



Workplace
Pride

THE INTERNATIONAL
PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+
INCLUSION AT WORK



Workplace
Pride

Breakout #4

Impact through Partnerships

11:15 - 12:30 | *Toorop Hall*

Breakout 4 Report



1. Executive Summary

The session explored how partnerships can amplify the impact of inclusion initiatives by bringing together organisations, employee networks, individuals and external communities around a shared purpose. The discussion centred on the development of a Pride exhibition that evolved from a personal story into a broader corporate initiative designed to create visibility, encourage conversation and reach audiences beyond the LGBTIQ+ community.

The initiative demonstrated that a strong vision, combined with strategic partnerships and management support, can turn a relatively small idea into a high-profile platform for inclusion. The approach also evolved beyond LGBTIQ+ representation towards a broader focus on identity, creating opportunities to collaborate with culture, youth and women's Employee Resource Groups.

The discussion highlighted both the opportunities and complexities of cross-company partnerships. Differences in organisational maturity, values, geography and willingness to invest time can create challenges. However, when partnerships are built around a clear business case and individual stories, they can generate meaningful conversations and extend the reach of inclusion efforts.

Looking ahead to 2026, the initiative will continue to evolve through a new Diversity Day concept focused on looking beyond visible characteristics and exploring the identities and experiences that make people who they are.

2. Key Findings

Finding 1 — Personal stories can become powerful catalysts for organisational change

The initiative began with a personal coming-out story shared at a WPP New Year's meeting. Although the story was known within APG, it had not previously been shared more broadly.



This personal starting point became the foundation for a much larger initiative. The 2024 Pride exhibition demonstrated how authentic individual experiences can create opportunities for others to see themselves represented and encourage conversations that might otherwise remain difficult to initiate.

The exhibition deliberately included a wide range of stories, including those of a father with a gay daughter and people with two mothers, alongside historical reflections on Stonewall, Marsha P. Johnson and the Homomonument.

Finding 2 — Visibility requires intentional design

The organisers recognised that an inclusion initiative will have limited impact if it is only seen by people who are already interested in the topic.

The exhibition was therefore positioned in central, unavoidable office walkways to maximise exposure and reach employees beyond the LGBTQIA+ community.

This demonstrates an important principle: **inclusion initiatives should be designed to reach the wider organisation, not only the communities they directly represent.**

Finding 3 — A strong vision is critical to securing organisational support

Management buy-in was achieved by presenting a clear and compelling vision for the initiative.

The experience also showed that participation requires more than financial resources. Organisations considering involvement need to commit significant time, coordination and internal effort.

This means that successful partnership models should make the required contribution clear from the beginning and demonstrate why participation is valuable to the organisation.

Finding 4 — Partnerships can multiply impact

The initiative expanded beyond a single Pride-focused event by broadening its focus to **identity**.



Collaboration with culture, youth and women's ERGs helped create a wider platform for different experiences and perspectives. The resulting *You&I* media campaign placed 16–18 everyday colleagues at the centre of the story, presenting them as the "real heroes" alongside recognised public figures.

This approach helped shift the emphasis from celebrity representation to the lived experiences of colleagues, making inclusion more personal and relatable.

Finding 5 — Successful initiatives can create conversations that extend beyond the event

The initiative received a 2025 Media Outreach Award and generated meaningful conversations in the workplace.

One example involved parents seeking advice about how to support children struggling with their identity. This illustrates the potential ripple effect of workplace inclusion initiatives: a campaign designed to raise awareness can also create space for personal questions, learning and support.

The value of an initiative should therefore not be measured only by attendance or visibility, but also by the conversations and actions it enables afterwards.

Finding 6 — Partnership models face practical and cultural challenges

The experience highlighted several barriers to collaboration, including:

- Building and financial approval processes.
- Different levels of organisational maturity.
- Significant time and resource requirements.
- Cancellation of planned initiatives.
- Differences in values between external partners.
- Geographic and regulatory differences.

Partnerships can become particularly complex when organisations operate in environments where LGBTIQ+ inclusion is more restricted or politically sensitive.



These challenges reinforce the importance of establishing shared principles and expectations before entering into a partnership.

Finding 7 — Organisational identity can influence how partnerships are perceived

External partners may sometimes perceive individuals involved in an initiative primarily as representatives of the LGBTQIA+ community rather than representatives of their specific organisation.

This can make it more difficult to establish corporate partnerships or communicate the broader business relevance of inclusion.

The discussion suggested that organisers need to be deliberate about positioning: maintaining the authenticity of the community connection while clearly communicating the organisational value and purpose behind the initiative.

Finding 8 — Inclusion can be positioned as a business case without losing the human story

A key recommendation was to challenge organisations that operate globally but remain hesitant to support diversity and inclusion.

The business case for inclusion should be made explicit, particularly where companies recruit globally, serve diverse customers or operate across multiple markets.

At the same time, the spotlight should remain on individuals and their experiences. A **"supported by" branding model** can allow companies to demonstrate their support without taking over the personal stories at the heart of the initiative.



3. Key Takeaways

- **Start with authentic stories:** Personal experiences can provide a powerful foundation for broader organisational conversations.
- **Design for visibility:** Inclusion initiatives should intentionally reach people outside the community directly represented.
- **Lead with a clear vision:** A compelling purpose helps secure management support and attract partners.
- **Build through collaboration:** Working across ERGs, organisations and communities can significantly extend reach and impact.
- **Put people at the centre:** Everyday colleagues can be powerful ambassadors for inclusion when their real experiences are given a platform.
- **Measure the ripple effect:** Look beyond participation numbers to the conversations, learning and actions generated by an initiative.
- **Expect partnership complexity:** Differences in organisational maturity, resources, values and geography need to be considered from the outset.
- **Connect inclusion to business:** A strong business case can help engage organisations that are hesitant to invest in diversity.
- **Protect the authenticity of individual stories:** Partners should support the platform without overshadowing the people whose experiences create its value.

4. Implications for the Organisation

The discussion demonstrates the potential for inclusion initiatives to act as **catalysts for wider organisational engagement** when they are designed around authentic stories and supported through strategic partnerships.

Rather than treating Pride or other diversity initiatives as standalone awareness campaigns, organisations can use them as platforms for broader conversations about identity, belonging and employee experience.



The expansion from LGBTQIA+ inclusion to a wider identity focus is particularly relevant. Collaboration across ERGs can help avoid fragmented approaches to diversity and create opportunities to explore the intersection between different aspects of identity.

The experience also highlights the importance of planning for partnership complexity. Organisations should assess potential partners not only on their financial contribution, but also on their values, level of commitment, geographical context and willingness to invest the necessary time and resources.

Finally, the initiative provides an opportunity to rethink how organisations communicate their support for inclusion. A model that keeps individuals and their experiences at the centre, while allowing companies to visibly demonstrate their support, can provide a balance between authenticity and corporate engagement.

5. Recommended Actions

Priority	Action	Owner / Level	Timing
High	Develop a clear vision and business case for major inclusion initiatives before seeking partners	Leadership / ERGs / DEI	Immediate
High	Identify opportunities for collaboration across ERGs to broaden inclusion initiatives beyond individual identity groups	ERGs / DEI / HR	Short term
High	Establish clear criteria for selecting external partners, including values alignment and commitment	Leadership / ERGs	Short term



High	Design inclusion campaigns to reach audiences beyond the communities directly represented	Communications / ERGs	Ongoing
Medium	Use authentic employee stories as a central component of inclusion campaigns	Communications / ERGs	Ongoing
Medium	Develop a consistent approach to measuring the impact of campaigns, including engagement and conversations generated	Communications / DEI	Medium term
Medium	Create clear expectations around the time, resources and responsibilities required from partner organisations	Project Leads / Partners	Immediate
Medium	Use a "supported by" model where appropriate to keep individual stories at the centre while recognising organisational support	Communications / Partners	Ongoing
Medium	Use successful initiatives and partnerships as case studies to encourage wider organisational participation	Leadership / Communications	Ongoing
Medium	Develop the 2026 Diversity Day initiative around the theme "The Beauty Within: Seeing Beyond What the Eye Sees"	Project Team / ERGs / Partners	2026



6. Conclusion

The session demonstrated the **multiplier effect of partnerships**: an initiative that begins with one personal story can develop into a platform that reaches thousands of people, creates meaningful conversations and encourages organisations to think differently about identity and inclusion.

The greatest impact comes when partnerships are built around a clear shared purpose, authentic individual experiences and a willingness to collaborate across organisational and community boundaries.

The experience also shows that successful partnerships require careful navigation of practical constraints, organisational maturity, values and local context. The opportunity is to turn these challenges into stronger partnership models that combine the human story with a clear organisational and business case.

Bottom line: Partnerships can transform individual stories into collective impact when organisations combine authentic voices, a clear purpose, strategic collaboration and a commitment to keeping people—not organisations—at the centre of the story.