

# New Catalyst Research Reveals Workplace Barriers for LGBT Employees Limit Advancement Opportunities and Contributions to Organizations

*LGBT employees report unique experiences of exclusion and echo similar workplace hurdles to women*

**TORONTO (June 3, 2009)** — Even in Canada, a country with legislated human rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals, LGBT employees face workplace barriers that limit career advancement and, therefore, restrict potential contributions to organizational success, according to Catalyst's third report on building LGBT-inclusive workplaces, [\*Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces: Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change\*](#). The new Canadian-based study, sponsored by [Scotiabank](#), finds that a lack of awareness, which may cause other employees to rely on stereotypes, can lead to a hostile work environment for LGBT employees including discriminatory behaviours such as inappropriate humour or derogatory language; exclusion from important relationships and advancement opportunities; and a lack of role models.

The study suggests that since some LGBT employees are "invisible" and choose not to disclose or come out, organizations may not fully understand the benefits, needs, and challenges of these employees. It also points out that when LGBT employees spend less effort managing disclosure and can focus on their work, both organizations and employees benefit.

"Leaders who understand the bottom-line benefits of diversity should be eager to implement LGBT-inclusion programs," said [Deborah Gillis](#), Vice President, North America, Catalyst. "LGBT inclusive workplaces can increase employee engagement by allowing employees to be authentic and spend less time self-editing. That reduces costs by decreasing turnover. It can also potentially increase revenue by encouraging LGBT employees to help the organization tap new markets and enhance customer loyalty."

According to the study, concerted efforts by organizations to create LGBT-inclusive workplaces, such as diversity training, employee networks, and mentoring programs, help to raise awareness and dispel myths, resulting in better workplace relationships, improved perceptions about workplace fairness, and increased career satisfaction and organizational commitment for LGBT employees.

"We believe very strongly in the importance of promoting inclusive practices, and that inclusion can only happen in the absence of judgment or bias," said Sylvia Chrominska, Scotiabank Group Head Global Human Resources and Communications. "We applaud Catalyst for providing information that will serve to continue the conversation amongst Canadian businesses about the need for LGBT inclusion as part of a well-rounded strategy to achieve real diversity. As a recognized employer of choice, Scotiabank has long acknowledged the importance of inclusion."

Through its LGBT series, Catalyst extends its focus on gender diversity to include LGBT employees—recognizing that women may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. This Catalyst study offers new insights about specific challenges facing LGBT women. While few differences were based on gender, LGBT women did report “less friendly workplaces” than LGBT men:

- 76 percent of LGBT women versus 85 percent of all others reported that their manager was comfortable interacting with them.
- 70 percent of LGBT women reported that their manager evaluated performance fairly versus 80 percent of LGBT men and 77 percent of non-LGBT women and men.
- On average, LGBT women are “out” to 50 percent of their workgroup versus LGBT men out to 72 percent of their workgroup.

The study reports that LGBT employees working in organizations with effective and inclusive diversity practices indicated better workplace relationships and greater organizational commitment and career satisfaction (linked to greater productivity) than LGBT employees at organizations without them. To help organizations become more inclusive and increase their brand as an “employer of choice,” Catalyst offers a number of recommendations, including:

- Increase awareness—identify and tackle organizational issues related to LGBT employees company-wide.
- Implement diversity training to help dispel LGBT myths/stereotypes.
- Help LGBT employees find mentors and employee groups.
- Make consistent and inclusive communications a core goal.

[Scotiabank](#) is the Contributing Sponsor of *Building LGBT-Inclusive Workplaces: Engaging Organizations and Individuals in Change*.

For more information on building LGBT-inclusive workplaces, please go to: [www.catalyst.org](http://www.catalyst.org). For media inquiries, please contact: Charmain Emerson, 416-588-8514, [charmain@building-blocks.com](mailto:charmain@building-blocks.com); or Susan Nierenberg, 646-388-7744, [snierenberg@catalyst.org](mailto:snierenberg@catalyst.org).

## **ABOUT CATALYST**

Founded in 1962, Catalyst is the leading nonprofit membership organization working globally with businesses and the professions to build inclusive workplaces and expand opportunities for women and business. With offices in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and more than 400 preeminent corporations as members, Catalyst is the trusted resource for research, information, and advice about women at work. Catalyst annually honors exemplary organizational initiatives that promote women’s advancement with the Catalyst Award.