

## Engaging gay workers increases productivity

**By: Staff Journalist, Singapore**

*Published: Jun 04, 2009 – Human Resources Online*

Canada - A study suggests companies can improve productivity and decrease turnover if more active steps are taken to engage gay workers.

Based on research released by Catalyst, a non-profit organization that promotes diversity in the workplace, "invisible" lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) workers are likely to be less engaged than their openly gay counterparts due to "self-editing" and an associated general lack of authenticity.

"When employees are working in an environment where it doesn't feel inclusive... that creates a situation where there is invisible diversity within an organisation that an employer may not even be aware of," says Deborah Gillis, vice president, North America of Catalyst. She adds that the employer will not have the chance to tap into their potential and support them.

The study reported that LGBT employees working in organizations with effective and inclusive diversity practices had better workplace relationships, greater organisation commitment and greater career satisfaction.

Additionally, fewer LGBT women (50%) than men (72%) were openly gay in their workplace, says a report by *Nanaimo Daily News*.

"When employees don't have to self-edit or think about how someone might respond to them... they are able to focus on their work and the issues at hand," says Gillis.

Despite having a number of legislative laws and policies implemented in Canada, a general lack of awareness and discrimination still exists. Others also complain of stereotyping, gay jokes and lessened chances of networking opportunities.

Michael Bach, a now openly gay executive at KPMG, felt serious apprehension about coming out at the beginning. "The stress of whether or not I was going to say he, or my boyfriend, and slip up, really caused a lot of consternation for me. It really did lead to me being less engaged and fearful at my work."

Bach's boss in New York was not supportive, and his career suffered. However, he feels that being openly gay in KPMG has been a boon. He founded a LGBT resource group for employees, and "rose within the organisation very quickly". He feels that he could not have done it if he was not openly gay.

According to the researchers, the survey of 17,908 respondents (466 are LGBT) is accurate nine times out of 10. However, the questions were open-ended and thus has no definitive margin of error.