

Beck Bailey:

What if my pronoun is they? What if that's the way I want to be interacted with or talked about? I don't think many of our institutions, health care or otherwise, have caught up to a way that people have expanded the definitions of gender and the way they see themselves.

LuAnn Heinen:

That's Beck Bailey, managing director, Inclusion and Diversity at Accenture. Beck joined Accenture from the Human Rights Campaign, where he led the Corporate Equality Index, a voluntary survey that scores U.S. companies and their global operations on equitable benefits and inclusive practices for LGBTQ+ employees. An openly transgender man, he's a nationally recognized expert on transgender inclusion policy, who has witnessed tremendous progress in the last 20 years and still sees a lot to be done.

I'm LuAnn Heinen and this is the Business Group on Health podcast, conversations with experts on the most important health and well-being issues facing employers. My guest is Beck Bailey and we're going to talk about how companies can become greater allies for LGBTQ employees by actively pursuing inclusive cultures and equitable benefits.

This episode is sponsored by Thrive Global. Thrive Global as a behavior change technology company, helping the world's leading enterprises and the stress and burnout epidemic, one microstep at a time.

Beck, welcome to the podcast. I'm so excited. I've been looking forward to talking with you.

Beck Bailey:

It is so wonderful to be here and thank you for inviting me.

LuAnn Heinen:

Let's start with your illustrious time, your career at the Human Rights Campaign, where you led the Corporate Equality Index. Over 1,100 companies took that survey in 2021. That includes almost half of the Fortune 500 and quite a number of companies achieve the top score and the title of Best Place to Work for LGBTQ equality. What does this mean to you? How has it achieved in really a short number of years? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Beck Bailey:

Absolutely. I had the deep privilege to work at the Human Rights Campaign and be a part of that team that produces the Corporate Equality Index or CEI. I joined HRC specifically because of the CEI. I had seen how effective a change management tool it really was for the private sector to become more LGBTQ inclusive. What I love about the CEI is that it sets forth a group of metrics that are transparent, fair, and objective. Companies have a roadmap to follow to ensure their policies, such as non-discrimination policy or anti-harassment policy, their benefits and their workplace practices fully account for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people. By following that roadmap, they can achieve that score. I think it's interesting, you mentioned how a high number of companies reach that a hundred percent score. I think unlike some other kinds of ranking tools, the CEI was specifically structured so that everyone could succeed, everyone could win, right? All the employers can get a hundred if they want to, and we're going to show them the way to do that, and all employees can see that and as they look for jobs in the marketplace, they can see with some transparency what the company has done to be more inclusive.

LuAnn:

Yes, I love that. How do you set the criteria? Is it really an iterative approach where you're in conversation with representatives from the companies who are invested in this index? Or is it something that you've kind of got your five-year plan? How far can we push it this year and by 2025, we're going to try to get to X and Y? How does that work?

Beck Bailey:

I think it's a little bit of both. The CEI has been around, when it gets published in January of 2022, that'll be the 20th edition. When you go back to the late 1990s, the early 2000s, there were a group of advocates at the Human Rights Campaign who were thinking about how do we better engage business in this conversation? They put together a working group of business leaders, of LGBTQ identified business leaders, but also non-LGBT business leaders, leaders in predominantly, I would say HR, at that time there weren't that many DE&I departments, but to have a conversation about what would that inclusive space look like and how would we measure it. That has continued throughout the nearly two decades of the report, such that there are criteria changes made, they aren't made every year, but they're made whenever there's an opportunity to kind of take a practice from emerging and untested to a best practice. As you see new practices emerge in the business community, the team at HRC, along with a group of business advisors that sit on the Business Advisory Council, evaluate that and look at how they might measure it as part of the CEI. You can expect to see a regular cadence of change there that helps companies continue to push the dialogue forward.

LuAnn Heinen:

Can you foresee a time when we're there, we've arrived?

Beck Bailey:

Well, you know, the interesting thing and it sets up a bit of the conversation for today is, it's important to think about what the CIO is really good at and maybe where its limitations are. What it's really, really good at is measuring the black and white of situations like policies. Does a policy exist or does it not exist? Is a benefit plan inclusive of same-sex couples or is it not? It takes an approach that is really measuring policies, processes, structures. It's not necessarily measuring all the outcomes of that, or more specifically the experiences LGBTQ people are having at work and it's measuring a foundation that's necessary, but alone is insufficient. That points a little bit to the future of the CEI is as we achieve all of these structural things, how do we then look at culture, a sense of belonging, aspects of equity, maybe we aren't measuring for today. Every company, including mine, I'm not at HRC anymore, I'm at Accenture, we're always looking at, well now what does that mean for our people? What is the experience that they're having and how do we make that the most inclusive, productive, and equitable experience that people could have?

LuAnn Heinen:

Let's talk about Accenture and why you made the change. In your new role you're leading an internal DE&I team and it sounds like culture is a big part of this.

Beck Bailey:

Yes, absolutely. Well, I came from the private sector before I went to HRC. It was my opportunity to kind of move back to the private sector and allow other advocates to take up the work at HRC. It's truly such a privilege to get to do that work. I'm glad to see the team and other advocates kind of carry that on. I know at a Accenture I am part of a team that's looking to improve the experience for our employees, of which we have at current count about 580,000 worldwide. I'm thinking about how we accelerate a culture of equality and inclusion and belonging for all of our people. We believe that no one should be discriminated against full stop, period. And we aren't tolerating discrimination because of difference in age or ability or ethnicity or gender or gender identity or expression, religion, sexual orientation. We are really aiming to be the most inclusive and diverse company in the world. To do that, we've really set forth what we kind of think of our framework as having bold goals and ambitions, taking comprehensive actions and fundamentally holding ourselves accountable to those things.

LuAnn Heinen:

How many of those 580,000 employees are you focused on either from an LGBTQ perspective or because they're at risk of not feeling included and belonging?

Beck Bailey:

When we think of our approach to inclusion and belonging, we really see that as a hundred percent effort. Like that's everyone. Part of that is, you know, we've done a lot of work around what is it that makes a sense of belonging? What is necessary to that? Some of the interesting brain and behavioral science around belonging is that folks need to feel a sense of psychological safety in order to belong. That's a precursor. It kind of doesn't matter with all you're doing with these policies and practices, if people don't feel that personal sense of psychological safety. For us, we've really worked out this idea of how do we make sure everyone feels seen, safe, connected, and courageous. It has to do with that psychological safety. Now what's interesting about that is I can't make you feel seen and safe unless I have a certain amount of, kind of, self-care to begin with. I need to kind of feel seen and safe, in and of myself, right? There's this aspect of self-care and self-empathy and understanding oneself that's necessary for me to turn around and give that to you. That's why I think when I say it's kind of a hundred percent effort is for everyone who belongs to any kind of marginalized identity, we all need to be there for ourselves and then there for each other, as well as the people who are part of whatever the dominant culture is in any particular space or place. We really look at that as how do we all thrive together? We even have a program that we've worked on called Thriving Together, that blends these aspects of the sense of self-care that one needs, and then also those ally and leadership and inclusive behaviors, you can then extend out from yourself to others.

LuAnn Heinen:

That sounds really nuanced and so appropriate. How are you beginning to kind of operationalize that? Let's also get to benefits, policies, and practices, which ultimately are hallmarks of culture.

Beck Bailey:

Sure. In terms of operationalizing, the sense of belonging and being seen safe, connected, courageous, one tool that we are using is our Thriving Together program and a corresponding app. That app is something that after I've gone through my Thriving Together course, I can have this app and interact with it on a daily basis. I can even bring it into my Microsoft Teams environment and have that feed me micro steps towards more inclusion and micro steps towards more self-care. It might ping me to say, take a break, take a break from your screen, take a deep breath and kind of do that self-care piece, but also it might ping me and say, you set a goal to learn more about people who are different from yourself, make a coffee date with someone different today. It's giving you these little micro steps to expand, say your network. That's one way to combat network bias, that similarity bias that we all struggle with. We're really leveraging technology as a large multinational company. That's one way we know we can scale these kinds of efforts is to leverage technology in that answer.

LuAnn Heinen:

How cool is that? Was that a home grown app.

Beck Bailey:

Yes, with Arianna Huffington and the incredible team at Thrive Global.

LuAnn Heinen:

Wonderful. Yes, we know that team. Does your work extend beyond the benefits and sort of offerings in the employer space? Inside Accenture, do you get into the experience in our health care system? So you provide the benefits and you provide the access and then what?

Beck Bailey:

That's such a great question. This kind of goes back to our conversation about the CEI and what it's really good at and kind of the limitations. For example, let's take transgender health care benefits, which I think are a great example here. The CEI has done an incredible job of educating employers and driving the adoption of those benefits within employer provided plans, particularly here in the United States where we all get our health care. What it doesn't account for is once you have those benefits, what's the experience your employees are having when they go to access them. I think we all know, who work in this space, that can be a really mixed

bag. Whether you're talking about something as specific as transgender benefits or LGBTQ health benefits more broadly, or even if you're talking about other aspects of navigating say complex care.

An example of what we were doing at Accenture is we work with Included Health, and we were an early adopter of Included Health, which is a care companion provider. They're coming in as a third party. Accenture has contracted them to provide the care concierge to our LGBTQ employees and their families and dependents. That includes how our employees can find LGBTQ-friendly practitioners, how they can navigate their benefits, understanding what is and what isn't covered, or the steps that might be necessary for pre-approval or authorization, and really so that our employees are having a more positive experience accessing those benefits, which is going to help them really get the care that they need, and ultimately for us to have a more productive workforce. That's a great example.

LuAnn Heinen:

That's a great example. Also, it sounds like just really removing sort of an added layer of stress and anxiety that might otherwise exist.

Beck Bailey:

The research shows that LGBTQ people are much more likely to delay or avoid preventative and wellness care, as well as seeking care for conditions that they're having because of their anxiety around whether or not their provider is going to be welcoming, even have just kind of a threshold level of understanding of the community. We get into this aspect where we think about in transgender or LGBTQ health even more broadly, a provider not only needs to be medically competent in some places, like maybe understand the specific needs of transgender people, but they just generally need to be culturally competent. They need to be a welcoming space. The first interaction I have, people don't understand that I may use a different name or pronoun than what my paperwork says, then I'm going to start to feel uncomfortable, and when you feel uncomfortable, it's disrupting the trust that's necessary to a good relationship between a patient and a provider.

LuAnn Heinen:

Yes, you've got to start explaining the basics.

Beck Bailey:

That's right. What Included Health does for our employees is they have already vetted those practitioners and they're establishing whether those practitioners have a certain level of competency, culturally and medically, with the community. That way our employees don't have to run through that particular gauntlet. Then they can also help them navigate the health plan, what it covers, what it doesn't, how to get there. Similar to other complex care concierge services, it really does improve the experience folks are having.

LuAnn Heinen:

Is this also an issue for incidental carrots? You're going to the dentist? Is there any role for a navigator or a care concierge in that setting?

Beck Bailey:

Yes, I think there is. Let's just start with the idea of dentist, vision, maybe some other aspects, where culturally that interaction may be important. So folks who maybe are non-binary, is a great example. Probably intake forms, they're probably not accounting for that. I can imagine being in the dentist chair and the hygienists and the dentists talking about me and my needs and probably assuming something about my gender using he or she. What if my pronoun is they? What if that's the way I want to be interacted with or talked about? I don't think many of our institutions, health care or otherwise, have caught up to a way that people have expanded the definitions of gender and the way they see themselves. Yes, I think that we're going to continue to see more and more people identify in more ways across the spectrum of gender identity. We're going to need systems that account for that so that people can feel seen in those processes.

LuAnn Heinen:

Picking up on the data and forms an apps, so legal identity is now in many places. I think some places, male, female, and X. Is that right?

Beck Bailey:

Yes, in the United States there are several states that have a third gender option. It might be X, it might be U. We just heard from the Biden-Harris Administration that they were working on a third gender recognition in passports. If that sounds kind of new and unusual to our listeners, there are many other countries that have already had this designator. The TSA is used to seeing passports from Germany, for example, that have an X identifier on them. It is something that we're going to see continue to expand into more places of legal identity, as well as personal identity.

LuAnn Heinen:

Is legal identity going to become all that's relevant or are we going to also track sex at birth? Then how are various business processes going to adapt to all this?

Beck Bailey:

Yes, that's interesting. Sex assigned at birth from a health care point of view, I think in particular, to medical practitioners that may sound like the right answer. I'm going to challenge that a little bit and let me try to give an example. You could have a transgender woman that you're treating and you know her identity is female, her legal documents are female, but there are still aspects of her body and her medical needs, for example, a transgender woman still has a prostate. We need to have that wellness care based on her anatomy. Not on the legal gender. I would say in some cases even not necessarily on the sex assigned at birth. This leads us more to intakes and patient histories that look at who was this person before me and what are their needs. What's their medical history with relationship to their actual anatomy, and then how do we interact with that? Another great example might be a transgender man who has had a full hysterectomy, and so if you just went by sex assigned at birth, you would still have to have, which would be female, you would still have to have that history that says, oh no, this person has had a full hysterectomy, so these other procedures aren't necessary for them anymore. I think we're really centering more on who is this person who's here in front of me today and what does their body need? That's going to have to be a combination of medical history and dialogue with the patient, and obviously we've got to build that sense of trust in order to make those conversations possible.

LuAnn Heinen:

Totally. Back to psychological safety, trust, belonging, comfort.

Thrive Global:

For all the challenges we're facing in this brave new world of hybrid work, we also have a once in a generation opportunity to redefine work and productivity. The pandemic has brought employee well-being, mental health and resilience to the top of companies agendas. When businesses are shaping the future of the employee experience, Thrive Global is leading the way. Thrive Global is a behavior change technology company committed to ending the stress and burnout epidemic and helping people live and work with greater well-being and mental resilience. With its science-backed methodology and AI powered platform, Thrive has helped employees at more than 100 organizations, take more than 1.5 million micro steps to build new habits and improve their lives. Learn more about how Thrive is helping end distress and burnout epidemic, one microstep at a time by visiting <https://thriveglobal.com/bgh/>.

LuAnn Heinen:

We've become so much more aware of microaggressions impacting our black colleagues at work, especially in the last 18 months. I'm wondering if microaggressions are an issue in the workplace today for LGBTQ colleagues and how those might manifest?

Beck Bailey:

Oh gosh, yes. Microaggressions are still a problem for people of all kinds of diverse and marginalized identities. Some of the most common ones for LGBTQ people still revolve around things like gender and dress norms. There's research from the Human Rights Campaign that shows that an LGBTQ colleague is five times more likely to be told that they need to dress "more masculinely" or "more femininely" in their role to somehow tone it down one way or the other. This kind of policing of gender is something that's really common in our society, but it plays out in the workplace. In that aspect, it might be also linked to professionalism. That's a really common microaggression for LGBTQ people, commentary on their dress. This is a great example of why policies are important, like having kind of a clear gender inclusive and neutral dress policy so that the employee has something to backstop those kinds of comments. Still from a microaggression point of view, it can really be a culture changer when those kinds of things happen. That's just one example.

LuAnn Heinen:

Yes, that's painful. It's hard to know how to respond to the moment, depending on who the aggressor is.

Beck Bailey:

That's right. An interesting thing about microaggressions, and I know we all get a little maybe sensitive around that aggression word, someone doesn't necessarily mean to cause the harm that they're causing, right? There's this difference between someone's intention and their impact, and we've all done a lot of work I'm sure around unconscious bias and implicit bias to understand that this is what happens. What I want to offer folks is if you aren't really sure about microaggressions and what some of the common ones are, to do a little thoughtful Googling. There are places where you can find lists and examples and kind of contextual understanding of the most common microaggressions for any community, whether it's black folks, brown folks, LGBTQ folks, people with disabilities. There are whole sets of kind of common microaggressions and doing some self-education around those will help you kind of spot them in yourself. Because you might have some blinders on about those and learning about what they really look like can help open up your eyes and help you kind of think about changing some of those for yourself.

LuAnn Heinen:

Let's chat a little bit about how could a prospective employee gauge a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion besides looking at the CEI score?

Beck Bailey:

Yes, there are several parts to that. From an LGBTQ point of view, the CEI score is an important piece of information. Doing research on the companies - what public positions have they taken, what statements do they have about their commitment to the community, what is their philanthropy or engagement with nonprofits look like in that space? All of that I think is really an important part of the due diligence process. Talking to current and former employees is an important part as well. You can ask recruiters to provide you people to talk to. If you're LGBTQ, you can ask to speak to people who are openly LGBTQ at the company. I think ultimately at the end of the day, I think it's important to know that culture is this funny thing. There's the big kind of overarching top-down leadership message culture, which is very important. Then there's what is it really like to work in this particular office on this exact team, with this exact leader?

At the end of the day, my sense of belonging rests in my experiences with those people who are closest to me at work, my team, my boss, the clients I'm interacting with. What that says to me as a leader at Accenture is it's my job to make sure that we're living into those bold ambitions we have with kind of actions and accountability necessary to make sure that everyone on every little team everywhere is having that experience. If they're not, and just to be really frank, if they're not, that they know the recourse and mechanisms that they have to raise their concerns and that they can raise those concerns and they'll be listened to and their concerns will be addressed. I think from the outside, you can only do that research and talk to so many people, but you can also ask, hey, what happens when it goes wrong? Because let's all recognize that sometimes it does, and what happens in your company if I'm experiencing something not so great, and really start to ask those questions and call everyone in to the accountability of that.

LuAnn Heinen:

I'm struck by what a strong ally and advocate you are and how fortunate you are to have this really purposeful path. I'm wondering how you found it, this work in diversity and inclusion, or how it found you?

Beck Bailey:

It's such a great question. I think like many people, I came to this work through my own experience. I'm a transgender man. I was assigned female at birth. I've navigated more of my life as a woman than I have as a man. I started work out of college as a young woman. I worked in a really male dominated field. I was a production manager in a manufacturing facility in the rural South. I was openly, relatively openly, lesbian when I was in college. When I went into that workplace, I really felt like I had to be in the closet at work, but I also had to be in the closet in my small rural Southern town. I loved that job. I loved the community I lived in, but I just could not be myself. I left that job after only a few years, because I couldn't be myself and I didn't think I could be the best leader or even businessperson without also being fully who I am. I went on a journey to find that career, to find that workplace. I was able to do that over the course of, you know, took decades to be kind of fully actualized in that sense. Now I look at it as I have the opportunity to be a part of an incredible global inclusion and diversity team that's working to make sure that everyone around me can have that same sense of self and purpose in their work.

LuAnn Heinen:

It's amazing. That's fantastic. What a great kind of capstone to your career, not that you're not going to keep going for a lot longer, but it's a really great opportunity with worldwide impact. In previous conversations on this podcast, we've discussed the importance of changing policies, and hearts and minds, to enact meaningful societal change for equity and inclusion. Before we wrap up, I want to reflect on some of the signs that change is really afoot. Every state has elected officials from the LGBTQ community at this point - the governor of Colorado, Jared Polis; the Governor of Oregon, Kate Brown; Senators Tammy Baldwin and Kyrsten Sinema are all part of the LGBTQ community. We've got Pete Buttigieg, who's made a big impact nationally, and now the Transportation Secretary. Mayors of the top eight most populated cities. Then when you look at the Fortune 500 CEOs, including at Apple, Tim Cook; Dow Chemical; Land O'Lakes, in my own community, I live in Minneapolis. Beth Ford is the first openly gay woman leading a Fortune 500 company. She's a rock star. She's all over the media. You see her on the golf course. She's very visible. She's really been a leader. The national public radio headline said, "openly LGBTQ Olympians would rank 14th in medal wins if they were a country." They were talking about the 2021 games. Then there's the shows we watch. I'm going to let you get a word in edgewise, but the character Taylor Mason in *Billions* has super made an impression on me. They're the first non-binary gendered person to be cast in an American television series and famously made their debut as a hedge fund quant, very male dominated field with my pronouns are they/theirs/them? There's *Queer Eye*; there's *Modern Family*. How does this impact your work?

Beck Bailey:

Thank you for setting the stage. When you trace the arc of the importance of having out LGBTQ role models, you can go from literally Ellen DeGeneres on the cover of *Time* magazine saying, "yep, I'm gay in the 1990s" to today where we have all of these examples that you've just given and it is a sign of acceptance, right? It's the idea that there are young lesbian women growing up right now who see Beth Ford and say, "wow, I can be a CEO of a Fortune company." That actually makes a difference, to be able to see yourself there makes a real difference. I think that what we'll see is these cultural changes will continue to embolden people to be out and open and not go into the closet for their first job. To stay out and to demand employers meet them for who they are.

Thankfully we have employers who are doing just that. For the electeds, first of all, I think we have organizations like the Human Rights Campaign to thank for a lot of that work, to change the face of our elected bodies. What that means is there are people in the places where policies are written, who are thinking about our community and educating their colleagues and talking about why an ex-identifier on a passport could be, is and would be really important and lifechanging for people. All of those things are happening. What I think is a

big challenge that we have is, we've had this incredible progress, and particularly over the last 20 years and maybe even for a lot of people the last 10 years, to see like the big headlines of marriage equality and these elected officials and other markers. We also still have like a lot of backlash to that. We have states that are trying to pass bills that would make it challenging for LGBT youth, get health care, for example, or to play sports, transgender kids to play sports. That's happening on the same stage. One of the reasons we know we're making progress is almost by the amount of backlash we're hit with at the same time. What really emboldens me or empowers me or inspires me is working with companies like Accenture and business leaders, like the Business Roundtable and others, who recognize that the private sector has the opportunity to play a big role in change. It starts by making sure that your employees are included, but also in their roles as community leaders, to be visible to be saying, hey, we believe in non-discrimination policies; we want to see these passed. All the private sector can do to continue to drive equality and inclusion forward for all communities, including the LGBTQ community.

LuAnn Heinen:

Any hopes you'd like to share for what the future will look like for LGBTQ individuals, for your grandkids, let's say?

Beck Bailey:

I think that in the end, I'm an optimist. The good battle wins out, right? I do believe that we are haltingly sometimes with a stumble, sometimes with a lot of pain moving towards a more inclusive society. I mean that in the broadest sense. I think and I hope that for the next generation and the generation after, and the generation after that, we continue to build a society where everyone is safe, where everyone is seen, where everyone is a part of the community and has the opportunity to be healthy and employed and productive and quite literally thrive in society. We don't have that society today and we know it. It's incumbent upon us to do everything we can to make a change in our lifetime that is picked up by the next generation to do it all over again.

LuAnn Heinen:

Thank you, Beck. Thank you so much for being with us today, for your really insightful perspective and great communication. I know why you got recruited for this job.

Beck Bailey:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

LuAnn Heinen:

I've been speaking with Beck Bailey about his work on LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion, most recently at Accenture. For more information on allyship and how to accelerate progress in your workplace, Google Accenture inclusion and diversity. For more on the Human Rights Campaign and the Corporate Equality Index, check our show notes on the podcast page at <https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/>.

I'm LuAnn Heinen. This podcast is produced by Business Group on Health, with Connected Social Media. If you're listening on Apple podcasts and like what you heard, please rate us today and leave a review.