.

Self-realization

Everyone agrees that self-realization is one of the most important sources of job motivation. Being in a workplace that is hostile to homosexuality has negative effects on gays and lesbians, and they would be right to think homosexuals would be hard-pressed to reach their full potential in that type of environment.

Relationships with co-workers

One of the best incentives for productivity is warm friendly relations with co-workers. Workplaces that belittle gays and lesbians and tolerate disdain towards them wind up paying the price because they cannot depend on a fully steady workforce.

Attitudes form the foundation for relations between co-workers. Homophobia is a negative attitude. You do not need to actually commit homophobic acts to create a hostile work environment.

Indifference can be an underhanded attitude. In most cases it is unintentional, but workplaces wind up isolating gay and lesbian workers just by saying 'it's none of my business what you do in your bedroom'.

Reducing someone's sexual orientation to this narrow perspective isolates people. It is almost impossible for gays or lesbians to talk about their love life without being forced to reveal their sexual orientation.

Creating a work environment

Everyone has a role to play in creating workplaces that are open to sexual diversity. Employers and co-workers have to show they are accepting, and gays and lesbians have to show they are receptive.

It is all about attitude and subtlety says Fondation Émergence President Laurent McCutcheon. "You hear people say, 'What do the gays want now, they have everything'. Yes, we have all the rights and legal protections and we even have tolerance. Who would want to be tolerated by their friends and family? No one! That is what has to be brought into the workplace, a genuine acceptance that lets you be included in a group and part of the action," sums up President McCutcheon.

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