



THE 2010 OUT & EQUAL WORKPLACE SUMMIT: A BUSINESS CASE

- **The 2010 Out & Equal Workplace Summit is the premier global event on LGBT workplace issues.**
- **The Summit is an intensive working conference, providing rich opportunities to build key employee skills and company loyalty.**
- **Visible corporate support and participation in the Summit reinforces an organization's perception as an employer of choice for the LGBT community.**
- **Summit participation keeps organizations abreast of emerging practices and issues, and competitive in LGBT talent recruitment and retention.**
- **The 2010 Out & Equal Workplace Summit experience will be less expensive than in recent years, improving the value return on investment.**

INTRODUCTION

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit is the world's premier educational and networking event focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workplace equality. This annual event involves a wide range of learning and networking opportunities for nearly 2,000 members of the LGBT employee leadership community and the colleagues, workforce professionals and executives that support them.

This year's Summit will take place in Los Angeles, California from October 5-8th. The schedule includes three plenary sessions featuring high profile speakers, a variety of discussions on emerging trends and leading practices with panels of respected business and movement leaders, and approximately 80 top quality workshops on a wide range of issues important to LGBT employees and the workplace. The Summit also offers several full-day training seminars, special receptions and luncheons, and the Outie Awards Dinner. Aspects of the Summit in 2009 were designated as official training for the Federal government and eligible for SHRM continuing education credits; we will be seeking similar accreditation in 2010.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING TALENT IN A DIFFICULT ECONOMIC CLIMATE

With few exceptions, human capital is one of the most critical resources contributing to the success of any organization. The capacity to attract and retain the best employees, provide them the tools and environment to be fully productive, and to support their continued professional development is a clear competitive advantage. The competition for the brightest and best, optimally deployed and appropriately motivated, is a critical organizational competency, irrespective of whether the economy is growing or slowing.

Especially when companies are profitable and growing, monetary compensation is often a primary means of attracting, retaining, and motivating talent. There are other important factors, of course: a clear career path and opportunity to advance, access to professional development opportunities, strong identification with corporate values, productive relationships with colleagues, a sense of security, a safe work environment, visibility and recognition, etc.

It is in the context of these non-monetary factors that the business case for investing in workforce diversity and inclusion is relevant – certainly for employees who identify within the broad LGBT community. In difficult economic times - when the flexibility to increase monetary compensation is constrained -- organizations must rely more on these broad "quality of work" aspects to keep its workforce engaged. We are in such a challenging economic climate now.

BENEFITS OF SUMMIT PARTICIPATION

The 2010 Out & Equal Workplace Summit will provide a unique opportunity to enhance quickly and significantly the quality of the work experience of key employees who are also LGBT.

- **Employees - those participating in the Summit and those who learn of an organization's participation - witness a concrete example of the organization's commitment to workplace equality for all**, most specifically to its LGBT employees and their friends, families and allies. The strength of that commitment is directly proportional to the organization's visibility at the Summit in terms of sponsorship levels and the number of visible employee participants.
- **The Summit offers important opportunities for organizations to showcase their leading workplace practices and programs.** By presenting workshops or participating on panels - either as an organization or in collaboration with industry partners - companies are able to share their expertise, reinforcing their position as a leading, progressive employer of choice.
- Companies are continually challenged to respond to emerging workplace issues. This is specifically true for LGBT issues, given both the evolution of legislation that impacts the workforce, as well as the emergence of new corporate practices among the leading competitors for the brightest and best employees. The Summit is an effective forum for organizations to ensure that they can attain or remain on the leading edge of best practices around this aspect of talent management. The Summit likewise provides organizations with the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue for emerging issues and best practices affecting LGBT employees. **With the expected 2010 passage of the fully inclusive federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), this year's Summit will provide a critical forum for discussing ENDA's impact and perspectives on compliance.**
- **The Summit provides a significant opportunity for professional development and leadership training for an organization's LGBT employees and allies.** The Summit experience is a working conference, focused on making available the leading practices and programs impacting the LGBT workforce. Nearly 100 workshops and panels on a variety of topics provide specific education and resources that can be implemented upon returning to the workplace after the Summit's completion.

- **An organization's LGBT employees and allies from sites around the United States (and outside the country) have an opportunity at the Summit for cross-geographical, cross-functional cooperation and relationship building**, from planning the organization's strategy for maximizing the Summit experience to having the chance to interact in person over the course of the program. Many companies take advantage of the Summit as a forum for organizational meetings of its LGBT employee leaders and to participate in (or lead) industry-specific network.
- **Competition for individual and corporate recognition in the form of Outie Finalists and Award Winners** in five categories provides organizations an opportunity to review and document their accomplishments and celebrate their leadership in LGBT workplace equality, again distinguishing themselves to their present and prospective employees.

BENEFITS FOR ERG LEADERS AND MEMBERSHIP

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit provides tools specific to the leaders, membership and advisors of an organization's LGBT employee resource group (ERG). A significant number of workshops are presented to cover topics specific to the leadership, structure, strategies and success of ERGs. Topics that range from membership engagement to community outreach to cross-affinity collaboration are among many targeted to provide ERG members with concrete benchmarks and strategies for improving the effectiveness of their groups.

Beyond the learning and professional development opportunities, the Summit provides the single best chance for building relationships with peers within and across industries that allow continued dialogue and learning over the course of the entire year. Additionally, the experience of Summit participants -- whether attending their first Summit or a long time repeat attendee -- is overwhelmingly affirming and energizing, with historic positive survey ratings continually above 90%.

It is important to note that, from an ERG membership/leadership perspective, the experience of attendees becomes more effective when shared with a critical mass of colleagues from their organization. The precise number varies depending on the size of the organization and the maturity of the ERG.

BENEFITS FOR HR/DIVERSITY and INCLUSION PROFESSIONALS

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit provides resources and networking opportunities geared specifically to Human Resources and Diversity & Inclusion professionals. Workshops and featured panels discussions highlight aspects of LGBT workplace equality of specific interest to the talent management community, from general education to policy development to changes in the legal framework affecting the LGBT employee community. Senior HR executives and chief diversity officers participate in many aspects of the Summit, lending their expertise on specialized panels targeted specifically to their colleagues. Workshops that range from introductory to advanced topics address the broad LGBT community as well as specific sub-populations relevant to the workforce experience including transgender, women, and communities of color.

In addition to the learning and networking opportunity provided by the Summit to talent management professionals, HR/Diversity representation at the Summit is also an important means for reinforcing personal and institutional support for LGBT employees, particularly with members of the organization's ERGs.

BENEFITS FOR LGBT EXECUTIVES

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit provides a unique opportunity for senior executives - those from the LGBT community and others with positions in senior organizational leadership - to be visibly supportive of LGBT workplace equality. For LGBT senior executives, in particular, the networking opportunities are another highlight of the Summit. Specific programs are designed to form an executive experience at the Summit, providing LGBT executives the chance to discuss their unique stories with peers as well as to provide visible leadership as role models to literally thousands of LGBT employees as members of featured panels and luncheon speakers.

THE TIME IS NOW !

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit is a rich series of opportunities for companies and their employees at many levels to strengthen relationships, reinforce organizational values, and demonstrate that their workplaces are where employees and the people that support them can be fully productive and appreciated for the talent that they bring, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, all in an environment of serious learning.

Just like LGBT employees, their allies, their HR and Diversity leaders, and their companies need to continually “come out” in support of full workplace equality. Employers have the opportunity to make a decision each and every day: to be invisible or to take clear action in support of its values. Participating in the Summit is just such a decision.

Finding economical ways to maintain employee productivity and loyalty is critical. The 2010 Out & Equal Workplace Summit provides a critical opportunity to keep LGBT employees engaged.

Los Angeles, the site for the 2010 Summit, provides many opportunities for adding business and pleasure to the valuable work experience of the Out & Equal Workplace Summit. Organizations that plan early and strategically for their participation at the Summit have the opportunity to reap significant benefits.

###

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates™ is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Out & Equal champions safe and equitable workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. The organization advocates building and strengthening successful organizations that value all employees, customers, and communities. See our website, www.outandequal.org, for more details