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WORKPLACE BELONGING WEEK

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WORKPLACE BELONGING WEEK

London, 9-13 November 2026

#WBW26 #WorkplaceBelongingWeek

workplacebelongingweek.com



A welcome from Kat Parsons, CEO, Diversity Umbrella

Belonging is more than a word. It's a feeling. It's knowing that your voice matters, your contribution is valued, and you don't have to leave part of who you are at the door when you come to work.

But belonging doesn't happen by accident. It happens because people make it happen.

That's why, as we launch the inaugural Workplace Belonging Week, from 9–13 November 2026, we're proud to recognise 20 extraordinary individuals and 10 organisations who are turning the ambition of belonging into meaningful action.

The people featured in this supplement are changemakers in every sense. They're challenging outdated thinking, opening doors, influencing leadership, amplifying unheard voices and creating opportunities for others. Some lead from the very top of their organisations. Others are driving change from within, often without the recognition they deserve.

What unites them is a determination to make workplaces better, not just for themselves, but for everyone around them.

Alongside these individuals, we celebrate 10 organisations demonstrating that belonging isn't simply a policy or programme. It's something experienced through culture, leadership and everyday interactions.

Linda Riley, founder of Diversity Umbrella, launched Workplace Belonging Week with a clear ambition: to make belonging everyone's responsibility.

As workplaces navigate hybrid working, generational differences and changing expectations of leadership, that ambition matters more than ever.

Too often, conversations about inclusion remain confined to policies, strategies or awareness days. Yet belonging is shaped by whether someone feels comfortable speaking up, sharing an idea, asking for support or simply being themselves.

That's why Workplace Belonging Week brings organisations, leaders, employee networks and individuals together for honest conversations, shared learning and, most importantly, practical action.

Throughout the week, we're bringing these conversations to Deutsche Bank, the London Stock Exchange Group, the House of Commons, giffgaff and BDO. Each event will explore different dimensions of belonging, connecting voices across industries, generations and leadership levels, and challenging organisations to consider their people's actual experience.

At Diversity Umbrella, through the British Diversity Awards, European Diversity Awards, Rainbow Honours and Employee Network Awards, we've seen first-hand the impact of those willing to challenge convention and drive progress. This week builds on that legacy, moving from recognising change to actively creating it.

To everyone recognised in these pages: thank you for the work you do, the courage you show and the change you inspire.

Because belonging isn't something we should have to earn. It's something we should all be able to experience.



PHOTO JONATHAN PHANG

For more information visit workplacebelongingweek.com

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Belonging starts with listening

People are more likely to feel they belong when they know their experiences are being heard, but the real test is whether that leads to change.

At Serco, a big part of our approach to inclusion is listening to our colleagues. Our employee networks, listening groups and wider conversations help us understand what's working, but just as importantly, where people are still experiencing barriers.

The important bit is what we do with that insight.

Empower, our Women in Leadership programme, is one example. It provides focused learning and support for women who want to develop and progress their careers. So far, 74 colleagues have completed the programme, with another 49 currently taking part. Across the first two cohorts, 36 colleagues have progressed into more senior roles or roles with greater responsibility, a progression rate of 48.6%.

We've also built on this work with the launch of Ignite, our leadership development programme for Black and Black heritage colleagues.

Neither programme is the whole answer. But they show how listening can help us focus our efforts where they can make a difference.

For Serco, that's what belonging is about: listening, learning, and acting on what our people tell us.



serco

Championing Belonging





What does it take to create a workplace where everyone feels they belong? In this conversation, Wincie Knight, SVP International Culture & Stakeholder Strategies, and Ben Dodds, Senior Technical Supervisor and Adapt UK Chair, reflect on Adapt UK's journey, the recognition it has received, and the everyday actions that help turn belonging from an ambition into a lived experience for colleagues across the organisation.

WK: What does belonging look and feel like to you?

BD: Belonging feels like being part of a family. At Paramount, my disability has never been a barrier. I've never felt I had to prove myself or work around anyone's assumptions. Openness is key because I'm comfortable talking about being an amputee and because I chair Adapt, colleagues feel able to come to me with any questions. That gives me a real sense of purpose. Belonging isn't just being accepted, it's being trusted to help others feel they belong too.

WK: Adapt UK was recently highly commended at the Employee Network Awards. What did this recognition mean to you?

BD: It was an incredible achievement and a proud moment for the ERG. We don't do this work for recognition, so being acknowledged was a wonderful surprise. More importantly, it showed that Adapt is working, and working well.

WK: What is your vision for the future of Adapt UK?

BD: Making sure everyone knows where they can turn to for advice and continue to grow our members. I'm looking forward to continuing to work hard for the ERG and further my learning from other ERG groups near and far also.

Paramount
A SKYDANCE COMPANY

LSEG: A place to belong, a place to thrive

At LSEG, we want everyone to feel valued for who they are and empowered to succeed.

We bring different perspectives, experiences, and voices together to cultivate an inclusive workplace. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is embedded in how we work, with our nine Inclusion Networks helping colleagues and allies to connect, contribute and create a stronger sense of belonging.

Find out more about EDI at LSEG:



LSEG

Belonging at LSEG: enabling people to thrive

At LSEG, building a culture of belonging is central to cultivating an inclusive, high-performing organisation where everyone has the opportunity to contribute and succeed.

LSEG has established a strong foundation for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, grounded in a belief that diverse perspectives strengthen our culture and our organisation. Our ambition is to create a workplace where colleagues feel valued, included and empowered, with opportunity to perform at their best.



That commitment is reflected in practical action, including our extensive EDI training programme, embedding inclusive practices into our processes, using data and analytics to inform our decisions, and the roll out of workplace adjustments for colleagues. We also have nine Inclusion Networks where colleagues and allies can connect around important topics and be part of a community.

Creating a culture of belonging is fundamental to building a high-performing organisation. Our success is rooted in our people; when they each bring different perspectives and come together around our shared purpose and ambition to drive financial stability, empower economies, and enable sustainable growth.

Our commitment extends beyond LSEG. Through our leaders, partnerships and community engagement, we seek to convene organisations, share perspectives and support progress towards more inclusive workplaces, while continuing to strengthen a culture of belonging at LSEG.

Workplace Belonging List – Companies

Celebrating organisations making belonging part of everyday working life. These companies are taking meaningful action to create inclusive cultures where people feel valued, supported and able to thrive.

Ocado

Ocado Group has worked to embed diversity, inclusion and wellbeing across its technology and engineering-led workforce. The company has introduced gender and ethnic diversity targets for senior management and supports employee communities including Women at Ocado and Pride at Ocado. Pride at Ocado has grown into a global LGBTQ+ and allies network, and in 2026 Ocado was named Large Brand or Organisation of the Year at the Rainbow Honours. It has also developed menopause and fertility policies with input from employees and runs a global Mental Wellbeing Champions programme providing peer-to-peer support. Ocado achieved the UK National Equality Standard following external assessment against 35 competencies and uses employee listening to understand workplace experience and wellbeing. Its approach connects inclusion with attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent across the organisation.

Serco

Serco brings workplace belonging into focus through employee networks, leadership development and opportunities for colleagues to shape change. Its networks support women, disabled colleagues, LGBTQIA+ employees, parents and carers, veterans and people from different cultural backgrounds. Programmes including Empower and Ignite help address barriers to progression for women and Black colleagues, while a dedicated belonging module forms part of leadership training. By connecting employee voice with practical support and career development, Serco is working to build a culture where people feel respected, supported and able to fulfil their potential.

ScottishPower

Leading energy company, ScottishPower, has embraced workplace inclusion as a core component of the business and drives this forward in partnership with its employee-led networks representing different communities and experiences. These include SPARC, supporting disabled and neurodivergent colleagues and those with long-term health conditions; In-Fuse, its LGBTQ+ network; SPACE supporting parent and carer experiences; VIBE, focused on ethnicity and cultural diversity; iCAN dedicated to climate action; and Future Connections, promoting business awareness and peer development. The networks are designed to provide community and support while also working with the wider business to positively influence workplace culture and practice on an ongoing basis. Through the likes of collaboration, community engagement and partnerships, ScottishPower ensures it offers a workplace where employees feel valued, able to thrive and play their part in delivering a better future, quicker.

LSEG

LSEG has made inclusive culture a strategic priority across its global workforce. Its approach centres on creating a culture of belonging and a merit-based workplace where different perspectives are represented, valued and used to strengthen the business. LSEG's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion strategy encompasses leadership, talent, culture and accountability, supported by employee networks and development initiatives. Through transparent reporting, policies and measurable ambitions, LSEG continues to connect inclusion with organisational culture, talent and long-term business performance.

HSBC Innovation Banking

HSBC Innovation Banking is a specialist bank supporting technology and life sciences businesses and their investors as they grow and evolve. Its teams combine sector expertise with experience scaling complex organisations, helping innovators navigate development. Its inclusion strategy is built on enabling its people to thrive while extending its impact across the wider innovation ecosystem. It aims to build a diverse workforce reflecting the clients and communities it serves, while also investing in colleagues' development. Its position at the heart of the innovation ecosystem allows it to shine a light on inclusion and drive positive change.

BDO LLP

BDO UK places inclusion and belonging at the heart of its people strategy, with a vision to make it part of the everyday workplace experience for "Every one, Every day." Its 12 employee-led networks support communities spanning gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ inclusion, disability, faith, caring responsibilities and social mobility. BDO has introduced mentoring for underrepresented talent and enhanced policies covering gender identity, menopause, neonatal care and domestic abuse. In 2026, women represented 26.3% of BDO's partners, with a target of 30% by the end of 2030. BDO was named Company of the Year at the 2026 British Diversity Awards.

Sky

At Sky, we believe in better. That means creating a workplace where everyone feels they belong, different perspectives are valued and everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Our Shared Future, our inclusion and engagement strategy, puts fairness and opportunity at the heart of what we do, building on our progress to drive positive change for our people, industry and wider society. By creating meaningful experiences, improving accessibility, advancing social mobility and using our voice for positive change, we're working to break down barriers and build a more inclusive future for all.

Deutsche Bank

Deutsche Bank's approach to inclusion is about enabling everyone to thrive by creating an environment where different perspectives, experiences and strengths are valued. Rather than seeing inclusion as the responsibility of individual groups or initiatives, the bank is embedding it into everyday leadership, behaviours and people practices. Employee Resource Groups remain an important part of this approach, creating connection, amplifying employee perspectives and helping identify opportunities to make the workplace more inclusive and accessible.

Lockton

Lockton is the world's largest independent insurance broker, with an entrepreneurial culture that encourages people to contribute ideas, develop their careers and make a difference for clients and communities. Creating a workplace where people feel valued and supported is central to that ambition. Its colleague networks span Pride, cultural diversity, women in Lockton, wellbeing and parenting, helping people connect and share their experiences. The colleague network, Ignite, supports early career professionals, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, through mentoring, education and community engagement. Winner of Outstanding Employee Network of the Year at the 2025 British Diversity Awards, Ignite is one example that demonstrates Lockton's wider commitment to helping people find their voice, build connections and progress.

Moody's

Moody's has built its inclusion strategy around creating a global workplace where employees can express their identities, contribute different perspectives and feel a genuine sense of belonging. Its Business Resource Groups play an important role in this work, providing communities for employees while acting as cultural ambassadors across the organisation. Moody's also connects inclusion with wellbeing and organisational performance, encouraging diverse perspectives to inform decision-making and innovation.

Workplace Belonging List – Individuals

Recognising people driving positive change and championing belonging at work. Through leadership, advocacy and practical action, these individuals are helping others feel heard, respected and empowered to be themselves.



Andrea Knowles

Founder, Equality Wound Care Training Ltd

Andrea founded Equality Wound Care Training Ltd, trading as Staff Equality Networks. Once a young single mother in social housing, she became a nurse and EDI Lead. A Black, queer, disabled woman, she champions LGBTQIA+ inclusion, healthcare regulation and independent assurance and patient advocacy. Following open heart surgery in July 2026, she established and funded a local Healthcare Navigation Initiative, helping residents confidently navigate healthcare services. She is guided by one belief: identity, gender, race, ability, or sexuality should never determine whether someone is heard, respected or treated equitably at work.



Bobbi Pickard

CEO and Founder, Trans in the City

Bobbi is a leading voice on trans and non-binary inclusion in the workplace and founder and CEO of Trans in the City. Established in 2017, the organisation has grown into a global collaboration bringing together hundreds of major organisations to advance trans awareness and inclusion. Drawing on extensive DEI experience alongside a senior career spanning banking, technology and energy, Bobbi works with businesses to turn inclusion commitments into practical action. A prominent speaker and campaigner, she has helped increase understanding of the barriers facing trans and non-binary people and encouraged organisations to create workplaces where everyone can be themselves.



Chris Dunn

Global Inclusion Director, GSK

Chris is an experienced culture, engagement, and inclusion leader, having worked across major FTSE organisations. Currently Global Inclusion Director at GSK, Chris is passionate about embedding inclusion into everyday experiences, organisational culture and leadership practices. He believes inclusion isn't simply something organisations do, but something people should experience every day - creating environments where everyone feels valued, empowered to contribute and able to thrive, while unlocking innovation, strengthening performance and driving lasting organisational success.



Claire Harvey MBE

Global Head of Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement, TP ICAP

Claire is Global Head of Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement at TP ICAP, bringing experience across business, regulation, public service and the charity sector. A Paralympian and former prison governor, she combines lived experience with expertise in leadership and organisational change. Her career includes senior inclusion roles at the Financial Conduct Authority and KPMG, alongside contributions to the UN Women's Empowerment Principles assessment tool. Claire's work centres on helping leaders understand their influence on workplace culture and take responsibility for change, creating environments where people feel valued, supported and able to contribute.



Dan Porter

Head of Employer Brand & Recruitment Marketing, Tesco

Dan is Head of Employer Brand and Recruitment Marketing at Tesco and Chair of its LGBTQ+ Network, combining professional leadership with active advocacy for inclusion. He leads one of the UK's largest corporate LGBTQ+ communities, using visibility, storytelling and personal experience to build understanding and belonging. His approach champions authenticity and colleagues seeing themselves represented in leadership. External recognition includes INvolve's global Outstanding Role Models, the Inspirational Leader award at the British LGBT Awards and the 2026 Pride Power List, recognising his work supporting LGBTQ+ colleagues and creating a more inclusive workplace culture for everyone.



Dr Carol Massay

CEO and Founder, Unity in Construction

Carol is a construction leader, advisor and advocate for diversity and inclusion across the built environment. With more than four decades of experience, she became the first Black British woman to lead a construction software company and has championed women and underrepresented talent. Through Unity For Construction, Carol works with organisations on leadership, talent, and inclusive culture, advocating for diversity to be embedded in how businesses operate rather than treated as a standalone initiative. In 2024, Solent University awarded her an honorary doctorate recognising her contribution to construction, including her work promoting equality and diversity.



Vince Pizzoni

Professor in Chemical and Environmental Engineering, University of Nottingham

Vince is a passionate champion of women in engineering. Drawing on decades of international business leadership, he has mentored and sponsored thousands of people, with a particular commitment to helping women enter, remain and progress in engineering, energy and technology careers. Through his work with organisations including the Women's Engineering Society and POWERful Women, he champions gender equity and practical male allyship. Vince combines education, advocacy and personal support to build confidence, open doors and help women access opportunities and leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated sectors.



Dr Shani Dhanda

Accessibility Specialist and Broadcaster. Innovating Inclusion

Shani is a recognised inclusion and accessibility specialist and broadcaster working across business, media and public policy to challenge the barriers and bias disabled people face. She has worked with more than 400 businesses and brands, advising on accessible product design and customer experiences to workplace inclusion. Her work spans television and radio, boardrooms and government policy discussions, bringing disabled people's perspectives into decisions. Her work has reached millions worldwide. She was named in Forbes' Accessibility 100 in 2025 and its Accessibility 200 in 2026. She was named the UK's most influential disabled person by the Shaw Trust and is a BBC 100 Women Laureate.



Dr Zaheer Ahmad MBE

Head of Unifying Culture, BDO LLP

Zaheer leads BDO's Unifying Culture agenda, bringing together inclusion, belonging, social mobility and citizenship. His career spans the public and private sector, including the police service, and senior roles at EY, GSK and Haleon. He works to remove barriers to progression, embed inclusion into leadership and everyday working practices. Awarded an MBE for services to policing, Zaheer's influence extends across business, education, and sport. He is a visiting professor at York St John University and an EDI Fellow at the University of East London. His work connects organisational change with wider social impact, helping people from different backgrounds access opportunities and feel they belong.



Hermann Trepesch

Vice President Human Resources, Harbour Energy

Hermann leads Inclusion at Harbour Energy. He sees progress as a collective effort, shaped by colleagues across HR and the wider business, employee-led networks and leaders who have championed change. Together, they have strengthened accountability, transparency and governance, while introducing practical changes to remove barriers at work, including inclusive recruitment, development for women in senior leadership, menopause resources and neurodiversity partnerships. Drawing on a career spanning policing, telecoms and global pharmaceuticals, Hermann is committed to turning inclusion from an aspiration into measurable, sustainable change.



Ian Tomney-Bell

Head of Inclusion and Talent Acquisition, giffgaff

Ian is Head of Inclusion and Talent Acquisition at giffgaff and an established advocate for workplace belonging. He champions the philosophy that people thrive best when a true sense of belonging is embedded throughout the entire employee experience. By aligning talent strategy with a deeply supportive culture, Ian continually demonstrates the powerful connection between inclusive environments, employee engagement, and organisational success. His impactful leadership as a workplace changemaker has earned significant industry recognition. He was named Head of Diversity at both the Employee Network Awards and the Rainbow Honours. Additionally, under his guidance, giffgaff's people team won Diversity & Belonging Team of the Year at the 2026 Great British Workplace Wellbeing Awards.



Jacquline Alcindor

Global Diversity and Inclusion Programme Partner, Legal & General

Jacquline is a Global Diversity and Inclusion Programme Partner at Legal & General, specialising in Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Wellbeing. She leads the development of global strategies and programmes aligned to business priorities, working closely with senior leaders and a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. Jacquline is an award-winning Inclusion role model, recognised for her thought leadership, impact on social mobility, and executive sponsorship, including multiple industry awards and inclusion on the D&I Leaders Global Inspirational List for 2025.



Joanna Prior OBE

CEO, Pan Macmillan

Joanna is CEO of Pan Macmillan, where she champions a publishing culture built on opportunity, representation and belonging. Under her leadership, the company has introduced living-wage apprenticeships, accessible work experience, transparent pay bands and an Equal Parenting Policy offering six months' full pay. She has also supported employee networks and management training focused on unconscious bias and neurodiversity. Beyond the workplace, Joanna chairs the National Literacy Trust and champions access to reading as a route to social mobility. Awarded an OBE for services to publishing and literacy, she connects inclusive leadership with lasting cultural and social change.



Jon Tilli

Director, Deutsche Bank

Jon Tilli is a Director in Deutsche Bank's Commercial Real Estate team and Global Chair of db-Pride, the bank's LGBTQ+ and ally employee resource group. He plays a leading role in advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion across Deutsche Bank and the wider financial services sector, building partnerships with businesses, charities and global organisations. Jon has driven Deutsche Bank's involvement in the World Economic Forum's Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality and previously co-chaired OPEN Finance, a network promoting LGBTQ+ equality across financial services. Recognised for Outstanding Leadership in Inclusion at the 2026 Employee Network Awards, Jon continues to champion inclusive workplaces where everyone can succeed while being open and authentic about who they are.



Lee Chambers

CEO, Male Allies UK

Lee is a business psychologist and founder of Male Allies UK, working to engage men more actively in gender equality and workplace inclusion. Through research, consultancy, training and speaking, he helps organisations move male allyship from awareness towards practical action, addressing issues including workplace sexism, microaggressions, menopause, positive masculinity and inclusive leadership. His work has reached organisations including the Bank of England, UBS, John Lewis and Amazon. Lee was named UN Women Changemaker of the Year in 2023 and has become an influential voice on intersectionality and allyship, arguing that equitable workplaces require men to participate actively in changing cultures, behaviours and systems.



Martyn Sibley

Co Founder and CEO, Purple Goat Agency

Martyn Sibley is a disabled entrepreneur, campaigner and co-founder and CEO of Purple Goat, a disability-led marketing agency created to transform representation of disabled people in business and advertising. Founded in 2020, Purple Goat works with major brands to ensure disabled people are authentically represented and involved in developing campaigns rather than treated as an afterthought. Martyn's wider mission is to demonstrate that disability inclusion is both a social and commercial imperative. Through the agency he has created opportunities for disabled talent, creators and marketing professionals while helping organisations move beyond tokenism and understand how lived experience can improve decision-making, communications and business performance.



Nadia Nagamootoo

Founder and CEO, Avenir

Nadia is a Chartered Psychologist, accredited coach and CEO of Avenir. Through her work at Avenir, her book, Beyond Discomfort, and her Why Care? podcast, she helps leaders understand the psychology behind how people lead, decide and behave at work, drawing on behavioural science to explain why some cultures thrive while others quietly hold people back. Her expertise spans leadership psychology, organisational culture and belonging, power dynamics, psychological safety and sustainable behaviour change. Nadia has guided leaders at Paramount, AstraZeneca, Starbucks, Kingfisher and Warner Bros. Discovery among many others, and was named on the HR Most Influential Thinkers list 2023 alongside HR Champion of the Year at the European Diversity Awards.



Oscar Davies

Barrister, Garden Court Chambers

Oscar is an award-winning human rights barrister at Garden Court Chambers and the UK's first publicly recognised non-binary barrister. They are a prominent advocate for trans and non-binary inclusion, advising employers and organisations on Equality Act compliance, workplace inclusion policies and discrimination. Oscar is also a committee member of FreeBar, promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion across the Bar, and mentors aspiring barristers from underrepresented backgrounds through Bridging the Bar. Ranked as a Legal 500 Rising Star, Oscar won its LGBTQ+ Champion of the Year award in 2024 and 2026 and was named King's College London's Changemaker of the Year in 2025.



Wincie Knight

SVP, International Culture & Stakeholder Strategies, Paramount

Wincie has played a significant role in developing the company's approach to workplace culture and inclusion internationally. She has worked with leaders across markets to strengthen employee engagement and has supported Paramount's international Employee Resource Groups, which create community, develop talent and give employees a voice within the business. In 2018, Wincie introduced Paramount's first Inclusion Week in the UK, an employee programme that subsequently expanded across more than 30 countries. Her work demonstrates how sustained leadership, employee engagement and organisational culture can combine to make inclusion part of everyday business practice.



Zoe Shackleton

Head of Human Resources and EDI, Huddersfield Town Football Club

Zoe is Head of HR and EDI at Huddersfield Town Football Club, where she has helped establish the club as an innovative leader in workplace inclusion within professional football. Under her EDI leadership, Huddersfield Town has achieved the Premier League Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Standard Advanced Award and the EFL Equality Code of Practice Gold Award. The club also became the first football club to achieve both Menopause Friendly and Menstruation Friendly Employer accreditation. Zoe leads work spanning policy, workplace culture, representation and community engagement, demonstrating how practical action can embed inclusion within an organisation operating in a traditionally male-dominated industry.


Journey to pride
When I think of home...
Deutsche Bank is deeply committed to creating an environment that embraces dialogue and diverse views, and where we treat everyone fairly. Just as our global network provides unique perspectives and benefits to our clients, our experience is that teams perform better and deliver improved outcomes when they are able to incorporate a wide range of perspectives.
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The difference between *Having a Job* and *Finding a Home*

For years, Jon Tilli hid his true self at work, unaware of the personal and professional cost. Now, drawing on his experiences of coming out, mental health and leading Deutsche Bank's global Pride network, he explores why genuine workplace belonging goes beyond inclusion policies – and why everyone deserves to feel valued, supported and free to be themselves. *By Jon Tilli*



For years, I was very good at my job. I was also very good at hiding. Not about my work. About my life.

When colleagues asked about my weekend, I changed the names of bars I had visited. When someone asked whether I was dating anyone, a guy became a girl. I edited stories before they left my mouth, removing anything that might reveal I was gay. Then I had to remember the edits.

Hiding who you are comes at a cost. Every conversation raises questions: What did I say last time? Will this story contradict another? In banking, where trust and quick-thinking matter, hiding takes energy away from both.

I built a career based on trust while struggling to trust others with the truth about me. Coming out later in life, I often wonder how much energy I spent trying not to be seen.

I sometimes wonder what I could have done with that energy instead. The ideas I might have contributed, the relationships I might have built, or the courage I might have found to ask for help. Imagine what we could accomplish together if none of us had to spend so much of ourselves pretending.

My experience has changed how I think about home. It is more than a place we occupy. It is where we find belonging and chosen family. Home can happen at work when shared challenges and successes bring us closer than the jobs that first brought us together.

At its best, work can offer the safety, support and freedom to be ourselves while contributing to something bigger. But belonging does not happen simply because we share an employer. Leading our global Pride network has taught me that it grows through how we lead, listen and care. At different moments in our lives, work can offer meaningful connection and stability.

That is both a responsibility and an opportunity for employers. Belonging unlocks human connection and expands what becomes possible through teamwork.

Belonging is built in moments that have little to do with work itself.

One conversation that stayed with me was with a senior leader who acknowledged that he was navigating a difficult period in his personal life. Our circumstances were different, but he trusted me enough to share what he was going through. In that moment, we were neither advocate nor ally, simply two people being honest about how hard life can get.

Belonging is not only about making space for difference. It is about making room for everyone to be human.

I have had to learn to make space for myself. Late last year, I took part in a structured mental health programme. After years of advocating for others, asking for help did not come easily.

More recently, when colleagues noticed I was struggling, I initially insisted I could manage on my own. When I finally acknowledged that I wasn't doing as well as I had pretended, they stepped forward, shared the load and reshaped our plans. The people I had spent years supporting reminded me that I did not have to carry everything alone.

I had forgotten the advice we hear on planes: put on your oxygen mask before helping others.

That is belonging when the inspirational posters come down and real life begins: knowing that admitting you are struggling will not make you less valued.

But moments like these should not be left to chance. Employers must create conditions in which people feel safe speaking up, asking for help and challenging assumptions. That means listening when the answers are uncomfortable, acting on what we hear and backing individual care with clear, consistent and accessible support.

The human value of belonging is enough for me. As a banker, however, I know that businesses measure investments, and research suggests there is a business case for belonging. Research by Open for Business has identified an association between LGBTQ+ inclusion and some measures of corporate performance, although the research does not establish a causal relationship. But some of belonging's value may never appear on a balance sheet. That makes it no less valuable.

For my younger self, being fully accepted would have been life-changing. I think of the time I spent changing pronouns, editing weekend stories and building a career while making sure nobody truly knew who I was. Today, I can speak openly about my identity and mental health. That sense of belonging has opened doors, forged new relationships and unlocked potential that was inside me all along.

Yet belonging is never something an organisation can declare finished. Many people still lack that freedom because of where they are on their personal journeys, where they are based or circumstances outside their control. We must keep making room for one another.

In conversations with business leaders, I am often asked how belonging can be measured. For me, it is what happens when someone says, "I'm not okay." It is whether someone can talk about their weekend without rewriting it and whether a young person can imagine a successful career without first imagining a different version of themselves.

Having a job means you are employed somewhere. Belonging means you know you matter there. Everyone deserves a place where they do not have to choose between being successful and being themselves.

That is the difference between having a job and finding a home and that is the reason Workplace Belonging Week is so important to me.


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