

# Bring Your Authentic Self to Work: Creating a culture of pride.

The Pride celebration has an amazing history, rooted in the work of many fearless individuals who understood the importance of freely expressing one's authentic self, even if that self-expression was often met with hate and violence. These trailblazers understood that love is love and that society is a collage, one that is made more vibrant when you allow everyone to contribute their unique color and sparkle.

Today, we remember those fabulous warriors who came before us and honor their memories by embracing our authentic selves. We recognize that *everything* is better with color and sparkle. That's a lesson that extends beyond the LGBTQIA+ community and applies to anyone who feels the need to suppress who they really are.

The inability to be the real you not only can take a personal toll; it also can take a professional one. When you have to suppress who you really are, your mental and physical health suffer. You become disengaged and choose to retreat from others. This underscores the important role that workplaces play in wellness and just how critical it is to put practices into action that result in greater [diversity and inclusion](#).

## Creating Inclusive Workplace Cultures

First, let me say that if you are working at a business that does not empower its people to be themselves every day they come into the office, or log on remotely, then you are being robbed of the ability to be the best that you can be. It's not your fault – but it is your life. If you are happy and proud of who you are, then the people around you, professionally and personally, will benefit.

For employers, happy employees make engaged employees. Workplace cultures that inhibit people from living authentically result in diminished returns. This workplace dissatisfaction is infectious and spreads to others, creating a toxic work environment. Thus, championing a welcoming workplace is a win-win for everyone.

A [law firm's office culture](#) doesn't arise out of thin air. It starts at the top, with an organization's leading decision-makers. These decision-makers are the authors of a firm's mission and values. They have the ability to create policies that allow the mission to come to fruition and for these values to flourish. They oversee choices in new hires to ensure that newcomers to the organization are a cultural fit. Those leaders who build a culture that inspires, empowers and invites everyone to be themselves, to talk about their lives and families without fear of judgment, are transformative. They bring out the best in their talent.

When you create a corporate culture that inspires people to be their best, you get results.



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Your lawyers, administrative staff and clients will be more likely to sing your praises in conversations and on social media. This fuels brand awareness, extending your reach beyond what your firm may have been able to achieve otherwise. There will be a general respect for your firm in the market, and word of your forward-thinking culture will attract top-quality talent who demand [a workplace that genuinely appreciates its people](#).

## Jaffe's Informal "Be You" Policy

At Jaffe, my business partners and I established a workplace where it's clear that everyone has the right and freedom to be themselves. This culture has been perpetuated by our employees, resulting in an environment that is truly inclusive. We have multiple male LGBTQIA+ staff members, including myself, who know they can refer to their spouses as "husbands" rather than obscuring that fact with the vague term "partner." We encourage our professionals to share what they wish about their personal lives without pause or editing.

As I take account of all the amazing people who make up our team at Jaffe, I am proud of the workplace we have collectively built. No matter our gender identity or sexual orientation, we respect and support each other. We celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. We also acknowledge that when it comes to issues related to diversity and inclusion, there is always more learning to do, and we are committed to educating ourselves.

## Be Proud of Who You Are

I am pleased to see that the business community, including the legal marketing community, has grown to be so open, resulting in a melting pot of diverse thinkers. Workplaces seem to be moving more and more toward a world of acceptance rather than oppression. Perhaps there is less worrying about what critics will say and more emphasis on what society at large might respect and appreciate. Yes, it makes business sense, but it also just makes sense.

For Pride this year, enjoy the parades and festivities. Remember those who fought for our freedoms. Show your LGBTQIA+ and other friends and loved ones how much they mean to you. Join me in envisioning a world where every day, everyone celebrates their authentic selves and is encouraged to bring this authenticity into the workplace. To me, that is Pride.