

# Allyship is Leadership

— Lessons from a panel discussion @ Rotman



For many LGBTQ workers, the decision to come out is contingent on whether they perceive the environment to be inclusive. This is where allies can take a stand and create a culture of safety.



Of closeted employees, 31% fear losing connections with coworkers if they come out. Nearly 2/3 heard lesbian and gay jokes. 43% heard bisexual jokes, 40% heard transgender jokes.

**23%**

23% of LGBTQ workers fear they might not be offered development or advancement opportunities if they came out.



Nearly 1 in 10 LGBT employees left a job because the environment was unwelcoming.

## What YOU can do as an ally



### 1. Take risks

- Move from being a passive to an active bystander.
- Push against a bureaucracy that may not be receptive.
- Don't be silent. People who make insensitive remarks or exclude an LGBTQ person from consideration for a key role are often open to feedback.
- Stand up for others, even to your seniors. Such an action will give you authority and credibility as a leader.



### 2. "Come out" as an ally

- Make your allyship public – it might prompt other leaders and colleagues to do the same.
- Speak up against bias. If you are in a position of privilege, be more vocal and visible.
- Create a welcoming environment for LGBTQ colleagues by, for example, displaying a rainbow flag in the office.
- Demonstrate your LGBTQ allegiance to investors, clients, and the community.



### 3. Practice what you preach

- Move beyond symbolic gestures or statements. Create action plans.
- Spearhead the creation of employee resource groups in your organization.
- Try to change the workplace culture. People don't imitate by osmosis, it requires proactive, constant attempts to stimulate change.



### 4. Learn and stay informed

- Allow individuals to dictate their own journeys.
- Do not pressure people to do things that are outside of their comfort zone.
- Build relationships with members of the community.
- Empathize and learn by actively listening to the LGBTQ (or any marginalized) community.
- Realize that it's okay to make mistakes. Just be respectful and genuine.