HIGHLIGHTS AND CAREER ADVICE FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER & QUEER COLLEGE STUDENTS TRANSITIONING FROM ACADEMIA TO THE WORKPLACE FROM THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN THERE

HOT SHOTS 2012

OUT&Work
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For the past seven years, OUT for Work has brought professionals and students from across the country together for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Ally (LGBTQA) career specific conferences and career fairs.

Hearing and learning from the successes and challenges of LGBTQA individuals already in the workplace has been the cornerstone of the conference. This year, OUT for Work is proud to bring you the first ever HOT Shots publication. HOT Shots is a career resource that highlights and provides advice for LGBTQ college students transitioning from academia to the workplace from young LGBTQ professionals who have recently been there. HOT Shots supports and compliments the work that OUT for Work has been doing.

Last year a survey was created that asked young LGBTQ professionals to provide commentary on their transition from academia to the workplace; preparation for the workplace, job search, resume, interview, and coming out at work. Participants were also asked to reflect on how they thought being out and open in the workplace has affected their career and what advice they would provide students just beginning the process. Individuals were solicited across job titles and industries. From the numerous respondents, 16 individuals were selected. The responses are as rich and as diverse as the individuals selected. On behalf of the OUT for Work Board of Directors and staff, I want to thank those LGBTQ young professionals that participated in this ground-breaking resource. I hope that you will use the 2012 HOT Shots publication as another resource as you start to think about how your sexual orientation and gender identity intersect with your career desires.

OUT for Work is working hard to create many LGBTQ career specific resources for you:

• **The HOT List:** The only publication that highlights the LGBTQ inclusiveness and the entry level hiring projections or organizations.

• **The Career Center Certification Report:** An annual report that audits, recognizes, and honors the LGBTQ programs and services that career centers are providing.

• **OUTSource:** A bi-annual magazine that provides career information specific to meet the needs of LGBTQ college students

• **The LGBTQ Career Resource Guide:** A college career resource guide specifically designed with the LGBTQ college student in mind

I encourage you to visit www.outforwork.org for more information and to speak to your career center representatives to ensure they provide resources in the office for you!

I would like to thank Merck, the global healthcare leader, for its continued support of OUT for Work and the larger LGBTQ community. With Merck’s initial financial support, this resource was able to move from idea to publication. Also, a thank you to all the organizations that advertised in this premiere edition. Be sure to visit their websites when looking for an internship or career upon graduation.

Good luck in your career endeavors,

Riley Folds
Founding Executive Director
OUT for Work
Cory Andrews  
U.S. Department of State  
Foreign Affairs Officer  
Born February 3, 1988  
Hired January 2010

Craig Benjamin  
Boeing  
Telemetry and Command Systems Engineer  
Born July 22, 1986  
Hired June 2008

Anthony Cotton  
United States Agency for International Development  
Investment Officer  
Born September 25, 1982  
Hired August 2009

David Farber  
U.S. Attorney’s Office Southern District of New York  
Paralegal Specialist  
Born June 30, 1986  
Hired February 2010

Aaron Green  
Oracle  
Director, Global Strategy  
Born June 27, 1980  
Hired January 2004

Jacob Benjamin Hanna  
Deloitte Consulting  
Consultant  
Born January 21, 1986  
Hired July 2008

Chris Liang  
Glaxo Smith Kline  
Senior Support Analyst  
Born January 5, 1982  
Hired February 2005

Dana Libercci  
Northrop Grumman  
Financial Analyst  
Born July 4, 1984  
Hired July 2006

Alexis Mundis  
American Sociological Association  
Membership/ Customer Service Representative  
Born July 20, 1986  
Hired May 2011

Charles “Dusty” Riddle  
Booz Allen Hamilton  
Associate/ Business Analytics  
Born June 18, 1981  
Hired July 2009

Andrew Stevens  
The Nielsen Company  
Emerging Leader Associate  
Born November 15, 1986  
Hired July 2010

Joshua Stewart  
PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.  
Project Manager, AVP  
Born June 3, 1982  
Hired June 2003

Drew Strellis  
BP  
Branded Sales Analyst  
Born April 25, 1987  
Hired June 2009

Nathan Victoria  
NASPA- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
Assistant Director of Educational Programs & Social Media  
Born May 23, 1983  
Hired August 2007

Sydnee Viray  
University of Vermont  
Federal Work Study Coordinator  
Born June 20, 1983  
Hired June 2007

Cornell Woodson  
Atlanta Public Schools  
Teacher  
Born April 1, 1987  
Hired August 2009

DEMOGRAPHICS
81% Gay, male  
19% Lesbian, female

*Each HOT Shot was asked to self identify their sexual orientation and gender identity

ETHNICITY
56% White  
13% Filipino American  
13% European American  
6% African American  
6% Chinese  
6% German/ Native American

RACE
69% Caucasian  
19% Asian American  
6% African American  
6% European
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“Have you ever received LGBTQ specific career advice that would better prepare you for the transition from academia to the workplace?”

63% responded NO
37% responded YES

In response, OUT for Work created the LGBTQ Career Center Certification Program. This program audits the LGBTQ specific career services, programs, and resources that career centers are providing their students. Based on results from a questionnaire, career centers receive either a Gold, Silver, or Bronze level of certification. OUT for Work provides assistance for those career centers that do not receive a Gold certification.
“Going into business school, I had kept my sexuality a secret in the workplace. I was so concerned about how I would be judged and the impact on my career. In business school, I sought the opinion of successful business leaders through conferences around the globe. They each told me that my professional relationships and, eventually my work ethic, would suffer if I continued to actively hide who I am. I decided that I was going to work for a company that respected me, so that I could take their advice.

Charles “Dusty” Riddell”

“Yes, I attended the OUT for Work conference my senior year in college. This helped me become much more confident about who I am.

Cornell Woodson”

“Advice from LGBTQ friends was very helpful... they explained that because they were open that they were able to make stronger/more meaningful personal connections with co-workers, which improved their professional relationships.

Anthony Cotton”

“Yes, I was told to pay attention to the benefits policies as an indication for a queer friendly work environment by a professor of mine (who is also queer).

Syndee Viray”
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“How important was your organization’s LGBTQ policies/benefits when considering working there?”

- 56% VERY IMPORTANT
- 25% IMPORTANT
- 13% SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 6% NOT IMPORTANT
- 0% NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

What are you searching for?

Whatever it is, a company’s website is a good place to start.

The most basic question pertaining to LGBTQ inclusiveness that you may want to investigate is whether or not the organization’s equal employment opportunity statement/nondiscrimination policy includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Students have the responsibility of researching the organization before completing an application or e-mailing a resume.
For those interested in working for larger companies, OUT for Work’s HOT List is an index of organizations that brings together two elements that students are concerned with; who’s hiring and how inclusive are the work environments for LGBT employees.

**Nathan Victoria:**
In student affairs, diversity and social justice is an important tenant. The policies and procedures at NASPA, including gender neutral restrooms and partner benefits, show that NASPA is committed to LGBTQ issues.

**My organization’s policies and benefits were important to consider when considering working there because I want to work at a place that practices what it preaches.**

For me, it is also important for me to be visible about my underrepresented identities. These policies and procedures in place afford me security in my career when I am public about my gay identity.

**Anthony Cotton:**
When considering working for the federal government, it was most important that:
1. There was a non-discrimination statement that protects employees on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity
2. I would be working for an administration that was supportive of LGBTQ people and equality
3. There was an active LGBTQ employee resource group

**Given these realities, I felt comfortable accepting a job with the federal government, in spite of the fact that its LGBTQ-related policies generally trail those of the private sector.**

This is especially true vis-à-vis partner benefits: same-sex domestic partners of federal employees are not eligible to receive federal health insurance, life insurance, or retirement annuities. Because these policies impact my long-term willingness to work for the federal government, I assumed the role of Policy Director for my Agency’s LGBTQ employee resource group and work and advocate for updated policies that ensure LGBTQ equality.
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Résumé

The resume is a document used by job seekers to present their educational background, work experience, and skill sets. When talking about coming out on your resume, it’s not about announcing that you are queer in bold courier font. The idea is deciding on whether or not to include information on your resume that directly associates you with the LGBTQ community.

Before including anything on your resume it is important to consider how does it add value and demonstrate the skills and experience that the organization is seeking? In this competitive job market, the decision to omit any relative experiences could jeopardize an opportunity for an interview. If and when you are called in for an interview, you must be able to speak coherently and confidently about any information on your resume.

**Did you list LGBTQ experiences/involvement on your resume that demonstrated skills and abilities?**

**Joshua Stewart**  Yes, I listed my experience as the President/Founder of the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) at the University of Pittsburgh. My role in the GSA helped me to build leadership skills that I felt valuable for the position.

**Alexis Mundis**  Yes, my experiences with the LGBTQ community have given me valuable skills that were directly relevant to the job. I knew there was a risk including it, never knowing who is looking at the resume, but I am deeply involved in the LGBTQ community, it is who I am.

**Aaron Green**  No, I knew that I was going to work for a progressive, west coast tech company, and that their culture would take into account my skills and experiences over my sexual orientation.

**Cornell Woodson**  Yes, in college I received the Harvey Milk Award for helping to increase the profile of LGBTQ students on campus.

**Drew Strellis**  Yes, I had leadership experience at an LGBT event that I wanted to highlight on my resume. All types of meaningful leadership experiences are important to communicate to potential employers.

**Did you list LGBTQ experiences/involvement on your resume that demonstrated skills and abilities?**

69% responded YES
31% responded NO
Job Interview

The interview is a meeting between you and the employer to determine if you are the right person for the position. It will be an opportunity for you to bring the educational background, work experience, and skill sets that you presented on your resume to life.

Just as with your resume, not discussing these because they connect you to the LGBTQ community could be selling yourself short and jeopardize you from being considered for the position. You are not only the interviewee, but also an interviewer. You will want to make sure that the position is one that aligns with your overall career goals.

The interviewer will also assess if you will fit in at the organization. You should also have a sense if the organization is right for you by the end of the interview.

“Did you speak to LGBTQ specific experiences/involvement that demonstrated skills and abilities during your interview?”

“The interviewer asked me about a time that I built a consensus among people with different viewpoints. I explained an experience in graduate school when I worked with students, staff, and administrators to develop and run the university’s first ever training needs of the LGBTQ community.”

Anthony Cotton

“No, I didn’t have any experiences from college that were applicable.”

Craig Benjamin
“No, at the time I thought it would be detrimental to my chances of getting hired. I knew that prejudices against the LGBTQ community existed and thought a recruiter might think less of me if they knew that I was a lesbian.”

Dana Libercci

50% responded
YES

50% responded
NO

“Generally I speak to LGBTQ specific experiences when asked a situational question around diversity. Since it is one characteristic that makes me unique, being gay has both presented costs and benefits both personally and professionally. It also allows me to relate and sympathize for the tribulations of other minority groups.”

Charles “Dusty” Riddle
Describe your coming OUT experience

Just as coming out personally can be a challenging and difficult decision, so too is the decision to come out in the workplace.

Coming out in any environment is a personal choice.

In addition, there are degrees in which you may consider when deciding to come out. It is important to remember that coming out is a continual process.

An individual that has had a positive experience in sharing her/his queer identity to close friends and family members tend to be more willing to take that same approach to the workplace.

Some will share such information with colleagues on the same project team, department, and/or a direct supervisor. If that experience is positive, that circle may expand.

Initially I came out to a few individual employees, but after seeing the lack of resources at my office for LGBT folks (there was no LGBT employee group) I decided to start one for the NY-Metro area for all DOJ employees. I came out to the entire office via emails recruiting LGBT employees and allies for the group.

— David Farber

When my sexuality comes up, I tell people. I don’t broadcast it when I walk into a room, but I don’t hide who I am. I think the fact that both my Sr. Manager and Program Director are out at work has been very influential in helping me to be comfortable coming out at work.

— Craig Benjamin

What has been difficult is working in a global environment with customers and colleagues from the far corners of the earth. Not only do you have to take the normal social and cultural differences into consideration, but there are moral and religious lenses that come into play as well. I’ve certainly had my share of experiences at work with folks who are openly hostile about gay people—in those circumstances I treat it just as I would someone with a vastly differing political view: something I can rationalize, but also not something that I need to battle. I make my point and in some cases share my perspective, typically making it clear that work isn’t the place to voice such strong opinions.

— Aaron Green
When I first started working at NGC, I was doing three month rotational assignments. I worked for nearly the entire first assignment without mentioning my sexual orientation or my partner of the last two years, whom I was living with. It was difficult; I wasn't connecting with co-workers and had a lot of trouble fitting in. I was guarded, didn't talk about my weekends and certainly wasn't my authentic self. Finally on a business trip, after spending three entire days with my manager, she asked the dreaded question for all closeted gays and lesbians. ‘Do you have a boyfriend?’ And that was the turning point, I had two choices. Continue to evade these questions and try to use gender neutral pro-nouns for the rest of my career or come out. So I answered ‘Actually, I have a girlfriend.’ My manager paused for a second as most people do and said, “Oh cool. What does she do?” And from there we talked about relationships and family and created a connection that wouldn’t have been possible if I didn’t share with her my true self.

— Dana Libercci

My coming out experience at work is still in progress. I tell people about my sexual orientation as it comes up in casual conversation. It is important for me to show that being gay is normal. That we have the same issues, the same discomforts and the same joys. Heterosexual persons don’t make a big show about being straight and I feel that I shouldn’t be entitled to a “production” to let them know that I’m gay. I’m striking the right balance between personal life and professional life, giving my work colleagues the pieces that make up the whole me when it’s appropriate.

— Cory Andrews

The students chuckled and looked disgusted; someone even said faggot. I took a break from reading and started a conversation about their feelings about gay people. I wanted to have a candid conversation where they could be completely honest. Many of the stereotypical opinions were present, but when I told them that I was gay they all looked puzzled. Most of them did not believe me and even began to apologize for some of the things they said about gay people. I had changed minds that day and even deepened my relationship with many of them.

Not only had I challenged their thinking, but they had challenged mine too.

— Cornell Woodson
How do you think being OUT and open has affected your career?

A consideration whether or not to come out in the workplace about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity is whether revealing such information will affect you professionally. *If yes, will it be a negative or positive impact?*
Cory Andrews>
I have made many unbelievable contacts through professional networking events for gay and lesbian federal government employees.

Washington, D.C. is a great place for young LGBTQ professionals. We get the best of all worlds; the opportunity to attend LGBTQ-targeted networking events and other networking events targeted to a broader population. It’s difficult to gauge how being open about who I am has affected my career. My sexuality is part of the whole package and it’s hard to tell how that one aspect of me has affected my career. I can definitely say that it has not negatively affected my work, and even after discussing my sexual orientation, I am still treated with the same level of respect.

Andrew Stevens>
Being out has set me aside from my peers; it’s what contributes to my uniqueness.

I think it has helped my career because it shows a challenge that I have embraced and overcame in my life and not afraid to talk about it. Also coming from a conservative school and taking the initiative to be the catalyst of change showed my employer that I won’t accept the status-quo for convenience.

Jacob Benjamin Hanna>
My colleagues can sense that I am being authentic in my interactions and conversations with them.

Being out and bringing my entire self to work has helped me achieve the greatest success possible.

This encourages trust and helps build strong relationships with people in my network. Second, my experiences with Deloitte’s GLOBE & Allies Business Resource Group have directly contributed to my growth, development, and promotion.

Chris Liang>
I’ve been able to access many more senior executives at work because of the work I do to promote an inclusive workplace.

I’ve also been able to attend conferences and represent my company at GLBT events, something I consider as helping me grow my skills in public speaking and leadership.

Craig Benjamin>
My confidence in my sexuality has basically carried over to other parts of my life.

I think it has helped me to become more confident in my job and other parts of my life.
To conclude this resource, the HOT Shots were asked to provide advice to those starting the transition from academia to the workplace.

This advice should be considered as a component of a myriad of other reflection, research, and outreach.

*These individuals have formed viewpoints based on their very specific paths. Your path will be different.*

Be uncompromisingly true to yourself.

Academia is an inspiring place. It is an environment that fosters self discovery and challenges you to refine values and beliefs that you will hold closely for years to come.

- Take what you have learned about yourself during college (LGBTQ experiences, academic studies, and otherwise) and allow these discoveries to inform your career choices.
- From the positions for which you apply, the employers you consider and the employment locations you entertain, make choices that align with the values you have carefully defined.
- From your resume to your interview to your job performance employers will notice your pride. Be PROUD of who you have become.

—Joshua Stewart

Not all work places are like college campuses.

Work and home are separate and some colleagues may not be able or want to talk about family makeup.

- This does not mean they are an anti LGBT colleague.
- I was able to attend meetings and find people who were more open to these conversations. Meetings are clutch to finding out how approachable people are to discussing their identities.

—Sydnee Viray
I encourage students to pursue their professional passions by being themselves during the recruiting process.

Do your homework to better understand potential employers’ culture and workplace policies related to LGBTQ individuals.

1. Ask representatives from the company or organization about its diversity and inclusion policies. Find out about its support for LGBT community organizations. Research the organization and its competitors by looking at Diversity Inc reports and the HRC Corporate Equality Index (CEI).

2. Ask to talk with LGBTQ employees to hear first-hand accounts of their experiences. It is of the utmost importance that you feel comfortable to be yourself while at work—after all, you are going to be at work for 40+ hours every week.

3. So if you feel pressure to hide during the recruiting process—or if you have a reason to worry that you won’t feel 100% comfortable after joining the company—then it might be best to look into other opportunities, which will allow you to bring your whole self to work.

—Jacob Benjamin Hanna

Hard work and performing well go a long way.

Be honest and transparent. Be confident in who you are, since everyone has something to add.

—Drew Strellis

Be yourself. If you have worked hard to come out of the closet in undergraduate, it sucks to have to go back in.

—Nathan Victoria

I think being out and openly gay during job interviews and at the workplace is an invaluable asset for college graduates.

—David Farber
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