

Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

Innovate or Bust

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Years ago, when I was a teenager, I urged my General Motors executive father to have the world's largest and most powerful corporation design a jazzy new car and market it to my age-group as chief rival Ford Motor Company had just done with the Mustang.

Dad dismissed the suggestion and assured me that G.M. had perfected a formula that worked and that they would be sticking with it. I am grateful that he died before his company stock became worthless and the rival Ford didn't face the same public shame from of the threat of bankruptcy.

A freelance reporter contacted me recently for leads on any innovative work being encouraged by corporations. A business news organ wants to highlight "best practices" in thinking outside of the box.

I suggested that he contact Todd Sears, director of diversity and inclusion at Credit-Suisse, Stephen Golden who does the same work for Goldman-Sachs in Asia, the Gay and Transgender Employee Resource Group at Merck, and Donna Griffin, the new diversity director at Chubb. All four firms have taken measures to break new ground and to reward innovative thinking by their employees.

Success in the business community requires new approaches in an ever-changing world. If you want simply to tread water and risk irrelevance, keep doing things the same old way, or, worse yet, drag a company back to doing things the way they were done in the glorious past. If you want to stay fresh and relevant, let go of the dead wood on which you are floating.

An op-ed piece in a recent *USA Today* lamented the attempts by the Vatican to drag innovative and relevant American nuns back to the days of long black habits, convent living, and classroom teaching. Ignoring all of the inspired thinking that took place at the Second Vatican Council, Rome has sent out a compliant Mother Mary Clare Millea to report on any modern thinking by nuns that falls outside of Church orthodoxy. One can't help vision goody-goody Delores Umbridge being sent by the fearful Ministry of Magic to reign in Headmaster Albus Dumbledore and the Hogwarts School of Magic in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*.

At the upcoming Out and Equal Workplace Conference in Orlando, I'll be guiding a discussion on the future of work on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. The goal will be to encourage "outside the box" thinking about what now needs to be done to make gay and transgender employees equal players and valued consumers. Entitled "ENDA Doesn't End It", the workshop participants will engage in a lively analysis on how the expected passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act by Congress will change the focus of workplace initiatives.

Though my goal, and that of Out and Equal, the Human Rights Campaign, Employee Resource Groups, and of others seeking workplace equity ought to be to put ourselves out of business, we

don't want to do so before the job is done. If we don't change approaches to reflect the changing culture, we will be forced to declare bankruptcy of purpose and effectiveness. To be successful, we need to be mustangs.