Making Your Workplace a Safe Space

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Today’s Presenters

• **Dale Philbrick** is a former chair of the LGBT employee resource group at Texas Instruments, the TI Pride Network. He joined TI in 1996 after earning his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from University of California, Berkeley. He has worked in different areas of TI’s Education Technology business, from Field Marketing representative to Director of Strategic Alliances. He currently manages TI’s Teacher Professional Development and Digital Content teams. Dale lives in Dallas.

• **Paul von Wupperfeld** is the global manager of the translation and localization architecture at TI. He is active in TI’s employee diversity and charitable efforts, serving as co-chair of the TI Pride Network. Outside of work, Paul was a founding officer of the Out & Equal DFW Regional Affiliate in 2004, and served on the board of directors for the AIDS Interfaith Network. He and his partner of 25 years, Andy Smith, reside in Dallas.
Safe Space Program

TI Safe Space
Do your LGBT employees feel safe?

- LGBT employees face situations every day where they are forced to decide how to represent themselves:
  
  “How do I answer questions in casual conversation such as ‘What did you do this weekend?’”
  
  - *It requires a lot of effort to constantly monitor my pronouns.*

  “Should I put a photo of my same-sex spouse or partner on my desk?”
  
  - *Can I tell my coworkers whom this is or should I lie?*

Will my same-sex spouse or partner *really* be welcome at department events?
  
  - *How will my coworkers react when they meet my partner?*
What do LGBT employees risk?

- Revealing a different sexual orientation, gender identity or expression may lead to the loss of:
  - Respect of their coworkers.
  - Credibility in the workplace.
  - Friendships in the office.
  - Opportunities for top assignments or projects.
  - Promotions and career growth.
  - Their jobs.
States with LGBT employment protections

- Employment non-discrimination law covers sexual orientation and gender identity (19 states + D.C.)
- Employment non-discrimination law covers only sexual orientation, though federal law offers some protections (see note) (3 states)
- No employment non-discrimination law covering sexual orientation or gender identity, though federal law offers some protections (see note) (28 states)
- State has law preventing passage or enforcement of local nondiscrimination laws

- Texas Instruments
What is the Safe Space program?

The Safe Space program is a TI-supported initiative that provides a positive and non-threatening way to communicate that:

- People are aware of the issues that LGBT employees may face in the workplace.
- You support your LGBT coworkers.
- Hostility and disrespect will not be tolerated, and
- LGBT people are safe with you.
What is the Safe Space program?

• When LGBT employees need to discuss personal issues with coworkers or managers, they may not know whom they can trust. Conversely, managers and employees who want to be supportive of diversity often don't know how to show this support to LGBT coworkers.

• The program provides a non-threatening way to bring awareness to the issues that gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons face, while conveying that hostility and disrespect based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are not acceptable in the workplace.

• The Safe Space program is focused on full engagement, and is not about changing value systems.
What is the Safe Space program?

• By displaying the program magnet, you send a visible message that people can be honest with you about their sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and that people can discuss related issues with you.
How Do You Use the Program?

- **Place** the Safe Space **sticker** on your badge

- **Display** the Safe Space **magnet** on your office wall or door
How can you be supportive?

- In addition to learning more about the issues and displaying a Safe Space magnet in your workplace, there are several ways that you can support your LGBT coworkers:
  - Be aware that not everyone is heterosexual.
  - Between 4 to 10 percent of the U.S. population is gay, lesbian or bisexual. Few LGBT people fit the popular stereotypes of behavior and appearance. Likewise, it's not safe to assume that people who fit these stereotypes are LGBT.
What does the symbol mean?

- The pink triangle is a widely recognized symbol of LGBT pride and liberation, even though its origins are in oppression.
What does the symbol mean?

• In Germany and in the countries overrun by Hitler’s troops during the Second World War, the Nazis used the pink triangle to persecute those they labeled “homosexual,” which broadly included gay men, lesbians, trans and bisexual persons. They were arrested, placed in concentration camps and targeted for extermination.
What does the symbol mean?

• Just as Jewish people were forced to wear a yellow Star of David, the people the Nazis classified as “homosexual” were identified by pink triangles.
What does the symbol mean?

- Starting in the 1970s and continuing until today, the pink triangle serves as a reminder of that suffering; a symbol of struggle, remembrance and empowerment for many in the LGBT community as a whole.
How can **you** be supportive?

- **Don't permit homophobic or transphobic comments or jokes.**
  - These are harmful and don't belong in the workplace. Let your coworkers know that you find these types of comments or references offensive.

- **Use inclusive language.**
  - LGBT employees are often in committed, long-term relationships, but were legally prohibited from marrying their same-sex partners in many states. Some transgender persons have been prohibited from marrying anyone, regardless of gender; others have seen legal marriages annulled and parental rights severed. Instead of asking if a coworker is married, ask if they are in a relationship. Terms such as significant other and partner are more inclusive than girlfriend, husband or spouse.
How can you be supportive?

• Treat the subject positively.
  – When LGBT issues are discussed, make it clear that you are supportive.

• Respect the individual’s privacy.
  – Keep in mind that LGBT people may not be ready to "come out of the closet," even if you are trying to be supportive. Ensure that your efforts to reach out are not aimed specifically at them. Understand that for some persons, especially transgender persons, disclosure can elevate the risk of discrimination, harm or even violence.
Common questions in the workplace

• There are a lot of employee initiatives - why is Safe Space just for LGBT employees?
  
  – America has seen the oppression of *many* groups based on inherent factors, such as race, sex, national origin, etc. While the civil rights movements have lifted the oppression from many such groups, LGBT people are still common targets of hostilities. LGBT persons are an important part of the work force, and so we take steps to ensure that these employees have a safe, supportive work environment. This allows them to focus on their work and be productive. Full engagement by all employees is the ultimate goal.
Common questions in the workplace

• If someone doesn’t have a Safe Space sticker or magnet, what does that mean?
  – It means that you cannot immediately know whether it’s safe to discuss LGBT issues with that person.
  – It does not mean that the person is non-supportive of diversity in general or the Safe Space program specifically. You must get to know the individual on a more personal level to understand their awareness of the issues that face LGBT individuals.
Common questions in the workplace

• If I wear or display the Safe Space symbol, does it mean that I agree with certain beliefs that may conflict with my own, such as same-sex marriage?
  
  – No. It’s not about agreeing or disagreeing. It’s about fairness and respect. It’s about providing an environment where a person can bring one’s whole self to work.

  – Supporting your LGBT coworkers doesn’t mean you know about or agree with every issue that might be LGBT-related.
Common questions in the workplace

- **As a leader, should I wear a Safe Space sticker?**
  - Wearing the Safe Space sticker or displaying a Safe Space magnet is a personal decision.
  - If you feel prepared to discuss LGBT issues with others where you work, you may choose to display the Safe Space symbol. If you prefer not to discuss the LGBT issues while at work, you should not to display the Safe Space symbol.
Common questions

• Should I encourage or pressure people in my group to wear a sticker?
  – No. Wearing a Safe Space sticker or displaying a magnet is a personal decision based on how prepared a specific individual is to talk about LGBT issues. As a leader, you may help individuals in your group become aware of the Safe Space program and the issues of LGBT persons in the workforce, but you should not pressure anyone into participating in the program.
Common questions

• How can my company or organization create a Safe Space program?
  – Texas Instruments is pleased to share electronic copies of its Safe Space literature, presentations, etc., and magnet and sticker ordering information with anyone interested in the program.
  – Send a request to safespace@ti.com.
Other Questions?
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Celebrating 20 Years of Inclusion: 1995 - 2015