

**EY****INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE
FINALIST**

Curiosity, discovery and education are critical features in EY's work on diversity, inclusion and belonging.

EY is a global organisation with four main service lines – assurance, consulting, strategy and transactions, and tax. In New Zealand it has offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

LGBTQ network leader Gina Mills says in recent years, the business' brand has been founded on 'Better Questions'.

"To us, asking better questions builds a better working world and our employees are surrounded by opportunities to engage with 'curious enquiry' with the clients we serve and their colleagues. Curiosity, discovery and education are critical features of our work related to diversity, inclusiveness and belonging," she says.

"Better questions are important to navigate this complex landscape which we know has varying levels of interest, appetite and understanding across our organisation. We undertake education with our leaders on inclusive leadership and unconscious bias and we support these discussions with facts, data and trends.

“We also seek to understand experiences, barriers and enablers for specific groups within our workplace and communities so that we can work on solutions to make their experience better, level the playing field through our equity initiatives, and develop structures, frameworks and a culture where all of our people have the opportunity to be successful in our environments.”

The She Starts Out programme is an example of how the organisation worked together for a common goal.

Since Unity, EY’s LGBTQ employee network, was formed approximately 10 years ago, there has been an underrepresentation of LGBTQ women involved in the network and their overall engagement scores are lower than their male counterparts.

EY leaders set a strategic goal to remedy this. Consultation with a LGBTQ female focus group identified they wanted Unity to be more than just a workplace social network, they wanted three specific things; connection, community and contribution. Through collaboration with other teams within the business, the She Starts Out programme was launched.

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“She Starts Out is a unique business mentoring programme targeted at LGBTQ female social impact entrepreneurs, designed to have a dual impact of increased workplace inclusion across EY and also an external community impact. It allows EY people to volunteer their skills and experience to an underrepresented group and raises the visibility of queer women in the workplace,” says Gina.

“The programme has allowed EY people from across the business to play an active role in raising the profile of queer women within our organisation and in the wider community.”

There has been widespread support for the programme from right across the business, with the nominating of participants, sourcing of mentors, project management and administration.

“Before the programme, many of these people had little or no involvement with the Unity network. This has created extraordinary opportunities for ‘inclusive teaming’ internally and within the wider community. This sort of teaming can be difficult to create in a day-to-day business setting, especially in large multi-lateral, multifunctional organisations.”

THE AIM

To lower the business start-up barriers for LGBTQ female social impact entrepreneurs through a business mentoring programme modelled on the insights and experiences from an inclusive internal culture and proactive engagement with underrepresented queer women within the organisation.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- After senior leadership identified there was a lack of visibility and involvement of queer women in its LGBTQ Unity network, they set out to proactively address it.
- Consultation identified there was a desire for more than just a workplace social network – people wanted connection, community and contribution.
- The She Starts Out programme, a business mentoring programme, was developed to support LGBTQ female social impact entrepreneurs.
- The programme was designed to have the dual impact of increased workplace inclusion across EY along with an external community impact.
- The programme supports 20 entrepreneurs working in a wide variety of industries and arenas ranging from inclusive midwifery, to preventing sexual violence, to addressing food waste.
- Programme participants were matched with culturally diverse/transgender EY mentors where possible and appropriate.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BENEFITS

- The profile and visibility of LGBTQ women at EY has increased significantly with a 450% increase in the number of openly identifying LGBTQ women in Unity in the past 12 months.
- The campaign has been highly visible to all EY people, not just the Unity network members.
- The programme has attracted a highly intersectional LGBTQ audience, with diversity of culture, trans-experience, pansexuality and gender identity being acknowledged and discussed openly.

KEY LEARNING

By role-modelling inclusive behaviours such as curiosity and active listening, EY leaders engaged an underrepresented group which led to the development of a programme that has allowed staff to play an active role in raising the profile of queer women within the organisation and in the wider community.

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AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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