

XpertHR Offers 9 Steps for Creating LGBT-Friendly Workplaces

Federal agencies focus on enforcement of equal rights

NEW PROVIDENCE, N.J. – (Sept. 12, 2016) From large to small, from metropolitan to rural, companies across the nation need to prepare for what is being called “the next frontier in the fight for equal rights,” according to Legal Editor Beth Zoller of XpertHR and author of a [report](#) on workplace issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

While nearly 50 percent of states prohibit workplace discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity, more than a third lack any such protections for LGBT individuals, Zoller explains in a whitepaper that offers employers nine steps to create an LGBT-friendly workplace.

Creating an LGBT-friendly workplace will be imperative, she says, because the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has stated that eradicating gender-based or sexual orientation discrimination is part of its Strategic Enforcement Plan.

The Commission, Zoller says, has sent a clear signal that LGBT discrimination is among its top enforcement priorities, mirroring a key area of focus for the Obama administration, government efforts and increased public attention, particularly in public schools.

Zoller also points to a 2016 Executive Employer Survey conducted by Littler, a global labor law practice, which found that LGBT-related discrimination claims have been on the rise and will continue to increase, in some cases “at a staggering rate.”

In its whitepaper, XpertHR offers the following steps for employers to create a LGBT-friendly workplace:

1. Develop, implement and enforce strong EEO policies.
2. Provide training to supervisors and other employees.
3. Implement bias-free hiring.
4. Recognize the importance of a diverse and inclusive workplace.
5. Handle restrooms and locker rooms with sensitivity.
6. Avoid discriminatory dress codes.
7. Create employee resource groups.
8. Offer comprehensive benefits.
9. Create transition guidelines.

Just as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) required employers to make workplaces more accessible and provide reasonable accommodations to employees and applicants with disabilities, Zoller says, “21st century employers must be prepared to even the playing field when it comes to gender identity and sexual orientation, and make sure that all persons are treated fairly and equally in the workplace.”

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XpertHR (www.xperthr.com) is a practical online service to help HR professionals comply with federal, state and municipal laws. [Resources](#) for preparing for an LGBT-friendly workplace, can be found on XpertHR’s website.

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