



BUSINESS GUIDE TO PRIDE

2024

Education and Research Department
Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce's 2024 Business Guide to Pride. In the last decade or so, there has been an increase in corporate interest around social justice issues, but an increase in interest does not always mean an increase in rights. Due to the increase in corporate investment, Pride-related products, and the continued commercialization of Pride Month specifically — which celebrates those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ+), or have other diverse and unique gender and sexual identities — it may seem challenging to determine the best course of action for genuine allyship, and why being an ally is important for you and your business. The goal of this guide is to address and inform those in the business community about how to, and why they should, advocate for and support their LGBTQ+ employees and peers not just in June, but all year long.

Since its founding in 2017, [The Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce \(MALGBTCC\)](#) has had one goal: cultivate inclusive relationships for the LGBTQ+ community that propel economic growth and social equity. We do that by fostering meaningful connections throughout business, education, and government sectors; understanding and acting upon the key factors impacting LGBTQ+ financial well-being; and guiding members on their journeys to greater economic prosperity.

As of 2023, the Chamber is proud to support over 500 member businesses, with a diverse and unique range of products and services to suit personal and business needs alike.



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“RAINBOW WASHING”



WHAT IS IT?

During Pride Month, many organizations, businesses, and corporations often take the first step of honoring LGBTQ+ Pride by changing their logo or social media icons to a rainbow-colored version. The LGBTQ+ community coined the term “rainbow washing” to explain the superficiality of only changing a logo or icon without going further to support LGBTQ+ people or policies. In fact, some companies “rainbow wash” their image for June even while negatively impacting the communities they claim to celebrate, by supporting policies, legislators, or organizations that actively harm LGBTQ+ people in their communities. It is vitally important for businesses and organizations to not only project an image of allyship, with rainbows, pride flags, or Pride participation, but also think critically of ways they can support LGBTQ+ people through analysis and action in their work.

PARTICIPATING IN PRIDE PARADES & FESTIVALS

No matter where you are in the United States, it's likely there is some type of Pride celebration in your city or town. In 2023, there were over 80 Pride events in Massachusetts alone. Many of these events invite businesses and corporations to participate. Pride festivals and parades are great ways to be active in the community and build your brand, but before you sign up, here are a few things to be aware of:



THINK LOCAL

While Pride events in major cities like Boston or New York are exciting, your impact may be far more meaningful on the local level. Look into smaller, more locally focused Pride events to support. This could be a pride night at a local bar, an LGBTQ+ book club at your local bookstore, or a smaller, town-wide parade or festival.



BE THOUGHTFUL & CREATIVE

Pride parades or festivals are a celebration, as well as an opportunity for fun engagement with the LGBTQ+ community. When considering marketing in these spaces, think about what your business or corporation specifically brings to the table for LGBTQ+ people. Highlight ways your business is LGBTQ+ inclusive and prioritize marketing of goods that LGBTQ+ communities are likely to purchase. Also, think about donating percentages of profits from Pride-specific products to local and national LGBTQ+ organizations. This can be a great opportunity for recruitment!



Photo by Jenna Lifshitz



CELEBRATE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Pride is a great time to center your LGBTQ+ staff. If you are thinking about marching in a Pride parade, instead consider enrolling your company's LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group (ERG) to march and celebrate. This is a more authentic and meaningful way to march. You can also ask LGBTQ+ employees what events or celebrations they'd like to prioritize for representation.



BEYOND MARKETING

Many Pride events, especially those that are smaller or more local, need your support. Reach out to your local organizers and advocates and consider the ways you might be able to partner, such as opportunities to sponsor the event(s), provide scholarships to LGBTQ+ youth, increase visibility, or beyond.

CASE STUDY: BOSTON PRIDE FOR THE PEOPLE

In efforts to be more community-based, many Pride events have changed the way businesses and corporations participate in their parades or festivals. In 2023, Boston Pride for the People created a policy that corporations and businesses were only able to march in the Parade if their LGBTQ+ ERG led their participation. This centered LGBTQ+ people and leadership in the event in a more meaningful and participatory way.



Photos by Jenna Lifshitz

COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS

Allyship is not just making sure your LGBTQ+ employees are supported and uplifted at work. This is an important piece of the puzzle, but allyship is not friendship. Allyship is a state of being, and it relies upon constant work, growth, and education to do better so we can uplift all members of our communities. Internal policies and events are necessary and valuable, but external community investments and interactions can turn promises into action and strengthen the LGBTQ+ community in the places we live, work, and play.



SUPPLIER DIVERSITY

Focus on and advocate for supplier diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusive procurement practices. If you are hosting a company event, contract with LGBTQ-owned restaurants, caterers, florists, balloonists, and entertainers. Buy LGBTQ+ artists' art for the office, hire an LGBTQ+ interior design firm, or buy paper from an LGBTQ-owned office supply store.



MAKE IT POLITICAL

Pride has always been a time of protest, and advocacy outside of pride season is no different. Check your organization's donations and sponsors. Make sure that charitable and political donations are helping, not harming, the community. Follow local and national policy that relates to LGBTQ+ folks and youth, and advocate for better, not for worse.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Want to take your community investment to the next level? Look for opportunities to sponsor, offer grants to, or provide scholarships for LGBTQ+ people. Whether you sponsor an LGBTQ+ sports league, provide LGBTQ+ youth scholarships, volunteer on an organization's event host committee, or beyond, there are numerous ways to uplift the LGBTQ+ community in your area.

THIS PRIDE IS BAKED IN:

Marketing during Pride is meant to be fun, unique, and special to the LGBTQ+ community. Think about Pride-themed goods, like rainbow layered cakes, specialty themed cocktails, merchandise in Pride colors, or beyond; the possibilities are endless! To take this to the next level, consider donating proceeds from the sales of these Pride-

themed goods to local LGBTQ+ organizations. Not only does this allow your customers to learn about and invest in LGBTQ+ organizations, but it also creates important ties between your business and the community.



DID YOU KNOW?

MALGBTCC offers a database dedicated to highlighting LGBTQ+ businesses in Massachusetts, making it easy to find, shop at, and connect with LGBTQ-owned businesses.

PRIDE BEYOND JUNE



It may seem easier or more apropos for your business to focus on uplifting your LGBTQ+ employees and community members during the month of June. There is more visibility during Pride month and they may already be celebrating in other areas of their lives.

However, please consider that it is important and necessary to continue Pride practices and goals throughout the year to promote inclusion, diversity, acceptance, and safety within the workplace and the communities you create. The

LGBTQ+ community in the US has a population of nearly 11 million Americans — not only a large percentage of the workforce, but also a group with massive buying and spending power, who value inclusive practices throughout the year. Simultaneously, non-LGBTQ consumers, especially those looking for work, and younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, are more inclined to shop at, work for, or invest in businesses that value acceptance and LGBTQ+ identity beyond profitability.

OK, MALGBTCC, THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW, BUT HOW DO WE DO IT?

We're so glad you asked! There are many ways to promote genuine inclusivity within a workplace, and your most valuable players here are going to be your own LGBTQ+ employees, their peers, and their allies.





AFFINITY SPACES

Allow and advocate for LGBTQ+ employees to have a space within your workplace. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are valuable here. These affinity groups within workplaces organize events, discuss workplace issues and policies, and provide a space for LGBTQ+ employees to connect, socialize, and advocate for their needs. To promote intersectionality, and involve multiple identities, consider working across multiple ERGs, whether your company has a BIPOC employees ERG, a Disability Coalition, or any other type of affinity group, think about how to include more voices here, not less.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Emphasize and seek out inclusive education and training to ensure all employees have the same knowledge and understanding about LGBTQ+ people, identities, and needs, and so that your LGBTQ+ employees are not the educators and advocates for their own lives.



PLAN ACTIVITIES

If you have a smaller company where ERGs may be less suitable, host various LGBTQ+ advocacy or inclusion activities throughout the work week, such as organizing lunch-and-learns, LGBTQ+ and diverse author book clubs, locally hosted trivia nights, or after-work cocktail hours. Make sure these events are accessible — host some events in a hybrid format or online, have events that are alcohol-free, and close caption all your media — the goal is more connection, regardless of how.



CELEBRATE & UPLIFT

Celebrate and uplift LGBTQ+ voices and joy all year long. Businesses can celebrate and recognize many different awareness days, months, and weeks throughout the year.

LUCKY YOU!

The MALGBTCC has various training programs and courses so that you can do just that. We'll come in and host a training session for employees and leadership, with interactive handouts and longstanding lessons to promote an inclusive workplace.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

1

KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS LIST

[MALGBTCC Trainings Key Terms and Definitions List, 2023](#)

2

BOSTON PRIDE EVENTS

[Lisa Williams, GBH News, "The big list of 2023 Pride events in Boston and Beyond," May 2023](#)

3

PARADE RULES

[Boston Pride for the People, Parade Rules, 2023](#)

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ARTICLE: LGBT RIGHTS ACTIVISM

Cory Maks-Solomon & Josiah Mark Drewry, "Why Do Corporations Engage in LGBT Rights Activism? LGBT Employee Groups as Internal Pressure Groups," Business and Politics, Cambridge University Press, 2021

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ARTICLE: THE BUSINESS IMPACT

[M.V. Lee Badgett, Laura E. Durso, Angeliki Kastanis & Christy Mallory, "The Business Impact of LGBT-Supportive Workplace Policies", The Williams Institute, May 2013](#)

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ARTICLE: A WORKPLACE DIVIDED

[HRC Foundation, "A Workplace Divided: Understanding the Climate for LGBTQ Workers Nationwide," ~2018](#)

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ARTICLE: EQUALITY & EQUITY

[Sean Cahill, Sophia Geffen, Anise Vance, Timothy Wang, Jacob Barrera, "Equality and Equity: Advancing the LGBT Community in Massachusetts, A Special Report of Boston Indicators and the Fenway Institute," May 2018](#)

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ARTICLE: A NEW LGBTQ WORKFORCE

[Dupreelle, P., Novacek, G., Lindquist, J., Micon, N., Pellas, S., & Testone, G., "A New LGBTQ Workforce has Arrived — Inclusive Cultures Must Follow," 2020](#)

QUEER ALL YEAR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

- 19–25th [Aromantic Awareness Week](#)
20th [World Day of Social Justice](#)
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APRIL

- 6th [International Asexuality Day](#)
14th [Day of Silence](#)
24–30th [Lesbian Visibility Week](#)
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JUNE

PRIDE MONTH

SEPTEMBER

- 14th [Sex Worker Pride](#)
16–23rd [Bisexual Awareness Week](#)
23rd [Bisexual Visibility Day](#)
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NOVEMBER

TRANSGENDER AWARENESS MONTH

- 5th [Transgender Parent Day](#)
8th [Intersex Day of Solidarity](#)
13–19th [Transgender Awareness Week](#)
20th [Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)

MARCH

BISEXUAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

- 1st [Zero Discrimination Day](#)
3rd [International Sex Workers' Rights Day](#)
31st [International Transgender Day of Visibility](#)
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MAY

- 17th [International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia & Transphobia](#)
19th [Agender Pride Day](#)
22nd [Harvey Milk Day](#)
24th [Pansexual & Panromantic Visibility Day](#)
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JULY

- 9–15th [Nonbinary Awareness Week](#)
14th [International Nonbinary Day](#)
16th [International Drag Day](#)
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OCTOBER

LGBT HISTORY MONTH (US & CANADA)

- 11th [National Coming Out Day](#)
18th [International Pronoun Day](#)
19th [Spirit Day](#)
22–28th [Asexual Awareness Week](#)
26th [Intersex Awareness Day](#)
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DECEMBER

- 1st [World AIDS Day](#)
8th [Pansexual Pride Day](#)
10th [Human Rights Day](#)
17th [International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers](#)