

#1 Qzine

Together for change -
A guide for Allies





ally

Ally: Straight/Cisgender advocate for LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion - a supporter, a friend, a person who wants to see change and is prepared to help bring it about.

ally



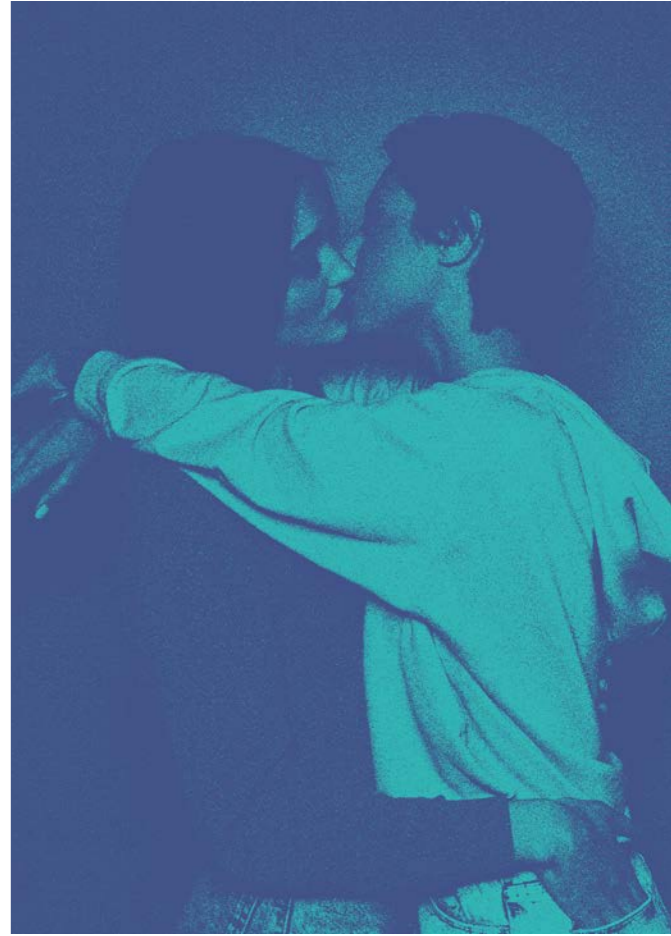
‘How can our heterosexual colleagues contribute to LGBTQ+ inclusion if they have never walked in our shoes?’

When organisations first start looking at creating an LGBTQ+ employee network, there are two questions that often get asked... the first is in regard to language - GLBT, LGBTQ+, GLBTIQ ... etc. What is the correct use of the acronym? The second is in regard to the groups inclusivity (to include or not include allies).

We have over the years addressed many genuine and well-meaning concerns such as “what is the point of having an LGBTQ+ employee network if its open to everyone?”, “if straight people are coming, LGBTQ+ people won’t come because essentially they’ll be outing themselves”, and “how can our heterosexual colleagues contribute to LGBTQ+ inclusion if they have never walked in our shoes?”.

At the Adecco Group we encourage all our employees to be champions of diversity and inclusion. We believe LGBTQ+ allies in the workplace can further assist in providing an inclusive work environment, and help create an atmosphere where employees are not just valued, but empowered to think freely and to be themselves.





The role that Allies play

Once we do engage allies, what role do they play? We've identified below many of the roles that allies play within an organisation, but this is certainly not an exhaustive list.. Organisations every day are discovering the benefits of an engaged ally workforce while the ongoing role that allies play may be quite fluid dependent upon the maturity of your organisation and the speed with which it adapts and grows.

- Allies help to extend and grow an employee network, allowing for a greater, collaborative and more diverse voice for LGBTQ+ inclusion. This is particularly important in the early days when numbers may be low and LGBTQ+ identifying people may be wary of participating.

- Allies clearly promote the network as an all-inclusive network, one that is not just for the "queer people". This makes it far easier for those who are not "out at work" to participate without identifying themselves as someone within the LGBTQ+ community. It allows people to "test the waters", meet people who are most like themselves, determine whether or not the organisation really is accepting without committing to be out themselves.

- Allies can call out anti-queer behavior and slurs, address negative stereotypes, correct destructive myths and take a stand against queer jokes in a way that LGBTQ+ cannot. It's a different voice taking a stand, one that may carry more weight with some people and one that will be privy to a lot of the comments that LGBTQ+ people may not be, just by the very nature of them being there

- Allies can be a tremendous support to other employees who may have family and/or friends that identify as LGBTQ+ people,

who may not want to come on board as an ally but may want to talk to someone who understands and will lend a supportive ear.

- Allies can support LGBTQ+ employees by sharing factual information with their colleagues, helping to clear up common misconceptions, destructive myths and outright incorrect information.

- Allies can help to normalise language and the life of LGBTQ+ employees by talking openly about events, their friends, the network and their views on current political commentary involving LGBTQ+ people.

- Allies can come on board to assist you with your network initiatives. Many provide that much needed extra resource or "man-power" to achieve what needs to be done.

- Allies bring their own passions for equity, inclusion and essential human rights and are able to channel that in a way that will promote what it is you are trying to achieve.

- Allies help to confront the "silence" and discrimination that normalises heterosexuality and cisgender at the expense of LGBTQ+ employees.

- Allies are educators and agents for change.

- Allies are your supporters, your advocates, your friends and they are able to take everything they learn about LGBTQ+ inclusion at work out to their family, their friends and their external social networks.

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Why would Allies want to be involved?

There are many reasons why people may decide to get involved in LGBTQ+ initiatives as an ally.

A belief in Social Justice, Inclusion and Essential Human Rights

For some, it's a strong belief in social justice, inclusion and essential human rights. For many straight allies, it's incomprehensible what some LGBTQ+ employees still go through on a daily basis just to do their job, particularly in this day and age, it makes them want to take a stand, get involved and be part of the change. Many see it as a great way to make a difference, particularly if they have been privy to the experiences of LGBTQ+ family, friends or colleagues.

A way of showing support for LGBTQ+ family and friends

Supporting LGBTQ+ initiatives within the workplace is a great way to show support for family, friends and loved ones who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex. It is not uncommon for mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, cousins, daughters, sons to become active in LGBTQ+ workplace initiatives in order to learn more about their family and those they care about, or to become part of the change that they hope will make a difference to their loved ones and the community to which they belong. Some of society's greatest LGBTQ+ activists are spurred on by the love they have for family members and the inequity they see them experience in many areas of everyday life.

To gain a better understanding of LGBTQ+ people and the challenges faced

For some, it's simply about better understanding LGBTQ+ people, the wonderful diversity that they bring to an organisation, the challenges that they face and their view of organisational culture and society as a whole.

This not only allows allies to interact and engage with people who are not like themselves, but it generates a greater appreciation of the importance of inclusion and assists in better understanding the true value of diversity.

To meet new people, make new friends

The opportunity to build new social and professional networks is another reason why people become involved in workplace networks as allies. It's a great opportunity to make new friends, engage with people unlike themselves and build a wider network of colleagues, associates and possible business contacts.

To offer skills and expertise in meaningful way

Some people have skills and expertise that they feel can really contribute to an initiative that they support and become involved simply to assist, offer their expertise and hopefully make a difference in doing so.

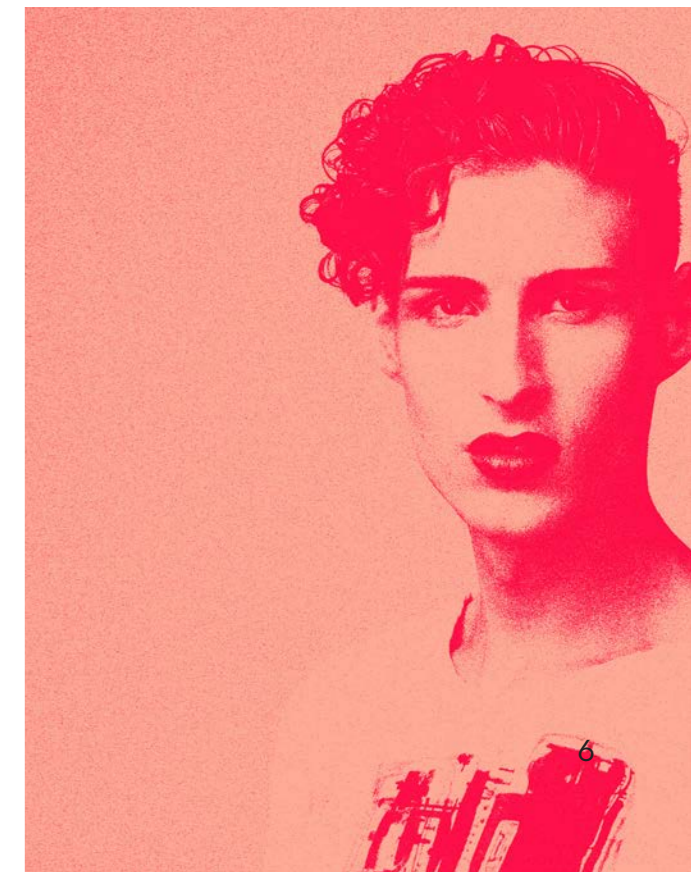




What makes a good Ally?

Every ally will bring a different set of strengths and possibly skills to your LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives. For some it will be their passion and enthusiasm, for others, their willingness to address homophobic comments or gay slurs within the workplace, but essentially, a really great ally is one who:

- **has a level of understanding as to why LGBTQ+ inclusion is so important to the company;**
- **has an understanding of LGBTQ+ terminology and challenges; and a willingness to ask questions and learn**
- **has a strong sense of self;**
- **displays a willingness to play a part, no matter how small or large;**
- **has an understanding of; and a respect for an individual's confidentiality.**



Heterosexual privilege



Few people are brave enough to walk into a new job 'gay'. For many, there is a testing of the waters or what we commonly refer to as a cultural scan. This cultural scan may be a conscious effort to determine how LGBTQ+ friendly an organisation is and may include a review of diversity initiatives, scanning of language used within HR policies or determining if there is an LGBTQ+ employee network. Alternatively it may be quite unconscious in so much as a "sensing" of whether or not this organisation is one in which an individual can be truly be themselves.

Sexual orientation is often a sensitive topic in the workplace but is not something unique to those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. We all have a sexual orientation. Most people, identifying as heterosexual, don't even consider the fact that their sexual orientation is on display 24/7 and is brought to work on a daily basis.

- We talk about our husband or wife, our children, our families.
- We celebrate engagements, weddings and birth of children with morning teas, greeting cards and perhaps team gifts or lunches
- We have photos on our desk, screensavers or mobile phones
- We bring our loved ones to Christmas parties or workplace dinners
- We socialise and use families as a means of small talk, getting to know one another
- We speak to our loved ones throughout the day
- We talk about our weekends etc.

Some academics refer to this as heterosexual privilege

While many people, regardless of how they identify, may not feel that they can bring their "whole selves to work" or can truly be themselves at work, most take this heterosexual privilege for granted. A heterosexual's orientation is such an incredibly innate part of who they are, they don't even consider the fact that "who they sleep with is flaunted or on display for all to see" (a phrase commonly referenced in terms of the inappropriateness of being out at work).

Unfortunately for many LGBTQ+ employees, the equivalent privilege carries great risk. Hence the initial nervousness about being out at work. Consider the alternative scenarios. How comfortable would your workplace be with:

- A gay man talking about his husband, children, family.
- Celebrating the engagement of a lesbian teammate with a morning tea, greeting card, team gift or lunch
- A gay man having photos of himself with his boyfriend and young daughter in a loving embrace on his desktop; and within a frame on his desk
- A lesbian bringing her long term partner to a Christmas event, or key stakeholder event
- A gay person openly and honestly answering small talk around family and marriage when meeting an important client or senior executive within the organisation.

The new workforce (Gen Y and beyond) are increasingly discerning re: their potential employers and their track record in diversity, corporate social responsibility and ethics. Many see LGBT inclusion as the ultimate litmus test and question employers who promote diversity and yet continue to deliberately exclude what is still a highly stigmatised group. For many, being part of the change is being part of the solution.

It is hard to gauge one's reaction to any of the above. In relation to a simple and honest answer to personal questions, reactions may range from:

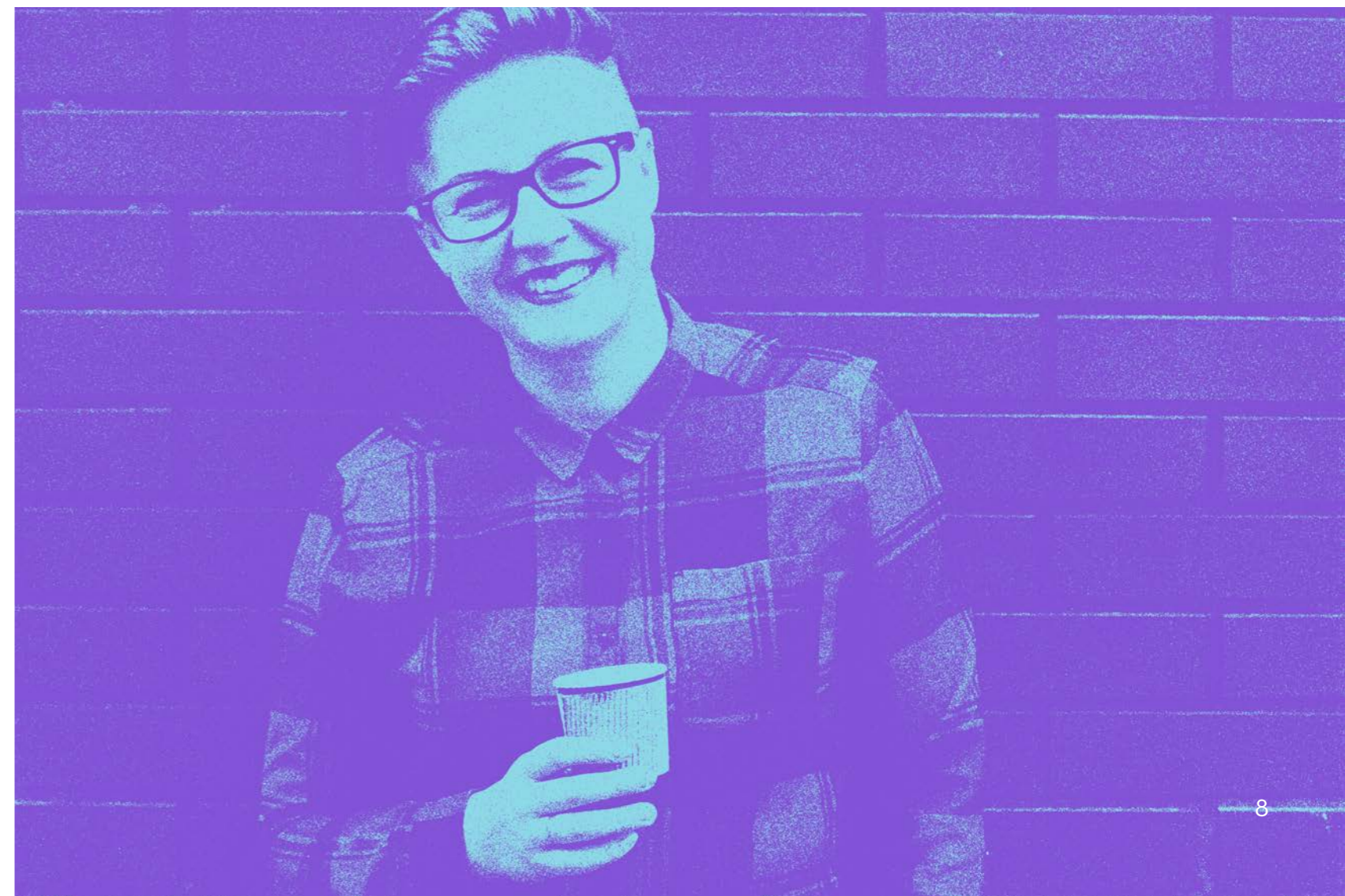
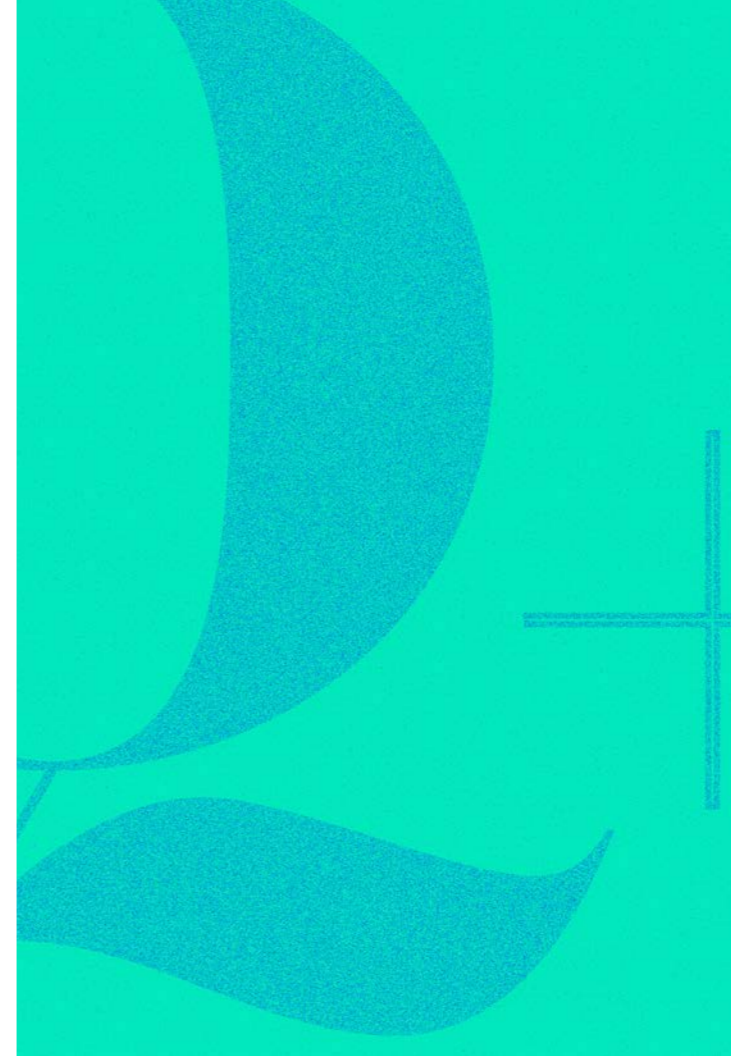
- An obvious look of discomfort and a move away from personal questions of any nature
- An attempted discreet excusing of oneself to mingle / catchup with others
- An obvious sense of disapproval
- An immediate acknowledgement of how many gay people the person knows and an uncomfortable focus on all things gay from there on in.
- Oblivious unqualified acceptance (less common)

While a person is in the closet, they are free to engage with people with a sense of ease. However, people who do not fit the heterosexual 'norm' are well aware that people may have personal issues in relation to their orientation based on:

- A conservative view of what should or should not be disclosed in the workplace
- A personal discomfort with someone who identifies as gay or bisexual
- Conflicting religious beliefs / values

For this reason, a large proportion of gay people stay in the closet at work. Unfortunately, the constant stress of having

to self-edit conversations, pretend to be someone they are not and keep up the guise both in and outside of work takes its toll. So is a scan of an organisation's policies and the existence of a network enough to determine whether or not one can truly be themselves within a workplace? While these things may give an indication of whether the organisation is actively engaged in building an inclusive culture, these things alone are not adequate. For this reason, many people will test the waters by making comments about gay friends and watching for reactions; listening to the responses of team mates in relation to gay jokes or political commentary and observe carefully the reactions of others when someone is put down because of their orientation or gender identity. Of course if the team does not know that this person is queer, they are free to respond naturally; without restriction - this is the real test and this is why allies are SO important. The responses of allies to these situations help to balance the negative messages with the positive and create the perception of a culture that could possibly be ok, as opposed to one that sends a message of exclusion.



Terminology and Sensitivities

While nobody likes to be labelled, the acronyms used to reference those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex carry with them a degree of sensitivity and dissention. Terminology in this space is extremely fluid and therefore does require a degree of comfort with its fluidity, but more importantly an understanding of the diversity within the identified group and an understanding of what each of the letters within the most commonly used acronyms represent.

The most common acronym used in HR/ Diversity practice is LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) although elsewhere you will see many variations of this from the simplistic GLB (referencing sexual orientation only) to the more elaborate acronym of LGBTTSIQQAA².

It is important to understand in terms of the more commonly used LGBTI acronym, that LGB refers to one's sexual orientation, T refers to one's gender identity and I refers to Intersex. While many within this group share common experiences of homophobia, exclusion and a sense of 'invisibility' and to a degree, some overlap, the three aspects of self are very different and the collective grouping within the acronym is not always a comfortable one (equally there are many that will advocate for this).

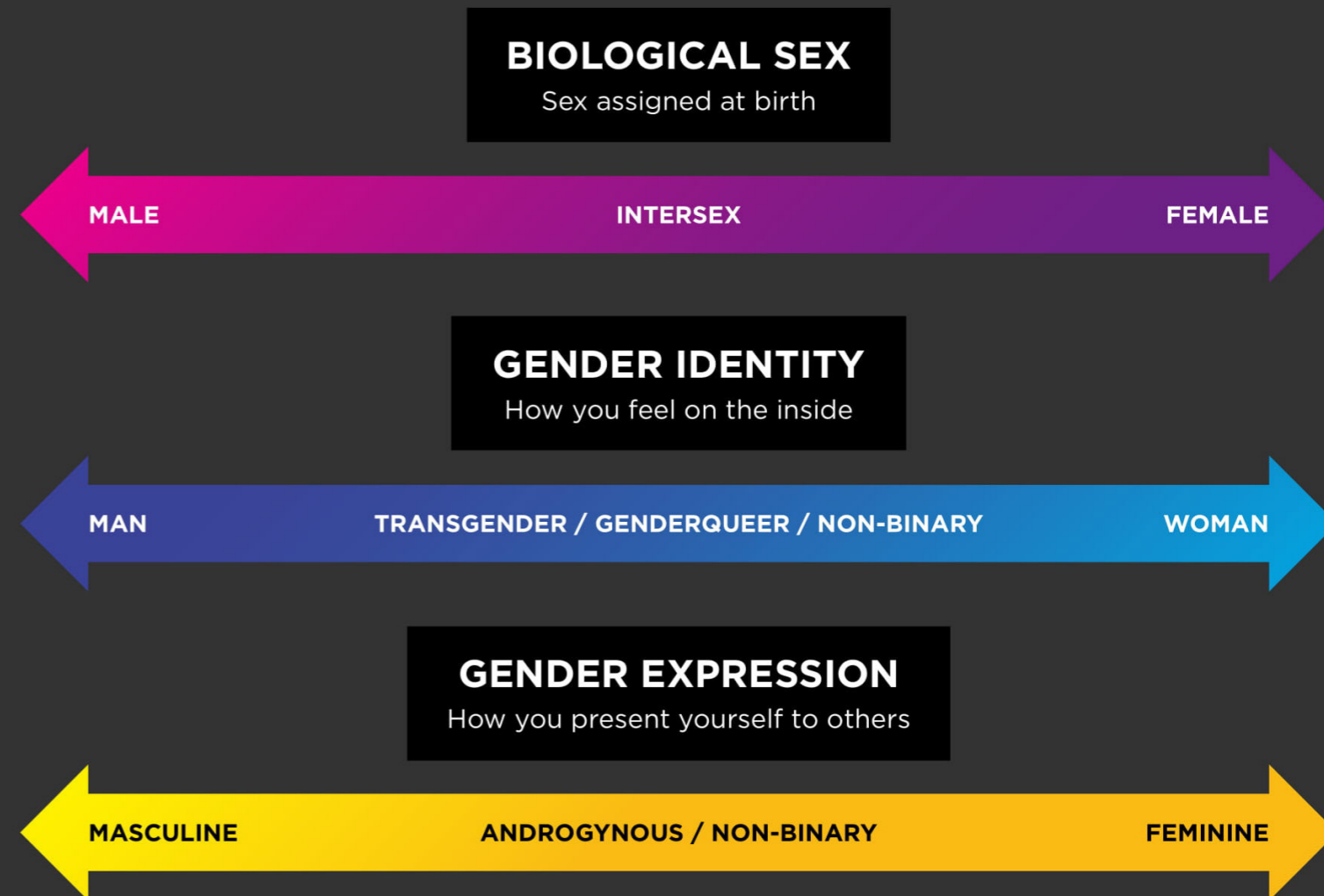
The following diagram is one that is often circulated and well regarded in an attempt to explain the differences. Q+ does conduct training for allies that incorporates discussion around the differences between sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and biological sex but for the

purpose of this publication, this somewhat simplistic diagram introduces the naivety of binaries and some of the language commonly used to identify the diversity within.

For purposes of clarification, Intersex refers to physical differences in sex where a person may appear to have features typical of both a male and a female, where a person may not be fully male or female or where a person is neither male or female.³ A term previously used for intersex people was hermaphrodite, considered now by many to be extremely offensive.

² Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, queer, questioning, asexual
and allies - academic example reference by Hall (2009), p5.
³ <http://oiaustralia.com/18194/intersex-101/>

THE SPECTRUM OF GENDER AND IDENTITY



THE SPECTRUM OF ORIENTATION



Levels of ally engagement

The following table provides a useful starting point for ally involvement and can be modified to suit. Remember, providing allies with ways and means to get involved in a way that most suits them is one of the keys to motivating allies to actively participate and contribute to inclusion initiatives. Most people will find at least one thing they can do.

Minimal

- Become part of the employee network by adding your name to the communications distribution list
- Attend network functions whenever you are able
- Attend training to equip yourself with a base level understanding of why inclusion is important, some of the LGBTQ+ terminology and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ employees.
- Question your own assumptions and beliefs around LGBTQ+ culture
- Ask questions of others in the network to expand your knowledge
- Be mindful of your own language, stereotyping and use of potentially negative phraseology (i.e. “that’s so gay”)

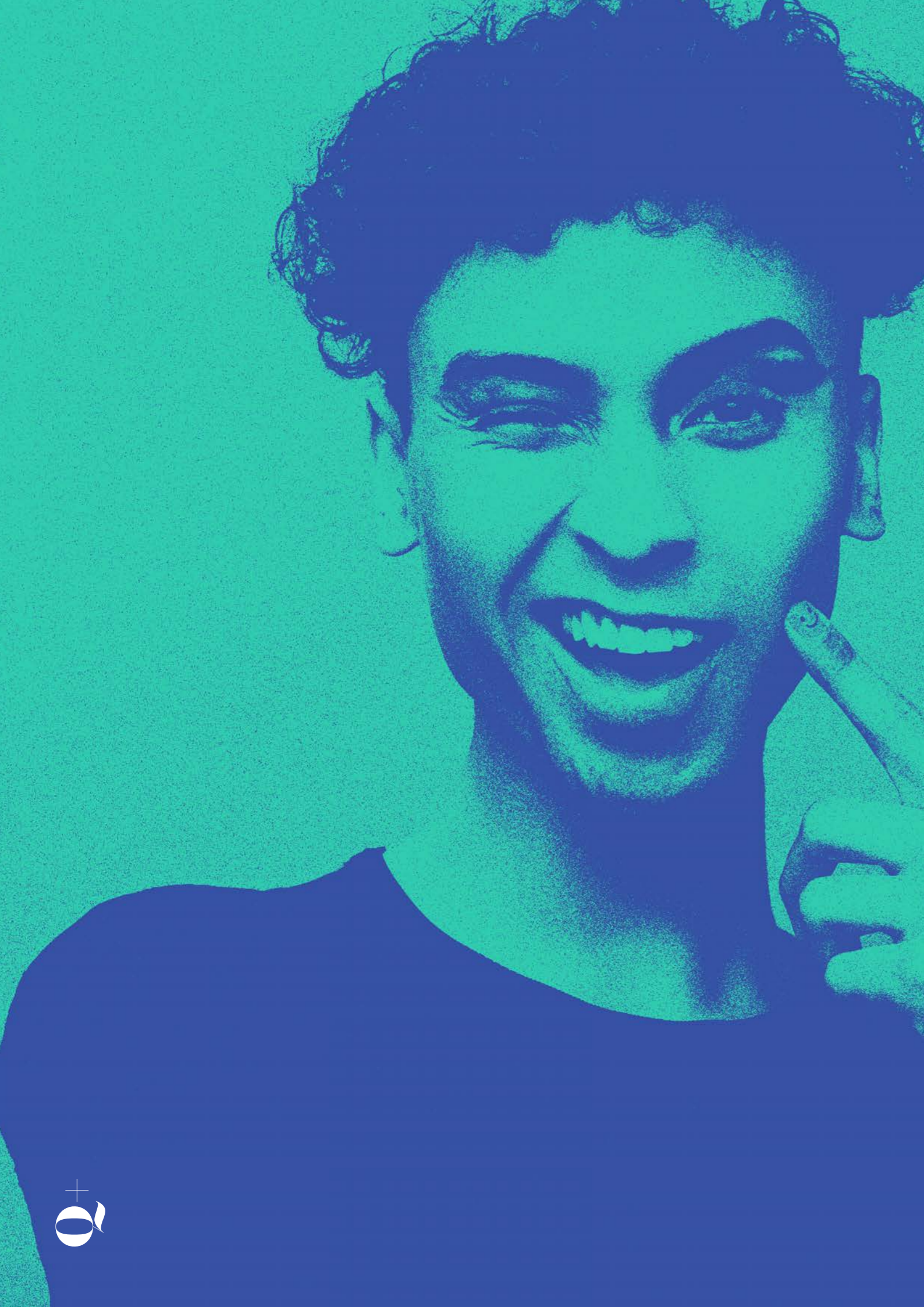
Moderate

- Let people know you are an ally
- Display visible signs of being an ally around your workstation (i.e. anti-homophobia cards or network logos etc)
- Talk openly about some of the events you attend and encourage interested people to come along
- Talk about why you are part of the network
- Take a stand against any negativity
- Question the workplace relevance when people talk about someone being queer
- Attend training and talk to others about what you have learnt
- Be known as an advocate for inclusion across the board, not just for LGBTQ+ employees
- Don’t buy into queer jokes or innuendo, make it clear that these are not appropriate

Extensive

- Offer to be promoted as an ally on internal promotional material or network intranet pages
- Ask the network leadership about ways that you can further contribute to the group or inclusion initiatives
- Offer your skills and expertise to the group
- Actively advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion
- Take an active stand against gay jokes, innuendo, queer slurs or negative comments in relation to LGBTQ+ people.
- Become a contact point for others who would like to talk about the network
- Learn as much as you can and share that knowledge with others.





Heterosexual Questionnaire

This Heterosexual Questionnaire reverses the questions that are very often asked of gays and lesbians by straight people. By having to answer this type of question, the heterosexual person will get some intellectual and emotional insight in to how oppressive and discriminatory a “Straight” frame of reference can be to lesbians and gays.

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Is there a possibility that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
5. If you've never slept with a person of the same sex, is it possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies?
7. Why do you heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into your lifestyle?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?
9. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers?
11. Even with all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
13. Considering the menace of overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear that the therapist might be inclined to influence you in the direction of his or her own leanings?
15. How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to compulsive, exclusive heterosexuality and fail to develop your natural, healthy homosexual potential?
16. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to.
17. Have you considered trying aversion therapy?



THE ADECCO GROUP

**We believe in talents
not in labels**

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