

# sm<sup>ps</sup>

Society for Marketing  
Professional Services

# DEI + A/E/C

**apply marketing know-how to support  
equity and inclusion in the industry**

by russell pollard

# [ pride ] talk

for A/E/C  
Marketing  
Professionals

Marketing professionals can play an integral role in supporting a more equitable, inclusive industry for LGBTQ+ communities. The presentation will also demonstrate how marketing knowledge and skills can be applied to support workplace and industry change.

This document serves to reflect key aspects of the presentation with the aim of supporting continued reflection and application. It does not constitute advisory.

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# [ pride ] talk

Pride Talk is a program by Framework Leadership to engage employers and organizations in supporting a more equitable, inclusive construction industry.

A portion of revenue will be distributed to industry-serving initiatives and organizations that contribute to equity and inclusion. Currently in its inaugural year, there is participation from employers and organizations in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

For 2022, its inaugural year, three Pride Talks were developed and delivered to employers and industry organizations:

Employers

**Celebrate and Elevate Pride with Workplace Culture and Leadership**

SMPS

**Apply Marketing Know-How to Support EDI in the Industry  
for A/E/C Marketing Professionals**

Toronto Society of Architects

**Supporting the Success of EDI Committees**

[www.pridetalks.ca](http://www.pridetalks.ca)

## participating employers:

TURNER  
FLEISCHER

WZMH  
ARCHITECTS

KPMB



SvN



gh3\*



wsp

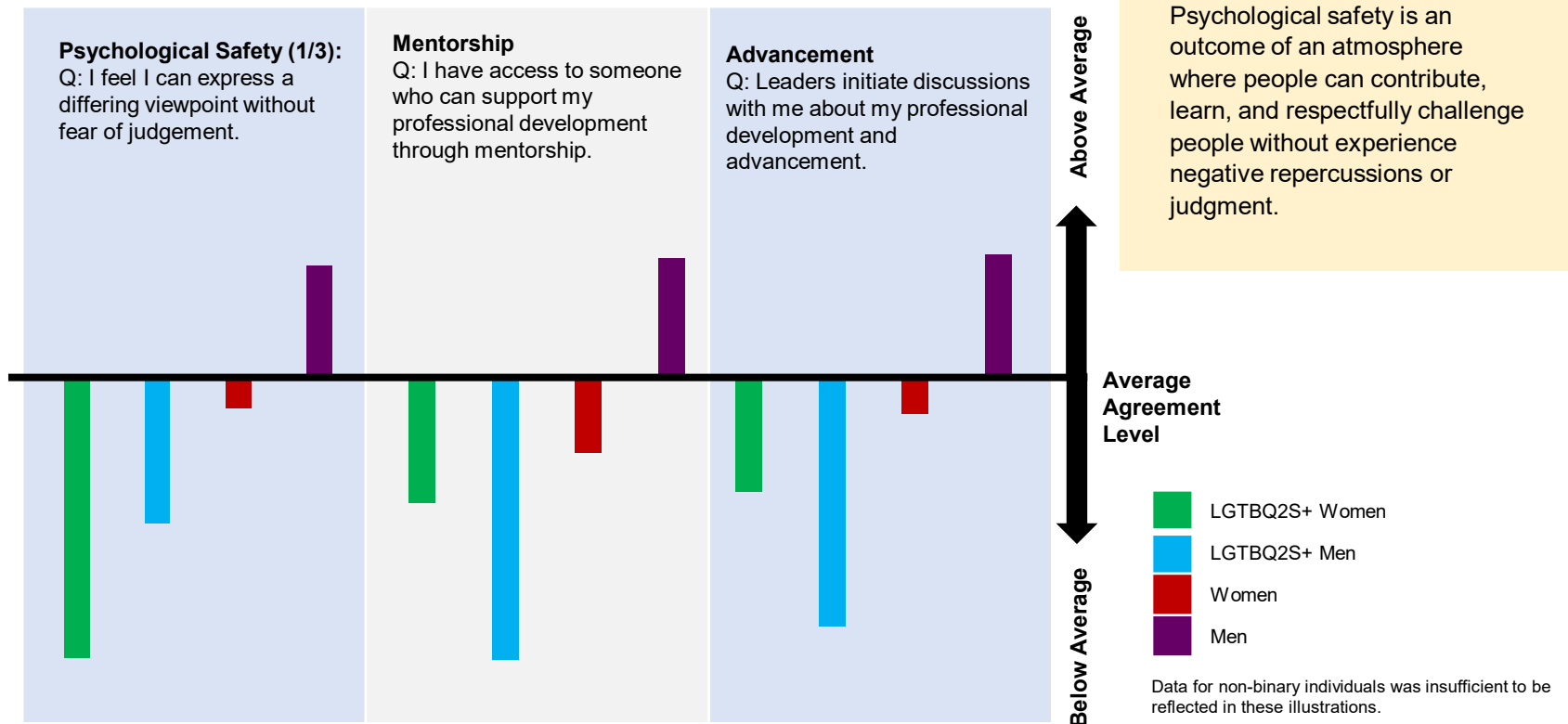
# marketing research

The skills of marketing research can be applied to more accurately reflect communities and their respective experiences and outcomes in the workplace and industry.

An example of this is an intersectional approach to workplace culture or employment assessments – an approach that acknowledges that individuals have memberships in several identity groups that subject them to different levels of advantage and disadvantage. This approach has origins from Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw’s identification of intersectionality. Reflecting an intersectional approach begins with how the research is designed to gather data in a manner that identify inequities and prompt further research to serve given populations.

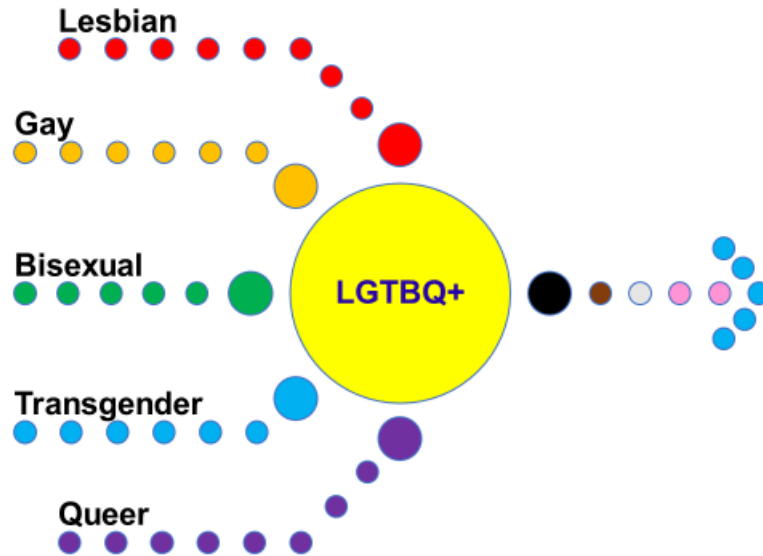
## Illustration: An Intersectional View on Career Experiences

Based on a 2021 research study by Framework Leadership of over 600 architects and consulting engineers, Canada.



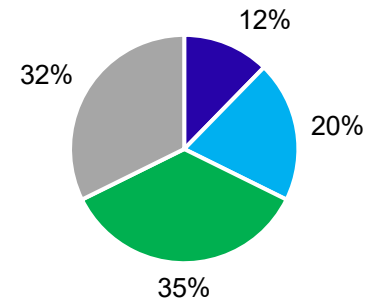
# marketing research

It is termed LGBTQ+ communities to reflect that each respective group is unique, even though they are often categorized together. Future research and understanding should reflect this plurality.



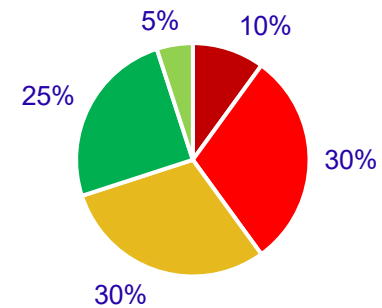
The prevalence of discrimination in the workplace indicates to LGBTQ+ persons that they do not belong and that they are not valued. Naturally, this impacts whether they can contribute, be successful or remain in their chosen professions. Many members of these communities report having an inclusive in-office professional experience but experiencing a different culture when working with clients, project consultants or contractors – people AEC professionals are meant to build relationships with as part of their career progression. Measures to ensure equity and inclusion must consider discrimination in all its forms in all of its contexts.

Q: Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace in the last twelve months? (LGBTQ2S+, n=76)



- Yes, I have been subject to it
- Yes, I have witnessed it
- Yes, I have both witnessed and been subject to it
- No

Q: Being lesbian, gay, transgender or bisexual creates barriers to career progression in my part of the industry. (LGBTB+ architects, n=250)




- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No Opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

## marketing planning

Build relationships with these communities all year round, not just during Pride month. Leverage your resources, influence and spending to contribute to equity and inclusion for these communities beyond a workplace celebration.

Beyond a carefully crafted marketing message, these communities are concerned about the evidence behind expressed support. Consider how workplace policies and processes may support or undermine people's wellbeing based on their respective needs. Also, look beyond just what is happening in the workplace to what is happening in the industry and society.

january	february	march	april
may		july	august
september	october	november	december

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may		july	august
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## client and business development

Apart from building relationships with colleagues, ensuring technical and non-technical staff are equipped with knowledge and skills to establish and build relationships with prospective and active clients is important, too. Client organizations and procurement processes are increasingly establishing accountability and expectations for diversity, equity and inclusion. Using gender-respectful and non-heteronormative language is becoming an expectation.

## promotional activity

Linked to marketing planning is promotional activity. People are quite aware of rainbow-washing and empty statements about support for the LGBTQ+ communities. If there is no evidence of a company's positive impact on LGBTQ+ communities, they should not be stating so.

Consider – this practice has the potential to mislead members of LGBTQ+ communities into employment situations that are not supportive for them and they already experience a high rate of employment discrimination.

Consider – if channel audience members ask in the comments on LinkedIn *“What have you done to support LGBTQ+ persons in the workplace, industry or broader society?”*, what your response might be.

As marketing professionals we are in the business of building (earning) trust. We must be honest about what we communicate externally. It may be better to be frank that your company is interested in supporting these communities and early on its journey to do so, rather than claiming leadership and unearned recognition.

When it comes to highlighting LGBTQ+ employees, firms should consider the power dynamic between employee-employer, the fact that the workplace may be inclusive but the industry still has much discrimination, and an individuals' journey of coming out may not appreciate a social media detour for corporate satisfaction. Where individuals are happy to be featured, ensure their professional accomplishments are prominent as that is how the feature can be mutually beneficial and support visibility for equity-deserving groups.

# proposals

## allyship & allyship

Although many colleagues and firms propose themselves as allies, members of LGBTQ+ communities do not always benefit from these proclamations. In some cases, they are harmed by these proclamations as an abundance of communicated support that is not translated into real equitable and safe outcomes may decrease the broader population's sense of urgency around issues.

Where many individuals and firms wonder "How can I be an effective ally?", the reality is there is no step-by-step approach. It is a personal decision and a personal path – starting with a decision. Clarify your personal values and consider how you wish for people to experience working with you and how you wish people to experience the workplace. It is a process full of learning, trust-building, anxiety, appreciation and fulfilment.

Even members of equity-deserving groups often struggle with being allies to members of groups to which they are not members of. As workplaces and as an industry we need to move towards what we are contributing to individually and building together, more than the us vs. them approach.

People don't see allyship in a social media post; they see it in contributions to meaningful change.

## ethics & accountability

Referenced throughout the presentation is the concept of ethical marketing. Whether related to equity, diversity and inclusion or not, marketing needs to be honest. Establishing market position, brand trust, and client relationships require firms to add and communicate value to their stakeholders. Consider developing a campaign for a service you do not provide (e.g. wayfinding) and what that means to the business and people.

In the realm of equity, diversity and inclusion there are very few precedents, especially in this industry. The true leaders do and will have a resolute mission, monitor progress, identify and remedy harm, and adjust to move forward. Much like business.

## the seventh domain

As we each consider how we can apply marketing knowledge, skills, and impact to support equity, diversity and inclusion in the AEC profession and industry, we should reflect on how we can embed these in our individual work and professional journeys.

## thank you

Russell is an active member of the A/E/C communities. He is a consultant for workplace culture, leadership and inclusion focused on A/E/C. For four years, he has volunteered on the Board of SMPS Ontario and currently serves as Immediate Past-President for the chapter.



Since joining the A/E/C sector in 2017, Russell has been contributing to industry change through public speaking, sponsorship, volunteerism, and research, aiming to support a more inclusive, equitable industry for all.



russell@frameworkleads.com  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/russellpollard/>  
www.frameworkleads.com

# **[ frame ] work** leadership

## **Framework Leadership**

**a workplace culture & leadership consultancy that embeds principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in its work, contributing to a better A/E/C industry for all.**

- **Leadership Development and Training**
- **Workplace Culture Advisory**
- **Employer Branding and Talent Strategy**

[www.frameworkleads.com](http://www.frameworkleads.com)  
[russell@frameworkleads.com](mailto:russell@frameworkleads.com)