

# The Queer Experience at Work

Participant Guide



We're happy to be here with you! We're bringing to the day our deep interest in transformation and drive to connect folks' personal sense of meaning and change with that of their communities.

Each of us has our own specialized practice; twelve13 Consulting is home to some of our collaborative work.

## Jen Self

Jen Self, PhD LICSW (they/them) is the CEO/Founder of Brick 13, a Critical Equity Educational Consulting and Coaching LLC. They are also a part-time Assistant Clinical Professor at the University of Washington School of Social Work, and have coached, educated, and developed leaders across industries, from non-profits to government to corporate.

Jen credits their early experiences as a gender outlaw and time playing Pac-12 basketball for Cal as the impetuses for their life's dedication to intersectional racial and gender justice. Dr. Self is a visionary, an outcast, an innovator, a community builder, a chameleon, a connector of ideas and people, a musical theater nerd, a continual learner, a co-host of the podcast All the Things-PNW (Spotify), a creator, a parent, a pro-femme space advocate, a partner, a survivor of many things, always a radical truth-teller, and even on a good day, continually shaking off the teachings of White supremacy.

## Liz Cruz

Liz Cruz (they/them or she/her) is the Founder & Principal of Liz Cruz Consulting. Prior to leading their practice, Liz spent over 10 years in the corporate space (retail and technology) as a coach, leadership development program leader, and organizational effectiveness consultant. You'll find Liz coaching individuals and teams, facilitating, nerding out about emotional intelligence, or ruminating on wholehearted leadership over a cup of (decaf) coffee. Liz enjoys working with a diverse mix of clients; a special area of focus is Queer (2SLGBTQIA+) leadership development.

Liz's approach is informed by their deeply held belief that each of us is inherently brilliant, and that the best solutions to our leadership challenges are found in our deep knowledge of ourselves. They are an eternal optimist, a queer leadership fanatic, a frequent teller of not-that-funny jokes, a lifelong artist (current love: watercolor), relentlessly curious, a deep empath, and despite all outward appearances, definitely an introvert.

# Common Workplace Challenges

**Discrimination and harassment:** Many 2SLGBTQIA+ people face discrimination and harassment at work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, in addition to discrimination and harassment based on other aspects of their identity, including race, religion, disability, and more. This can take many forms, including verbal abuse, exclusion from work activities, or even physical violence.

**Microaggressions:** Queer people may experience microaggressions, or subtle forms of discrimination, in the workplace, such as being asked inappropriate or invasive questions about their identity or being misgendered. Queer people who belong to multiple marginalized groups may experience additional microaggressions based on other identities, including race, religion, and disability.

**Stigma and isolation:** Many 2SLGBTQIA+ people may feel stigmatized or isolated at work because of their identity, which can have a negative impact on their mental health and well-being. 2SLGBTQIA+ people who belong to multiple marginalized groups may experience even more stigma and isolation at work, as they may not feel seen or represented in the workplace.

**Inequality in hiring and promotion:** 2SLGBTQIA+ people may also face inequality in hiring and promotion opportunities, as some employers may be biased against them or unwilling to hire or promote them because of their identity. Queer people who belong to marginalized groups may face even more barriers to hiring and promotion opportunities because of intersecting forms of discrimination.

**Lack of inclusive policies:** Many workplaces do not have policies in place to support and protect 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, such as non-discrimination policies, policies on pronoun usage, or policies protecting all intersecting identities within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

# Common Workplace Challenges (cont.)

**Limited representation in leadership roles:** 2SLGBTQIA+ people may be underrepresented in leadership roles, which can limit their opportunities for advancement and make it difficult for them to be seen as role models or mentors. Queer people who belong to multiple marginalized groups may be even more underrepresented in leadership roles, which can further limit their opportunities for advancement.

**Lack of legal protections:** In some locations, there are no laws protecting 2SLGBTQIA+ people from discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, in some locations, there may be legal protections for some marginalized identities but not others. In both of these cases, lack of legal protection can make it difficult for 2SLGBTQIA+ people to seek recourse if they experience discrimination or harassment.

**Inadequate healthcare coverage:** Some healthcare plans may not adequately cover the needs of queer people with intersecting identities, such as:

- Transgender-inclusive healthcare
- Gender-affirming surgeries
- HIV/AIDS treatment
- Fertility treatment for 2SLGBTQIA+ families
- Cultural competency in healthcare for queer people of color

**Inadequate support for transitioning:** For transgender people, the process of transitioning can be challenging, and they may not receive adequate support from their employer or coworkers. Transgender people with intersecting identities, such as being a person of color or having a disability, may face additional challenges.

**Lack of workplace diversity:** Many workplaces do not adequately represent the diversity of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, which can lead to a lack of support and understanding from coworkers and management. In workplaces that do have diversity initiatives for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, these initiatives may not be inclusive of all intersecting identities within the community.

# Best Practices for Organizations

The categories below come from The Workplace Pride Global Benchmark, an online tool designed to measure 2SLGBTQIA+ policies and practices for internationally active employers.

We recommend reviewing each category's themes and practices as a self-audit; this activity will give you insight on where you can improve your practices as an organizational leader to best support 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.

- 1 POLICY AND COMMUNICATION
- 2 EMPLOYEE NETWORK
- 3 WORKPLACE AWARENESS
- 4 SUPPORT & BENEFITS
- 5 INCLUSION & ENGAGEMENT
- 6 EXPERTISE & MONITORING
- 7 BUSINESS & SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT
- 8 SOCIETAL IMPACT

# 1 POLICY AND COMMUNICATION

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy content and wording</li> <li>• Policy implementation and compliance</li> <li>• Inclusive communication</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inclusion/anti-harassment policy, and code of conduct specify sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and intersex status.</li> <li>2. Employees must review and agree to inclusion, anti harassment policy, code of conduct regularly (e.g. annually).</li> <li>3. Employees are informed about inclusion, anti harassment policy, code of conduct and managers are incentivized to share and enforce them.</li> <li>4. Recurring processes are in place to ensure that official documents and internal communications use 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive language.</li> </ol>

# 2 EMPLOYEE NETWORK

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of your network</li> <li>• Structure of the network</li> <li>• Achievements</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. The 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network is positioned as a value-add to the organization and are officially seen as advisors to leadership.</li> <li>6. The 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network develops plans that are explicitly linked to key organizational goals.</li> <li>7. Time spent on network planning and activities is seen as business-related and is thus carried out during paid work hours.</li> <li>8. The 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network is formally organized and granted a budget. Leadership, HR and DE&amp;I visibly and actively participate and support network activities.</li> <li>9. The 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network engages the entire organization and works with other employee networks to formally drive 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion (e.g. inclusive language, gender-neutral washrooms, transition benefits).</li> </ol>

# 3 WORKPLACE AWARENESS

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging</li> <li>Training content and availability</li> <li>Recruiting and onboarding</li> </ul>	<p>10. Goals and activities of your 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network are shared regularly with your employees - via website, newsletter, mail etc.</p> <p>11. Planned events celebrating and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ milestones (e.g. International Coming Out Day) are open to all employees. Organizational leader participate visibly and actively in these events.</p> <p>12. DE&amp;I training is formal, mandatory and includes 2SLGBTQIA+ specifically. Participation in training is tracked so that action can be taken where there is less uptake.</p> <p>13. Training is available to temporary and contractors working within your organization and also to partners, suppliers, and customers externally.</p> <p>14. There is 2SLGBTQIA+ specific content about value of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion to the organization, anti-bullying and harassment, examples of social, professional and legal challenges that 2SLGBTQIA+ people face, what inclusion looks like, and how to challenge non-inclusive behavior.</p> <p>15. Recruiting materials introduce your 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion policy &amp; practices, employee network and role models.</p> <p>16. Recruiting materials provide a link to where potential employees can find more information about your 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion policy and practices.</p> <p>17. Recruiting materials provide potential candidates with a confidential point of contact if they have further questions.</p> <p>18. Onboarding materials introduce your 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion policy &amp; practices, employee network and role models in.</p> <p>19. New 2SLGBTQIA+ employees are offered a buddy/mentor to help them getting started.</p>

## 4 SUPPORT & BENEFITS

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Employee support</li><li>Support services</li><li>Inclusive benefits</li></ul>	<p>20. A summary plan is in place that outlines unique support needs of Lesbian, Gay, Queer employees, of Bisexual employees, of transgender and non-binary employees, and of Intersex employees.</p> <p>21. Internal and external employee support services are specifically trained on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues and concerns.</p> <p>22. Information about 2SLGBTQIA+ safety is readily available and included in your travel planning processes.</p> <p>23. Specific 2SLGBTQIA+ benefits are offered in all operating locations (where not prohibited by law).</p> <p>24. Language in your employee benefits specifically defines partner to include same-sex and domestic partners and ensures that 2SLGBTQIA+ parents and rainbow families are explicitly included.</p> <p>25. Employee benefits compensate for situations where legislation discriminates against 2SLGBTQIA+ people (e.g. tax equalize where same-sex marriage is not legal and where tax rates are lower for married people).</p> <p>26. A plan is in place to regularly check employee benefits to ensure they remain 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive.</p>



# 5 INCLUSION & ENGAGEMENT

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership involvement</li> <li>• Engagement of allies</li> <li>• 2SLGBTQIA+ employee engagement</li> </ul>	<p>27. Senior leaders actively participate in 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion activities and authentically communicate to the organization about 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion.</p> <p>28. Senior leaders speak about 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion externally (at conferences, with partners, customers etc.).</p> <p>29. 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network initiatives are open to all employees and there is visible participation by allies.</p> <p>30. Training and cross-mentoring programs are in place to build understanding, empathy and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.</p> <p>31. Steps to engage in 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion are clear and shared proactively (e.g. during onboarding)</p> <p>32. Anonymous communication channels are available for those that are not yet ready to engage otherwise.</p> <p>33. The value of working on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion is clear and supported (i.e. work falls within paid working hours and formal objectives).</p> <p>34. There are specific development opportunities allocated to 2SLGBTQIA+ employees.</p> <p>35. Recognition for DE&amp;I work is a standard part of performance management.</p>

## 6 EXPERTISE & MONITORING

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress monitoring</li> <li>Data collection</li> <li>2SLGBTQIA+ monitoring</li> </ul>	<p>36. The 2SLGBTQIA+ employee network is formally engaged as a listening mechanism.</p> <p>37. There are LBGTIQ+ related questions in your employee engagement survey.</p> <p>38. You participate in benchmarking to understand where you stand with respect to 2SLGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.</p> <p>39. Employees know how they can self-identify/disclose as 2SLGBTQIA+, anonymous feedback channels are available - personal data is handled confidentially.</p> <p>40. You measure and watch for gaps and trends of employee that have self-identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ - for example by division /department, by age/seniority, by organizational level (e.g. individual contributor, manager, director, csuite etc.).</p>

## 7 BUSINESS & SUPPLIER ENGAGEMENT

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplier diversity</li> <li>Public 2SLGBTQIA+ support</li> </ul>	<p>41. Your 2SLGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion policies are a part of supplier/partner selection process, and are adhered to by suppliers and partners.</p> <p>42. You engage partners/suppliers to help them implement more inclusive 2SLGBTQIA+ policies and practices in their operations.</p> <p>43. 2SLGBTQIA+ imagery is visible in marketing and recruiting materials and raises public awareness for 2SLGBTQIA+ issues.</p> <p>44. There are specific plans to engage 2SLGBTQIA+ clients, customers, or constituents.</p>

## 8 SOCIETAL IMPACT

Themes	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public 2SLGBTQIA+ support</li> <li>Community engagement</li> <li>2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy</li> </ul>	<p>45. Support for 2SLGBTQIA+ people is public (declared in social and 2SLGBTQIA+ media).</p> <p>46. The organization supports or sponsors 2SLGBTQIA+ civil society organization(s) and involves their employees to broaden support.</p> <p>47. You engage with the 2SLGBTQIA+ employee networks within your customer/partner/supplier/ constituent organizations.</p> <p>48. You engage directly with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and NGO's to learn more about 2SLGBTQIA+ issues.</p> <p>49. Your organizational leaders volunteer with 2SLGBTQIA+ NGO's - e.g. as board members.</p> <p>50. Your organization joins coalitions and takes public action as a visible advocate for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.</p>

# Identifying Opportunities



Below, rate your **current contributions** in each category on a scale of 1-10 (1= not contributing; 10= contributing actively and often).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>1</b> POLICY AND COMMUNICATION										
<b>2</b> EMPLOYEE NETWORK										
<b>3</b> WORKPLACE AWARENESS										
<b>4</b> SUPPORT & BENEFITS										
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<b>8</b> SOCIETAL IMPACT										



Looking at your ratings above, what opportunity do you notice?  
How can you begin to have more impact right away?



Use the space below to capture notes as you observe two live coaching conversations.

## Coaching Conversation #1

## Coaching Conversation #2

## The Queer Experience at Work – Session take-aways



As we wrap up the session, take a few minutes to capture your insights below.

- What new insights did you gain in this session?
- How are you feeling right now?
- What actions will you take based on your learning?

Example: I found the best practices useful in understanding how I can participate in making sure our workplace is truly inclusive. I feel overwhelmed about how much our organization still needs to fulfill but I'm going to start actively voicing out suggestions based on what I've learned today.