

AGENTS OF CHANGE:

A GUIDE TO LGBT ADVOCACY FOR BUSINESSES

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'As the Executive Sponsor of Herbert Smith Freehills' IRIS Network, which connects and supports LGBT+ people and their allies across the firm, I see first hand the positive impact that collective advocacy has on individuals and businesses. That is why I am delighted and proud to sponsor this informative and practical guide.

The global landscape for LGBT+ is ever-changing; progress is far from certain and, in many places, members of the LGBT+ community continue to face inequality, discrimination, and violence. More than ever, the collective voice of business is vital in supporting local communities to create more equal, safe and inclusive places.

That said, business advocacy is not always easy or straightforward. Indeed, the opposite is often true and involves navigating both internal and external considerations. I'd like to thank Stonewall for developing this guide, which aims to both better inform and strengthen business advocacy in this regard.

I know it will be a catalyst for further change. I hope and trust it will encourage businesses to work in partnership for a world free from inequality and discrimination.'

– Justin D'Agostino
Executive Partner at Herbert Smith Freehills

FOREWORD

Achieving equality for lesbian, gay, bi and trans people across the world often feels impossible. As our community secures a win in one country, somewhere else in the world, our rights are being rolled back. Nowhere is immune from this, as we are witnessing now – our work is the work that is never done. For that reason, we need everyone to play their part.

Businesses are now vital to our mission. Across all parts of society, there has been a growing recognition of the human rights responsibilities that businesses have, including the rights of LGBT people within this, as set out in standards such as the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and the [UN Standards of Conduct for Business](#).

Many business leaders recognise this and are implementing internal practices that support and celebrate their LGBT staff. In addition, some organisations are taking the further step of promoting LGBT equality in society more widely. The impact of this can be huge. If done right, the result is LGBT people feeling empowered, uplifted and protected, something that might have seemed impossible if they were trying to achieve change on their own.

The complexity of doing this, however, cannot be underestimated and it can pose significant challenges. Each country has different social, political and legal contexts and this mix can lead to lack of confidence, leaving businesses unsure of the best way to engage.

This guide addresses this issue and is designed to help organisations navigate advocacy. It's part of Stonewall's [Global Diversity Champions](#) programme: a best-practice forum for businesses to learn from each other on how to promote global LGBT inclusion both inside and outside the workplace.

By providing a clear overview of what advocacy means for businesses and giving concrete, step-by-step advice on how to engage in advocacy in a safe and effective way, this guide is designed to be a tool for businesses to advance the rights of LGBT people.

Many thanks to Herbert Smith Freehills for sponsoring the creation of this guide and contributing best-practice case studies. I'd also like to thank the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality for providing a foreword and endorsing the guide.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to Accenture, IBM, Pink Dot SG, Prague Pride, Pride Circle, Pride Connection Chile, Pride in Diversity, RBS, and Vodafone. They have generously shared their experiences as case studies, and they continue to prove their commitment to creating a world where every LGBT person is free to be themselves.

Paul Twocock
Interim CEO
Stonewall



FOREWORD

When releasing the UN Standards of Conduct for Business, the High Commissioner for Human Rights said: 'If we are to achieve faster global progress towards equality for LGBTI people, businesses will not only have to meet their human rights responsibilities, they must become active agents of change.' He went on: 'Companies must either decide to actively combat discrimination against LGBTI people or accept that they are, in effect, facilitating it. There is no neutral position.'

As the Executive Director of the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality, a global leadership platform to accelerate LGBTI inclusion in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, it is my honour to work with a group of companies and civil society organisations committed to advancing equality, and social and economic inclusion for LGBTI people globally. We do this by harnessing the power of collective advocacy in business.

The Partnership's member companies are fully focused on using their collective voice and influence to achieve a number of goals. We will reduce discrimination in the workplace against LGBTI people globally; increase the number of workplaces globally that are LGBTI inclusive; raise awareness among public policy-makers of the economic benefit of LGBTI-inclusive policies; and leverage the power of business to drive legal change in countries where LGBTI discrimination is still legal.

Throughout its history, Stonewall has provided visionary leadership and resources to help advance LGBT equality and this guide is another example of their groundbreaking work. Having spent 18 years of my career at Microsoft, where I had the great privilege of serving as one of the executive sponsors of the company's LGBTI employee resource group, I know firsthand how incredibly useful this guide will be for companies (and their employees) as they aspire to fulfill their commitment to advancing equality and inclusion globally.

Businesses do have an important role to play. This guide provides concrete steps (and excellent case studies) to ensure that the voice of business is most effectively represented in the ongoing work to advocate for LGBT equality worldwide.

Daniel T. Bross
Executive Director
Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality

INTRODUCTION

This two-part guide invites organisations to understand how they can advocate for LGBT equality across the world:

- The first part outlines what advocacy means to businesses and explains the different channels available for advocacy.
- The second part gives practical advice on designing, implementing and evaluating advocacy strategies, in addition to guidance on ensuring advocacy work is safe, sustainable and effective.

Comprehensive case studies from committed organisations are shared throughout, providing practical examples of how to successfully advocate for LGBT rights across the world and overcome potential challenges.

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING ADVOCACY

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ADVOCACY?

This guide adopts a broad and inclusive definition of advocacy. This includes any activities undertaken, either by a group or individual, with the aim of influencing decisions within political, economic and social systems and institutions to advance LGBT rights.

For example, advocacy can take many forms; from public statements, to quiet diplomacy, to supporting other organisations to advance LGBT equality.

The following section, 'Advocacy channels', provides concrete examples of how businesses can engage in advocacy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, the following principles should be at the heart of any advocacy. The second section of this guide, 'Engaging in advocacy', provides practical advice on how businesses can put these principles into practice.

- 1. Do no harm** – Businesses should ensure their advocacy efforts cause no harm to staff or local communities. This should be the absolute minimum standard when working to advance LGBT equality (see the 'Understanding the local context' and 'Addressing risk' sections for more information on this).
- 2. Let local communities lead** – Any advocacy carried out on behalf of the LGBT community should have their needs and agency at its heart. Local communities should be fully and directly involved in any advocacy efforts through consultation and feedback processes and their unique, direct understanding of the issues affecting them should be respected.
- 3. Be accountable** – Accountability ensures businesses fulfil their responsibilities towards LGBT people and the communities they operate in. Businesses should ensure they're fully accountable to local communities and LGBT people for any part of their advocacy efforts, for example by following up with them during and after advocacy initiatives.
- 4. Get informed** – The social, political and legal contexts for LGBT people's rights can often be complex and nuanced. Throughout advocacy, businesses should ensure they are adequately informed and benefit from a variety of perspectives by consulting a range of local civil society groups.
- 5. Seek sustainable solutions** – It can be hard not to want to achieve as much as possible as quickly as possible when engaging in advocacy. However, there is rarely a 'quick fix'. Having a strategy that looks beyond immediate advocacy initiatives and considering long-term impacts and solutions helps ensure advocacy meaningfully affects LGBT people.

Advocacy is one part of an organisation's wider journey towards promoting LGBT equality and should always be part of a broader programme of LGBT-inclusion work. Stonewall has a range of programmes and resources that can support organisations' internal and external efforts to promote LGBT equality

¹ M. B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Contribute to Peace – or War*, 1999

THE CASE FOR ADVOCACY

✓ Improve LGBT people's lives throughout the world

Businesses often have substantial power. In contexts where LGBT people's rights aren't respected, business advocacy can have a huge impact on LGBT people's lives.

✓ Adhere to international standards

Businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights, as set out in the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights**. Several standards and frameworks also specifically state that businesses should actively work to promote LGBT equality. Acting in the public sphere makes up the fifth standard in the **UN Global LGBTI Standards of Conduct for Businesses** and promoting inclusivity is a key component of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, the furthering of which is promoted by the **UN Global Compact**. Advocating for LGBT rights means businesses can meet the duties set out within these standards.

✓ Show your commitment to the LGBT community is authentic and consistent

The sincerity of businesses' LGBT inclusion efforts can sometimes be met with scepticism by the wider community. This may be because their support is viewed as a PR exercise. Advocating for LGBT rights in a safe, sustainable way shows an employer's commitment to LGBT equality is authentic and that organisations support all LGBT people and are not using their support just for their own gain.

✓ Help your business thrive

Advocacy helps create environments that support LGBT people and safeguard their rights, which benefits businesses. Internal culture and staff retention can be improved, organisations' reputations can be enhanced and they can position themselves as leaders in the fight for LGBT equality. This can positively influence a business's performance and contribute to businesses operating in a context with stronger economic prospects.²

'Vodafone engages in advocacy for LGBT rights because it's the right thing to do. These are fundamental human rights issues and we are committed to being a morally upstanding company.'

– **Wayne Spillett, Head of Legal, Commercial Operations at Vodafone**

'Businesses definitely have a role to play in advocacy. Companies should use the power they wield to foster an inclusive environment, both inside and outside of the workplace. The power that multinational companies wield is more obvious, but SMEs can make a difference too, as hundreds of Singaporean SMEs have shown with their support of Pink Dot SG.'

– **Deryne Sim, Lawyer and Spokesperson at Pink Dot SG (Singapore)**

² J. Miller and L. Parker, *Open for Business: Strengthening the Economic Case*, 2018

'For RBS, advocacy is important because it sends a message to our staff and our customers that we support them. We want society to be more inclusive and we know we cannot change society on our own but we hope that, through advocacy, we can help.'

– Nicholas Crapp, Group Chief Audit Executive and LGBT Exec Sponsor at RBS

'Advocating for LGBT equality is important to Accenture because it aligns with our values, it's the right thing to do, and it's good for business.'

– Javier Leonor, Senior Manager, Global Inclusion & Diversity Center of Expertise at Accenture

'Any business is dependent on external factors, be it the external context for their staff, customer demographics, or something else. The context for LGBT people is a part of this. In line with this, businesses should engage in advocacy because this impacts them.'

–Mark Latchford, Associate Director at Pride in Diversity (Australia)

ADVOCACY CHANNELS

Businesses have a range of options when considering where to focus their advocacy efforts, with each having unique benefits and challenges. Part two of this guide can help organisations identify which channel will be most effective.

THE STATE

As the primary institution responsible for developing and implementing laws, the state can be a key advocacy channel. This includes a range of actors, such as the government, parliament or equivalent, government departments and agencies, and individual politicians.

How can businesses engage in advocacy with the state?

- ✓ **Public advocacy** – Businesses can take several state-focused approaches to publicly advocate for LGBT rights, such as signing open letters and amicus briefs, participating in public campaigns, and releasing statements.
- ✓ **Private advocacy** – Taking a public approach to advocacy may not always be appropriate and may risk negatively impacting the local LGBT community or the issue being advocated on. In these cases, engaging in LGBT advocacy in private through approaches like closed-door meetings can be more effective.

'As a leading technology company, we are very aware of our global impact and the responsibility that comes with this. A key part of IBM's corporate responsibility is making sure employees are treated equally and have equal opportunities. Standing up against discriminatory legislation or unfair treatment is something that aligns with IBM's sustainability goals and we hope is an example for others to follow.'

– Marijn Pijnenburg, Global Business Development Executive for Workforce Diversity and LGBT+ Markets at IBM

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are the primary bodies responsible for the protection, monitoring and promotion of human rights nationally. NHRIs are established by the state and are part of the state structure but operate independently. Businesses can work with NHRIs to provide input on priorities and initiatives promoting LGBT rights.

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Nations encourages all states to develop, enact and update a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP). NAPs set out a state's priorities relating to business and human rights. Participating in the development of a NAP can be a key opportunity for businesses to promote rights for LGBT people.

THE DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS³

The Danish Institute for Human Rights has several partnerships with businesses. Through mutual collaboration, the Institute and corporate partners jointly develop long-term action plans reflecting the human rights challenges of the business as well as the Institute's priorities.

³The Danish Institute for Human Rights, Working with Companies, 2019 humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/dokumenter/business/corporate_engagement_principles/ce_flyer_2019_ed.pdf

VODAFONE

Vodafone's Czech Republic management team actively supported the 'We are fair' campaign, which fights for equal marriage. Vodafone was one of the first corporations to publicly support the campaign and promoted its support with billboard posters, signage on shop doors, and through social media posts. Vodafone also promoted a petition in support of the campaign on Valentine's day, with over 600 Vodafone employees signing the petition.

PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

During the 2017 plebiscite on marriage equality in Australia, Pride in Diversity worked with several companies to signal their support for marriage equality and the LGBT community more widely. Around 50 per cent of the CEOs of Pride in Diversity's members signed a letter to the government calling for them to legislate for equal marriage. The government was initially dismissive of businesses' efforts to engage in this way, saying it was not relevant for businesses. Businesses responded by highlighting how this was indeed a business issue, impacting their staff, customers and shareholders and restating their commitment for marriage equality. This encouraged the government to understand the topic in a more holistic way.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society refers to space for collective action outside government and businesses. It includes NGOs, community groups, trade unions, and social movements.

How can businesses engage in advocacy with civil society?

- ✓ **Partnering with civil society to achieve advocacy goals** – Civil society should always be part of businesses' advocacy initiatives, regardless of the channel they are focusing on, and are best placed to suggest how businesses can engage in advocacy (see the section 'Understanding the local context').
- ✓ **Providing civil society groups with the support needed to achieve their goals** – Businesses can also use their specific skills, expertise, resources and platforms to enable civil society organisations to more effectively advocate for LGBT rights.

'As a company you have a significant amount of influence. Your voice is listened to by your clients and your customers, so by using this reach to provide a platform for LGBT groups and communities you can help effect change.'

– **Wayne Spillett, Head of Legal, Commercial Operations at Vodafone**

'It can be challenging for both businesses and civil society to develop the trust needed to effectively work together. However, if everyone works as partners, displays mutual respect and takes the time and effort to find common ground, an effective foundation for advocacy can be established.'

– **Czeslaw Walek, Chairman at Prague Pride (the Czech Republic)**

IBM

IBM supports civil society organisations to more effectively achieve their strategic goals and develop their capacity to effect change. This is done through offering support with governance, as well as providing grants, and for example training, strategy development support, and social media consulting. Additionally, IBM provides LGBT organisations with a platform by hosting and supporting events.

ACCENTURE

In response to the introduction of the HB2 bill in North Carolina in 2017, which would have forced trans people to use the bathroom that corresponded to the sex they were assigned at birth, Accenture joined with 200 other companies to stand for trans rights and urge the state's leaders to repeal the law. The initiative was led by local LGBT organisations, who were able to bring businesses together, creating a collective front that provided expert input, while participating companies were able to leverage their collective power against the bill.

PRAGUE PRIDE

From the start of the campaign for equal marriage in the Czech Republic in 2017, Prague Pride, a local LGBT organisation that was part of the coalition of organisations leading the campaign, consulted with businesses on how they could offer support. From this, businesses have demonstrated their support in several ways. 65 companies have provided their logos for a pledge in support of LGBT equality. Additionally, 18 CEOs signed an open letter that was sent to the Prime Minister calling for marriage equality, organised by Prague Pride. In response to this, the Prime Minister scheduled a future meeting with the CEOs, highlighting the impact of the letter.

RBS

In 2018, RBS Poland hosted the inaugural LGBT Poland Business Awards. The awards brought together multinational businesses, with Polish operations, to celebrate both the work being done to support LGBT equality in Poland and demonstrate support for Polish NGOs who share that goal. The event also provided a platform for 8 Polish NGOs, giving them the support and recognition of the business community in their efforts to push for greater equality from the Polish government. These NGOs were consulted throughout the process of planning and organising the event; ensuring RBS were sensitive and mindful of the climate within Poland, and that the awards supported the progress of LGBT rights in the country.

'Businesses should engage in LGBT advocacy because these issues affect them. For example, if employees are unhappy in their private lives as a result of discriminatory laws, this can affect their performance at work and thus the business.'

'Business support can also have a huge impact on policymaking, especially in cases where activists are not taken seriously. This means that businesses can really make a difference and fill a gap in a way that positively affects LGBT people'

– **Czeslaw Walek, Chairman at Prague Pride (the Czech Republic)**

'Even if businesses can't engage in public advocacy for LGBT rights, there are still other valuable ways they can support advocacy initiatives. For example, they can strengthen ties with local LGBT organisations and support the advocacy work they do by providing funding.'

'This can also serve as a valuable opportunity for businesses to increase their understanding of the context for LGBT people and respond accordingly.'

– **Emilio Maldonado, General Director at Pride Connection Chile**

OTHER BUSINESSES

Businesses are often part of networks, which can include suppliers, clients and competitors. These can be key spaces for businesses to exert influence and advocate for LGBT equality.

How can businesses advocate with other businesses?

- ✓ **Partnering with other businesses** – When engaging in advocacy, businesses can join together to increase their collective voice and maximise the impact of their efforts. This can allow businesses to learn from other organisations and demonstrates the strength of support for the issue across the business community, which can increase the effectiveness of advocacy.
- ✓ **Targeting advocacy efforts at other businesses** – Relationships between businesses, such as clients or suppliers, place organisations in a position where they may have influence over the way another organisation conducts itself. Businesses can use this to encourage other organisations to implement policies or practices that promote LGBT equality.

'Businesses should actively engage in initiatives supporting LGBT rights. Their staff and consumers will include members of the LGBT community and so they have a responsibility to take action to raise awareness about these issues.'

– **Emilio Maldonado, General Director at Pride Connection Chile**

VODAFONE

In the Czech Republic, senior executives from Vodafone collaborated with other companies and the LGBT organisation Prague Pride to develop the **Pride Business Forum Memorandum**. Through the Memorandum, companies in the Czech Republic are encouraged to sign up and commit to the implementation of principles that support the LGBT community.

Additionally, Vodafone uses its relationships with suppliers to influence their practices regarding LGBT equality. As part of its global Partners with Pride initiative, Vodafone holds forums in which it engages with its top suppliers on LGBT issues and encourages them to take steps that support LGBT equality, such as signing up to the UN Standards of Conduct for Businesses.

'Reaching out to other companies who are already working on LGBT advocacy or who want to start doing so to make bonds and allies at a corporate level can be really powerful. Linking together with organisations in this way allows us to maximise the power of top-level corporate stakeholders to effect change.' – **Felizitas Lichtenberg, Global Diversity & Inclusion Lead at Vodafone**

ACCENTURE

In 2018, Accenture signed the **Business Statement for Transgender Equality** in response to the increased legislative and administrative efforts to restrict the rights of trans people in the USA at both the state and national level. The statement calls for respect and transparency in policy-making and for full equality for trans people under the law. Accenture worked with a range of local LGBT groups and business as part of signing the statement.



PART 2: ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL CONTEXT

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Consulting with local civil society is vital when an organisation is looking to engage in advocacy. Local communities and LGBT groups are best placed to advise on where businesses' advocacy efforts would be most helpful, and the most effective and safe ways to advocate. Complex local political, legal and social factors mean a lack of understanding can inadvertently cause significant harm to local LGBT people and the wider community.

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS

In some contexts, it can seem like there is an obvious issue, and a clear approach for business advocacy. However, this may not be the area LGBT people need support on most or where business support would be most valuable. Consulting with local LGBT groups can help highlight the community's needs and where businesses are best placed to engage.

UNDERSTANDING APPROACHES

Local civil society can provide invaluable information into the most effective and most appropriate approaches to engaging in advocacy in their context. The legal, political and social environment in specific countries is nuanced and complex, particularly when working on issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. Local groups are best placed to advise on the safest, most effective approach in these circumstances.

Working with civil society groups:

- ✓ Leverage existing relationships with local LGBT groups who can be a key source of guidance and information.
- ✓ Consult with multiple groups to ensure a plurality of voices from the LGBT community are heard.
- ✓ If looking to advocate on a particular issue, engage with groups working specifically on this area.
- ✓ Check in with Stonewall, who can connect Global Diversity Champions with local LGBT groups in over 90 countries.

'Businesses can build trust with local LGBT groups and people by demonstrating a continuous commitment to improving their support for LGBT people. Businesses should be wary of using their support for LGBT rights as part of a marketing strategy as this can negatively impact their ability to develop relationships with activists.'

– **Emilio Maldonado, General Director at Pride Connection Chile**

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL CONTEXT IN ADVOCACY

Company X strongly disagrees with a new law penalising LGBT people in Country Y. Without consulting local people, Company X joins other multinational organisations in signing an open letter asking for the law's retraction. Country Y has a history of damaging interventions from foreign actors. In response to the letter, some local groups accuse the companies of meddling and lobby the government to reject this 'foreign intervention'. The government responds by accusing the companies of trying to force Western values on Country Y and doesn't withdraw the law.

This example demonstrates the potential consequences of not understanding the local context. Speaking to local civil society would have shown Company X that the government is wary of being seen to be bowing to international pressure and that historic injustices have made local people suspicious of foreign companies. Company X then could've chosen a different, more effective approach, such as quietly engaging with government representatives they had relationships with.

'Organisations need to make sure they understand the history of the places they work in, and how this has impacted LGBT people, in order to build trust with local LGBT community. For instance, learning about the long legal battle of Indian Penal Code Section 377 in India and the hardships endured by the community will help organisations engage effectively. Celebrating the LGBT community should not only be limited to Pride marches and/or Pride month, instead there should be consistent efforts throughout the year to engage and include. It is also important that organisations contribute to the movement by empowering individuals/organisations working in this space through other means such as providing resources, funding, volunteering etc.'

– **Ram Sinha, Co-founder at Pride Circle (India)**

'Businesses need to show they are genuinely committed to supporting the LGBT community in order to develop trust. This can be done by demonstrating they have implemented inclusive workplace practices internally. Taking part in benchmarking exercises addressing LGBT inclusion can also demonstrate the credibility of their commitment.'

– **Mark Latchford, Associate Director at Pride in Diversity (Australia)**

'To build trust with local civil society, businesses need to work hand-in-hand with LGBT groups. This includes respecting groups' expertise and understanding the local context and listening to their advice. It also means demonstrating that you are acting out of a genuine commitment to inclusive values, and not just marketing or chasing the pink dollar.'

– **Deryne Sim, Lawyer and Spokesperson at Pink Dot SG (Singapore)**

PINK DOT SG

Since 2009, Pink Dot SG has organised an annual outdoor rally at the Speakers' Corner in Singapore in support of the LGBT community. In 2011, Google came on board as Pink Dot SG's first corporate sponsor, paving the way for other companies to sign up as sponsors. For the 2016 event, Pink Dot SG had a total of 18 corporate sponsors, including Barclays, JP Morgan, Bloomberg, GE and Apple.

After the 2016 Pink Dot SG event, the law was changed to prevent multi-national companies from sponsoring events at Speakers' Corner, the only area in Singapore designated for public demonstrations. The change in law resulted in the Pink Dot SG event losing 15 out of 18 of its sponsors. With such a drastic cut in sponsorship, it looked like Pink Dot SG wouldn't have the resources to hold the event the following year.

Fortunately, a local tech entrepreneur reached out to Pink Dot SG and helped build Red Dot for Pink Dot, an online sponsorship platform that allowed local companies to sign up as sponsors. Response from the local business community was overwhelming. In the first year, Pink Dot SG had a total of 120 local companies sign up as sponsors and the number has remained approximately the same for the 2018 and 2019 editions of the event.

IBM

Partnering with civil society organisations is a key part of IBM's global advocacy strategy. Consultation with LGBT organisations is used to determine a range of areas of IBM's advocacy. This includes which topics are most important for local LGBT communities, where advocacy from IBM can be most effective, what approach is best for the local context, and where IBM can help build support from other corporations.

'Partnerships with civil society groups are essential for IBM to understand what we can do to support the LGBT+ community and how to make sure our footprint in society is a positive one.' – **Marijn Pijnenburg, Global Business Development Executive for Workforce Diversity and LGBT+ Markets at IBM**

ACCENTURE

Accenture encourages partnerships with in-country LGBT organisations in all countries where it is legally possible and safe to do so. It does this to ensure local context and understanding when making decisions. Partnering with local LGBT organisations increases the impact that Accenture has when engaging in LGBT advocacy.

'Working with civil society organisations helps rally people together. It gives the opportunity to work as a collective front, a cohesive and vibrant community, making the advocacy we engage in much more effective.' – **Amanda Leacy, Managing Director at Accenture**

PRAGUE PRIDE

Before engaging with the government on marriage equality, local LGBT organisation Prague Pride met with businesses to help them prepare for the meeting. In doing so, Prague Pride was able to offer their expertise on the local context and the most effective approach to take. This increased the likelihood that businesses could effectively advocate for marriage equality and increased the businesses' confidence when engaging on these issues.

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

When choosing an issue work on, Herbert Smith Freehills always follows the lead of local LGBT groups. This is something that is often facilitated by in-country LGBT employee networks.

'Civil society organisations are the experts on the local context. Engaging with them helps to inform our approach to advocacy and build our understanding of the situation on the ground. It also means we act in a way that aligns with the needs and wants of the local LGBT community. Our most effective partnerships are ones where we listen to local people and then see where we can contribute.' – **Stephen Somerville, Senior Associate, Pro Bono at Herbert Smith Freehills LLP**

ACCOUNTABILITY

When advocating for LGBT rights, it is important that businesses are accountable to local communities. A way of doing this is by continuing dialogue with local LGBT groups during and after advocacy. This allows local groups to feedback to businesses and ensures their views are considered throughout. Businesses can also continue to learn from their efforts and identify how their advocacy can be more effective in the future.

*'There are a number of ways that businesses can stay accountable to local communities when engaging with advocacy. Keeping channels of communication open with LGBT organisations during and after advocacy allows them to be kept abreast of developments and give feedback. It also shows a commitment to responding to their needs and concerns. Also, taking part in benchmarking exercises or indices such as Stonewall's **Global Workplace Equality Index**, can demonstrate an organisation's commitment to being accountable. Participating in these exercises shows an organisation's support for the LGBT community is authentic as it is embedded both internally, through workplace inclusion initiatives, and externally through the work they have done in the public sphere.'*

– **Deryne Sim, Lawyer and Spokesperson, Pink Dot SG (Singapore)**

'Businesses can ensure they are accountable to local communities by making sure they retain links with local LGBT people and demonstrate a continuing commitment to empowering local LGBT people, not just during Pride month. Organisations can do this by providing capacity building training for local LGBT people, hiring people from the LGBT community, and funding local LGBT organisations/initiatives. Businesses can also remain accountable by ensuring they are transparent about which of their activities impact the LGBT community, and publicly communicate this.'

– **Ram Sinha, Co-founder at Pride Circle (India)**

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL CONTEXT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Have you consulted a range of local LGBT organisations?
- ✓ Have you referred to local legal experts?
- ✓ Have you reviewed resources providing an overview of the legal, political and social context for LGBT people in the country, such as Stonewall's [Global Workplace Briefings](#) or [ILGA's State-Sponsored Homophobia report](#)?
- ✓ If they exist, have you engaged in-country LGBT employee networks?

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE ARE NO LOCAL LGBT GROUPS

A lack of active civil society in a country can be a sign that publicly working on LGBT issues may be unsafe. In these contexts, businesses should be extremely cautious about how they engage. A lack of civil society severely limits an organisation's ability to understand the local context and signifies that people may be put at risk when advocating for LGBT rights there. Many approaches that are appropriate in other contexts will not be in these circumstances.

What can businesses do when there is no active civil society?

- ✓ **Check with regional LGBT organisations or general human rights organisations** – Regional organisations or general human rights organisations that work on LGBT issues may exist that can provide information about the situation for LGBT people in a particular country and what businesses can do to best support them.
- ✓ **Consider other forms of support for the LGBT community beyond advocacy** – In very high-risk contexts without civil society, advocacy may not be the most effective support businesses can offer or may actively be harmful. Businesses should then consider other ways to use their power to support LGBT people, such as working with other businesses in the region to improve internal diversity and inclusion practices or providing funding to regional organisations working on LGBT equality.

KEEPING STAFF SAFE

In these contexts, businesses should first ensure their staff are protected. Stonewall's [Global Workplace Guides](#) and [Global Workplace Briefings](#), listed at the end of this guide, provide guidance on supporting staff across the world, including in some of the most high-risk contexts.

CHOOSING ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVE SETTING

Objectives are the intended result of advocacy. Clear objectives are an essential foundation for effective advocacy.

Why set objectives?

- ✓ Objectives can help ensure advocacy efforts are focused, providing clarity and direction.
- ✓ If there are changes in circumstance or unforeseen challenges, objectives can help reorient advocacy efforts by serving as a framework for developing new approaches.
- ✓ Having clear objectives can ensure businesses remain accountable to the communities their advocacy affects by providing a concrete goal their efforts can be measured against.

Some examples of LGBT advocacy objectives for businesses may include:

- The Thai Ministry of Justice will make legal gender recognition a policy priority.
- 10 clients will sign an open letter in support of legislation explicitly banning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Argentina in the next 6 months.
- The Gender Recognition Act in the UK will be reformed to include self-determination for trans people (more information on Stonewall's work on the Gender Recognition Act can be found at [stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/gender-recognition-act)).

In more substantial or long-term advocacy, overarching objectives may be complemented by smaller interim objectives.



HOW TO SET OBJECTIVES

- 1. Identify a potential area to address** – Have civil society organisations asked for support on an issue? Have other businesses started engaging on something in particular? Has there been a recent legislative change or event that is negatively impacting LGBT people? Are staff or an LGBT network looking to engage in a certain issue? These can all serve as useful starting points from which to decide what to advocate for.
- 2. Consult with civil society** – Before developing any kind of objectives or engaging in advocacy, organisations should consult local civil society to ensure that their support is needed and how best they can be involved.
- 3. Be S.M.A.R.T** - The best objectives are as clear and specific. Following a S.M.A.R.T approach to objectives, ensuring they are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound, can help achieve this. When an organisation has identified the issue to work on and has consulted civil society, a S.M.A.R.T approach can be used to finalise the concrete objectives an organisation will work towards.

ACCENTURE

Accenture focuses its LGBT advocacy efforts on two specific areas: marriage equality and discrimination.

‘The more you narrow the focus on where you can effect change, the better off you are. Being tactical and strategic about where you can make a difference means you are much more likely to be effective.’

– **Javier Leonor, Senior Manager, Global Inclusion & Diversity Center of Expertise at Accenture**

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

Herbert Smith Freehills’ advocacy framework sets out key areas to be considered when the firm is looking to engage in public advocacy. The considerations set out in the framework guide whether the organisation engages in advocacy and what approach it takes. Some of these include:

- ✓ Does it align with the firm’s values, global diversity and inclusion policy, and other HR policies and practices? What do the teams responsible for these areas think?
- ✓ Does a precedent exist because the firm has previously supported a similar or analogous issue?
- ✓ Are other leading organisations carrying out similar activity?
- ✓ Is there a potential reputational risk to not acting?
- ✓ What are the views of the LGBT community, including Herbert Smith Freehills’ staff and the wider community? Will their safety and security be affected by Herbert Smith Freehills’ advocacy, or lack thereof?
- ✓ What guidance have local/regional/global advisory partners offered?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

WHAT IS INFLUENCE MAPPING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Businesses often engage with a range of actors in a variety of spaces (see the section on ‘Advocacy channels’). These connections can be leveraged to help achieve objectives.

Influence mapping identifies stakeholders that can affect a decision. It investigates the position and motives of each actor and the best channels through which to communicate with them. From this, organisations can make strategic decisions on how best to conduct advocacy. It can also help justify why an organisation is engaging in advocacy by highlighting their unique ability to exert influence over certain actors and showing how a particular issue impacts them.

For businesses, some of the actors that may be included in influence mapping could include:

- ✓ The government
- ✓ Other businesses
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Local LGBT groups and other civil society groups
- ✓ Customers
- ✓ Clients
- ✓ Suppliers
- ✓ Professional associations
- ✓ Trade unions
- ✓ The media
- ✓ Academia
- ✓ International institutions such as the United Nations

CARRYING OUT INFLUENCE MAPPING

- 1.** Begin with the change that is being sought.
- 2.** Identify and map the key actors that have influence over the issue. They may or may not have a relationship with the organisation. It can be helpful to indicate who has influence over who, as indicated with arrows in the diagram.
- 3.** Add in the actors that have influence over those identified in step 2.
- 4.** Use the influence map that’s been developed as the foundation for an advocacy plan, factoring in the map into decisions about what objectives to set and what approach to take.

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

Herbert Smith Freehills joined other businesses to support marriage equality in Australia. The decision to do this, and the approach taken, was based on an analysis of where the firm had influence among the stakeholders that were leading efforts for marriage equality. This included internal stakeholders, such as staff and employee network groups, as well as external stakeholders such as clients and civil society organisations. After this assessment, the firm added its logo to a weekly advert in a national newspaper, with other organisations continuing to add their own logo every week. This collective act helped build a sense of momentum and showed the increasing support for marriage equality across the business community.

DECIDING ON AN APPROACH

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING A RANGE OF APPROACHES

Having identified objectives, the next step is to decide on an approach. Several factors impact the feasibility and effectiveness of advocacy approaches, which makes considering a range of approaches and then making an informed choice about which to use essential.

IDENTIFYING WHO WILL TAKE PART

Several teams within a business can be involved in advocacy. Multiple perspectives can help inform your approach to advocacy and ensure it reflects the needs and expertise within an organisation. Some examples of teams often involved in advocacy include:

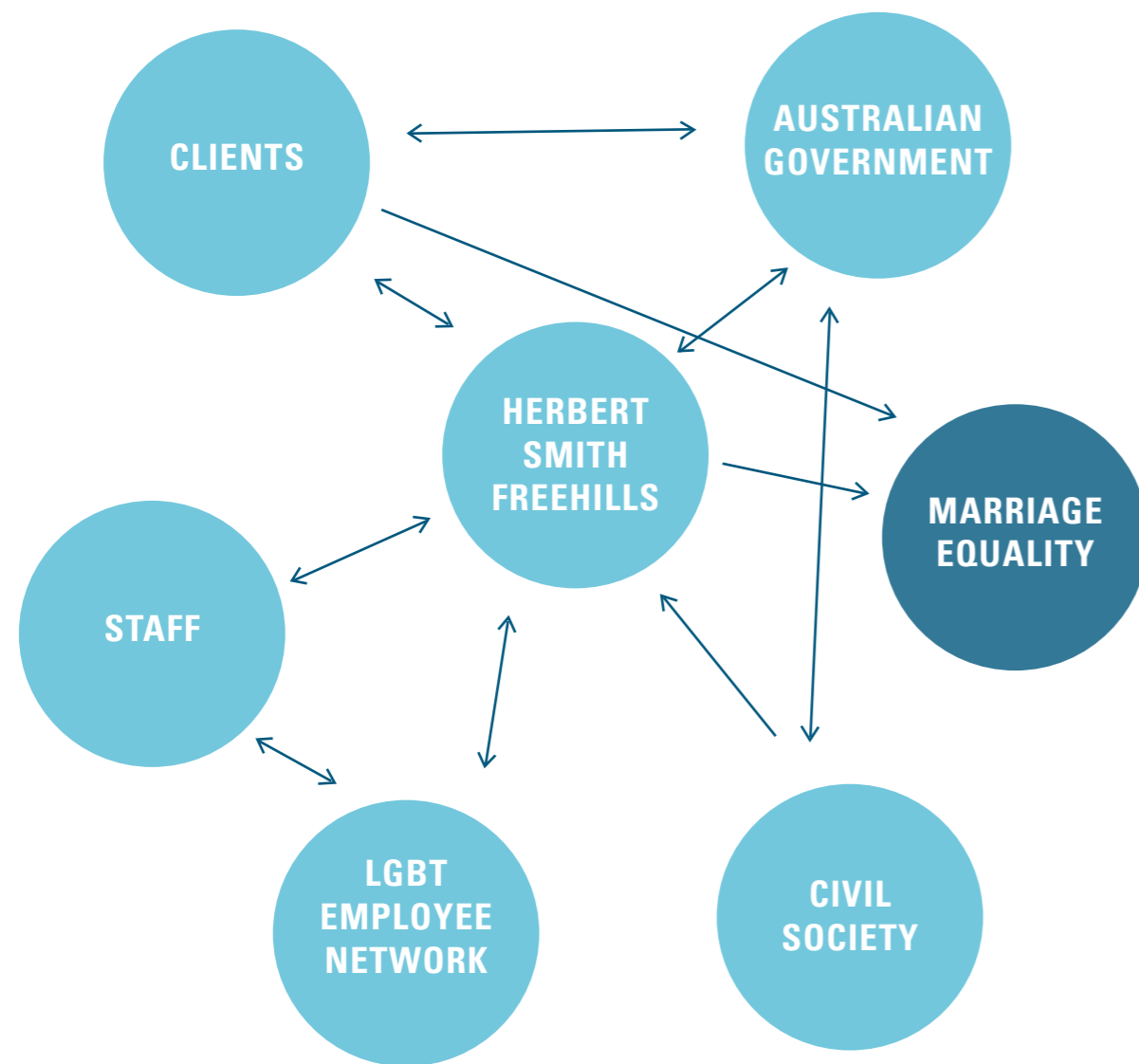
- ✓ Legal
- ✓ HR/Diversity and Inclusion
- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Government relations
- ✓ Employee network groups

VODAFONE

When engaging in LGBT advocacy, Vodafone's reputation and management committee collectively make decisions. This committee is made up of key staff with unique perspectives that can inform Vodafone's choices and approach to advocacy, including external communications, crisis management, legal, media, HR, and diversity and inclusion teams. This allows for a healthy debate featuring a range of voices and ensures decision-making is informed by relevant stakeholders in the company.

'When engaging in advocacy, it is important that businesses prepare well. Organisations should be able to clearly articulate why they are engaging in advocacy and have the facts to back it up. Businesses can face pushback when they publicly come out in support of LGBT rights and having clear objectives and a communication plan ready can help mitigate this.'

– Mark Latchford, Associate Director at Pride in Diversity (Australia)



Example influence map based on Herbert Smith Freehills' marriage equality advocacy in Australia.

FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

The context for LGBT rights can shift rapidly. Being flexible allows organisations to be responsive to change and increases the likelihood of advocacy being effective. Building in contingency plans or preparing a range of approaches can help an organisation be adaptive and achieve their objectives. It can also ensure an organisation is able to respond to changing levels of risk and ensure their advocacy is as safe as possible (see the section on 'Addressing risk').

Additionally, an overreliance on the same approach can limit its impact. Taking an innovative approach to LGBT advocacy increases the likelihood that it will positively impact LGBT people.

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

To see what would be most effective when advocating for marriage equality in Northern Ireland, Herbert Smith Freehills assessed: the firm's activities in Northern Ireland, what advocacy approach other businesses were taking, and what relationships the firm had there. From doing this, it became clear that the most effective approach would be to sign an open letter with other organisations calling for equal marriage. This was chosen as it would allow for businesses to act collectively and demonstrate the strength of support for equal marriage across the entire business community.

'We have a strong preference to act in partnership with other leading organisations when it comes to local, regional or global LGBT advocacy – business advocacy is much more powerful when we act together. Collective action can also encourage and build confidence amongst other organisations who might not otherwise do so, and that can help drive real change within those organisations.' – **Matthew Clements, Diversity & Inclusion Executive at Herbert Smith Freehills LLP**

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING AN APPROACH

- ✓ How will the approach impact local communities?
- ✓ Have local civil society actors confirmed their support for the approach?
- ✓ Are there adequate resources to commit to this approach?
- ✓ What are the risks of this approach (to both the organisation and those outside of it)?
- ✓ Is this approach the most effective way of affecting change?
- ✓ What could the response to this approach be and how can it be addressed?
- ✓ Will the organisation's input be genuinely helpful to local LGBT people? If not, would it be more helpful for the organisation to consider other types of support outside of advocacy?

IBM

IBM has a structured process that is followed when engaging in advocacy:

1. Firstly, a solid understanding of the legal, political, and social context in the country is developed. This is done through consultation with local LGBT organisations and local IBM staff, including legal, government relations and diversity and inclusion teams.
2. Following this, the suggested approach is reviewed by internal legal experts to ensure it complies with local laws.
3. As safety and security of employees are paramount, a risk assessment is conducted to ensure no one will be put in danger through IBM's advocacy.
4. Once the approach has been confirmed, internal communications teams will review the communication strategy relating to the advocacy.
5. Finally, country managers are engaged in the advocacy initiative to ensure they are fully informed and can communicate effectively.



ADDRESSING RISK

Risk in advocacy can be a significant concern for businesses. In this context, risk can take many forms, including risk to reputation, risk to staff, legal risk, and risk to local LGBT people or to wider local communities. Understanding the risk of advocacy, and developing strategies to address it, allows a business to feel confident when engaging in advocacy and ensures all involved are safe.

RISK IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

How risk manifests in LGBT advocacy can vary significantly based on the local context. For example, in the UK, an organisation may face reputational risk by not coming out strongly in support of LGBT rights. However, in Russia, the opposite may be true. These circumstances should be considered when deciding on an approach to advocacy, with public statements being appropriate in the UK whereas quiet diplomacy may be more effective in Russia.

WEIGHING UP RISK

A business's approach to risk, and the type and levels of risk it can be exposed to, depend on its unique circumstances. However, taking steps to address risk can empower organisations with the information and tools to ensure risk is mitigated as effectively as possible.

HERBERT SMITH FREEHILLS

When calculating risk, Herbert Smith Freehills always refers to the considerations set out in its public advocacy framework. As well as helping the organisation clarify what it will advocate on and how, the framework also ensures that any risk is fully understood before engaging in advocacy. This then enables the organisation to put practices in place that can mitigate any identified risks.

STONEWALL

In response to a transphobic newspaper advert in the UK, several Stonewall Diversity Champions took part in an advert in a major newspaper in support of trans equality. Prior to participating in the advert, the potential risk organisations could face was assessed. It was identified that organisations could face reputational risk and transphobic vitriol. Despite this, organisations still participated due to the strength of their desire to vocalise their backing for the trans community. By doing so, they were able to send out a very strong message about the support for trans rights throughout the UK. It also allowed Stonewall and participating organisations to deepen their partnership.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

NOT FULLY ACCOUNTING FOR THE RISK OF AN ADVOCACY APPROACH

After an election, the new government of Country A announces a 'crackdown' on LGBT people. In response, Company B announces it will be boycotting Country A and pulls its LGBT staff out of the country to ensure their safety. The boycott has a substantial financial impact on Country A, causing unrest among local people. Many local people lose their jobs as a result and are pushed into poverty. Additionally, some local people blame the local LGBT community for this, leading to LGBT people facing greater discrimination and violence.

In this example, while the company had considered the risk faced by its own staff, it did not recognise the risk for other groups. This negatively affected local communities who were economically dependent on the company and created animosity towards local LGBT people. If the company had more fully assessed the risk of the boycott, for instance by consulting local civil society, they could have taken an approach that wouldn't have negatively impacted local people.

HOW CAN RISK BE ADDRESSED?

- ✓ **Be informed** – As before, understanding the legal, political and social context for advocacy and the potential impact of the approach on the local environment and stakeholders is key to understanding and responding to risk.
- ✓ **Consult with internal experts** – Staff such as legal teams, assets protection teams, in-country leaders and LGBT networks can provide expertise on risk in a particular context.
- ✓ **Create a risk management strategy** – Often, it is impossible to engage in advocacy without there being any risk. Creating a risk management strategy ensures risk can be addressed effectively.

ACCENTURE

To understand risk before participating in the first Pride march in Bucharest, Accenture's local Pride team consulted with a range of staff. This included the global diversity and inclusion team, the global assets protection team, and the local leadership, legal and government relations teams. Doing so allowed Accenture to understand the local context and explore opportunities to express support for the LGBT community in line with Accenture's advocacy framework. It also ensured employees' safety was addressed. After a thorough assessment, Accenture sponsored the event and over 80 employees participated in the first Pride march.

CONCEPTUALISING APPROACHES TO RISK

The Centre for Talent Innovation has developed three models that outline the ways businesses can engage in LGBT inclusion work in different contexts around the world: When in Rome, Embassy, and Advocate.¹

Businesses frequently use different models in different locations. This might depend on the local circumstances in the markets they are based in, as well as their ambitions regarding LGBT inclusion. Businesses also move between models depending on changes to the local situation or their LGBT inclusion approach. Considering these models can be a helpful tool when conceptualising the risks related to LGBT advocacy.

In the [UN LGBTI Standards of Conduct for Businesses](#), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights explains the models and outlines the benefits and risks of each.² They are as follows:



When in Rome allows a company to create exceptions to certain global pro-LGBTI corporate policies based on local conditions. While this might help organisations as a whole avoid risk, individual staff may be exposed to significant risk. The lack of protections in this approach may also facilitate discrimination, contradicting an organisation's commitment to LGBT equality and its responsibility to avoid infringing upon human rights.



Embassy enforces corporate policies regardless of local context, creating safe spaces in jurisdictions where the rights of LGBTI people are not protected. In environments where public advocacy for LGBT rights would be deemed too high-risk, organisations may opt for this approach. However, only LGBT employees in the workplace benefit from this approach, with LGBT staff and all other local LGBT people being exposed to risk at all other times.



Advocate attempts to influence local laws affecting LGBTI people, and the context more widely, in order to strengthen legal protections and contribute to a more accepting environment for LGBTI workers. While organisations might be exposed to risk when following this model, it can help promote LGBT equality and ensures the greatest proportion of LGBT people are protected.

¹ S. Hewlett and K. Yoshino, *Out in the World: Securing LGBT Rights in the Global Marketplace*, 2016 [talentinnovation.org/publication.cfm?publication=1510](https://www.talentinnovation.org/publication/cfm?publication=1510)

² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People: Standards of Conduct for Business*, 2017 www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UN-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf

EVALUATING EFFECTIVENESS

WHY DO YOU NEED TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ADVOCACY?

Once advocacy has been conducted, evaluating the effectiveness of a business's advocacy initiatives can help clarify what worked and what didn't, highlight the positive impact on the LGBT community, and inform future advocacy.

HOW CAN YOU EVALUATE EFFECTIVENESS?

How advocacy's effectiveness is measured depends on the approach and the objectives that were set, and so should be considered at the start of the project. Some helpful starting points when evaluating effectiveness include:

- ✓ **To what extent were the initial objectives met?** Objectives can serve as a key metric of the effectiveness of advocacy by acting as a benchmark to measure success against.
- ✓ **What response has there been from civil society?** Civil society partners can provide an appraisal of the success of the initiative as they have witnessed the advocacy process and will have stronger links to local LGBT communities.
- ✓ **How many people were reached?** Depending on the type of advocacy, the number of people reached can serve as a barometer for an initiative's effectiveness. Example of this could numbers of signatures on an open letter or number of news articles on the initiative.
- ✓ **What new relationships have been built?** Even when overall advocacy objectives weren't achieved, the establishment of relationships with key stakeholders such as civil society, government representatives or other businesses can be incredibly valuable and can help future advocacy. Organisations should also consider how these relationships have played out in the longer-term and if they have been maintained.

RESPONDING IN A CRISIS

WHAT IS CRISIS ADVOCACY?

While this guide has so far focused on longer-term, planned approaches to advocacy, the following section addresses advocacy undertaken in different circumstances. Crisis advocacy refers to advocacy focusing on issues presented in the immediate term. It can be undertaken alongside longer, planned advocacy efforts.

WHY MIGHT BUSINESSES RESPOND DIFFERENTLY IN A CRISIS?

- ✓ **There may be less time to respond** – Working in rapidly changing contexts can often be time-sensitive, meaning businesses may need to be able to respond quickly.
- ✓ **Organisations may be responding to a situation that is particularly high risk** – Circumstances that are particularly risky, such as times of political upheaval or social unrest, will require different responses.
- ✓ **Different approaches will be more effective** – When responding to sudden changes, such as legislative change or a change in government, different approaches may be more appropriate and effective than those used in longer-term advocacy.

WHAT DO BUSINESSES NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN ENGAGING IN CRISIS ADVOCACY?

- ✓ **How will the safety of different stakeholders be affected?** – Several different stakeholders can be impacted by rapidly changing local contexts. This can include staff, local civil society groups and local LGBT communities. These groups will also likely be impacted by advocacy efforts in response to these changing circumstances. The safety and wellbeing of these stakeholders must be of primary consideration when responding to a crisis.
- ✓ **What do civil society groups recommend?** – Responses to crises should always be led by local civil society groups with businesses providing support as and when requested. In these situations, LGBT groups will often be under pressure and have limited capacity so businesses should be aware that they may not be groups' priority at that time.
- ✓ **What will the long-term impact of advocacy be?** – While crisis advocacy is usually carried out in response to immediate changes, organisations should make sure the on-going consequences of advocacy are fully considered. While immediate measures may seem like a 'win' in the short term, consequences of these actions that play out over time may produce worse outcomes.

STONEWALL PROGRAMMES AND RESOURCES

Advocacy should always be part of a wider inclusion strategy. Stonewall has a range of programmes and resources that empower organisations to support LGBT people inside and outside of the workplace.

STONEWALL GLOBAL DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS

The **Global Diversity Champions** programme is Stonewall's best practice forum for global businesses who are committed to providing inclusive workplaces for LGBT employees worldwide. Our team can support organisations looking to engage in advocacy and can connect businesses with LGBT groups in over 90 countries as well as other leading businesses working on LGBT advocacy.

For more information about Stonewall's Global Diversity Champions programme, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/globaldc

GLOBAL WORKPLACE EQUALITY INDEX

The **Global Workplace Equality Index** is Stonewall's comprehensive annual benchmarking exercise. To assess your organisation's achievements and progress on LGBT equality across your global operations, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/get-involved/workplace/global-workplace-equality-index

OTHER STONEWALL RESOURCES

This guide is part of a series of Stonewall resources to help you create an inclusive workplace for your LGBT staff. To download your copies, visit www.stonewall.org.uk/best-practice-toolkits-and-resources

ALSO IN THE SERIES OF GLOBAL WORKPLACE GUIDES:

- ✓ **Do Ask, Do Tell: A guide to capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity globally**
- ✓ **GDPR: Capturing data on sexual orientation and gender identity under the GDPR in the European Union**
- ✓ **Trans Inclusion in the Global Workplace**
- ✓ **Safe Travels: Global mobility for LGBT staff**
- ✓ **Global Workplace Briefings: Practical guidance on how to support LGBT staff in 35+ countries**

Written by **Charlotte Lush** Stonewall
Designed by **Annabel Dakin** Stonewall

Stonewall, 192 St John Street, London EC1V 4JY
info@stonewall.org.uk
www.stonewall.org.uk
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