

Job Search and Career Tips for LGBTQ Students

As you prepare to enter the workforce or do an internship, you may be faced with additional challenges related to your sexual orientation and/or identity. You may have questions about how open you should be or how to come out in the workplace. That is why we are developing this brief tipsheet. At the end of this document there will be resources for researching companies/industries, job search tools, advocacy resources, and networking resources focused on the LGBTQ population. We hope this is a helpful resource and please let us know if you have other resources or issues you would like us to include. There are no rules to this process, so please come see Career Services for any questions and guidance. We will cover the following areas in this guide:

- A. How out do you want to be?
- B. Researching organizations
- C. Writing your resume
- D. Strategies for interviewing
- E. How to come out on the job?



A. Strategies: How Out Do You Want To Be?

This is a very personal decision. It is absolutely up to you to determine your openness and under what circumstances. For many people their sexuality is a key part of their identity and to remain closed in the workplace would not be true to themselves. On the other hand, some prefer to maintain a separation of their professional and personal lives, and only share information with their closest friends. You may have to evaluate how open a particular industry or location is to determine your answer to this question. There are positive and negative sides to coming out in the job search or in the workplace and you need to weigh the decision carefully.

Your attitudes about coming out may change throughout your lifetime. Things you may want to consider are: What is your level of involvement in the LGBTQ community? If you have a partner, are they out in most situations? Are your friends, peers, and support network heavily connected to the LGBTQ community? If you identify strongly and are very committed to the community, this may be a deciding factor on your decision. In fact, you may re-evaluate your decision on being out each time you change jobs because different environments may influence your decision.

B. Strategies: Researching Organizations

Always research individual organizations as to their level of acceptance for LGBTQ employees and how you will approach your communication with them. You may also find through your research how open certain industries are, which could influence how you approach your job search. The web sites that we provide at the end will help you look up employee groups, non-discrimination policies, and domestic partnership benefits. You may also find this information on employer web sites as well. If you find an LGBTQ employee group you could contact them to talk to current staff about what it is really like to work there.

In addition to researching organizations, you may want to research the geographic location as well. On the Human Rights Campaign web site at www.hrc.org/state_laws you can find an up to date map of the states that have passed anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation and gender. You may want to even go more local because some counties and cities have passed anti-discrimination laws too. There might also be regional or municipal workplace groups for LGBTQ individuals.

C. Strategies: Writing Your Resume

First, utilize our Resume Tip Sheet to start developing your resume. It is available in our office or on our website. Second, the research you do on organizations will help you determine how open to be on your resume. Consider your audience and determine ahead of time how out you want to be. Should your LGBTQ activities be on your resume? If you are applying for an organization that advocates for the gay community, then

your LGBTQ experiences will be a strong advantage. But, if you know that the organization is less open, then you may want to consider listing the information in a different way. Instead of citing the actual name of the organization you could list it as an “Anti-Discrimination Organization”, but you would definitely include your accomplishments from the experience. Again, be certain to put the emphasis on accomplishments that are relevant to employers. Highlight skills in leadership, budgeting, organizational, speaking, and event planning or whatever the job description is asking for.

Finally, another way to format your resume would be to use a “functional format”. This type of resume groups accomplishments according to functions/skills rather than by the organization name. For example, you might use headings such as Event Planning, Fundraising, and Presentation Experience and then list the accomplishments under these headings. This de-emphasizes the organization where you developed the skills. There is a sample functional resume in our Resume Tip Sheet. No matter what style you use, you will still need to prepare for questions during an interview.

D. Strategies: Interviewing Process

First, please refer to our Interviewing Tip Sheet available in our office and on our web site. Just like anyone in the interviewing process, it is critical that you research the organization in which you are interviewing. Two of the main questions you will get is, “What do you know about our organization?” and “Why do you want to work here?” So, understanding the culture, environment, and the type of people an organization hires can only help you with those questions. Most companies have a section like this on their website and you must do some homework to be able to present yourself well in the interview.

Researching organizations can also help you determine how out you want to be during the interview process. You may find out that the company is really open and supportive in the area of LGBTQ issues. Nevertheless, you need to be conscious of the fact that you may not know how the particular interviewer(s) will respond to these issues and they may evaluate you negatively (consciously or unconsciously), regardless of the company policies. As on the resume, focus on your accomplishments and skills developed from your experiences. If you have decided to be open about your sexual orientation you can talk about the organizations in which you worked, but if you have not, you might refer to the organization as an anti-discrimination organization

and then focus on those achievements as a result of your work. Many people wait until they have secured the job offer, when they have more leverage or until after starting the new job to come out on their own terms.

You could always “test the waters” during your interview by asking questions about the organization’s diversity initiatives. You could be more direct and ask “Can you tell me more about the organization’s policies around race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and the like?” These should not be your first questions. Focus on your capabilities and accomplishments and make the company want to hire you. After convincing them you are the right fit for the job, then ask these types of questions as you move forward.

E. Strategies: Coming Out On The Job

The Counseling Center here at Husson can help you develop strategies for any situation in which you want to come out (i.e., parents, friends, co-workers, school). They have an incredible resource guide on coming out and it has very good suggestions. It can be intimidating to come out at work because you spend the majority of your time with your co-workers. When deciding to come out or not, look for clues around the office to see how open your co-workers might be.

It is probably best to focus on your job, learn the expectations for your performance, and establish yourself as a competent employee. Once you have done this it may feel more comfortable to come out to your co-workers. It may just happen naturally over time as you have conversations about what you did over the weekend or if you bring your partner to a company function. Again, it is up to you to figure out what will be most comfortable for you in this situation. Most of your co-workers will simply accept you for the value you add and the contributions you make to the organization. Some co-workers may choose to avoid you in social situations, but that is their loss.

Benefits of Coming Out at Work

1. Eliminates the need to mislead or hide.
2. Makes deeper friendships possible.
3. Breaks down barriers to understanding.
4. Builds trusting working relationships
5. Can bring our whole selves to work.
6. Can make you more productive and even benefit your career because co-workers may see you as courageous.

Important Note: This guide was adapted from the University of Pennsylvania Career Center's website guide for LGBTQ students at:

<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/affinity/lgbtguide.php>

LGBTQ Resources on the Web

Job Search Resources

ProGay Jobs: www.progayjobs.com

Diversity Working: www.diversityworking.com

Company Research Resources

Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org. Largest GLBTQ civil rights organization

Out for Work: www.outforwork.org: LGBTQ career resources online

Out and Equal Workplace Advocate's Career Link: <http://www.outandequal.org/resources/lgbt-careerlink/>

Networking Resources

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com. Professional networking site with several LGBTQ groups.

LGBT Associations:

www.hrc.org/resources/entry/lgbt-professional-and-student-associations

Out for Professionals: www.outprofessionals.org.

Gay and lesbian professional networking site.

America's LGBT Chamber of Commerce:

www.nglcc.org. LGBT owned and friendly businesses.

LGBTQ Advocacy Resources

Pride at Work: www.prideatwork.org. Social and economic justice organization.

Campus Pride: www.campuspride.org. Non-profit working to create safer college environment.

National Center for Transgender Equality:

www.transequality.org. Social justice organization.

GLAD: www.glad.org. Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders—Legal rights organization.

Lambda Legal: www.lambdalegal.org. Civil rights and workplace discrimination information.

National Gay & Lesbian Task Force:

www.thetaskforce.org. Advocacy information and campaigns.

I AM:Trans People Speak:

www.transpeoplespeak.org. A project to raise awareness about the diversity within transgender communities.

The resources portion adapted from a piece created by Barbara Zerillo, Assistant Director of Career Services at Clark University



(Check out video on surviving the workplace)

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