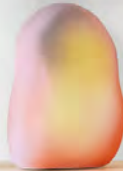
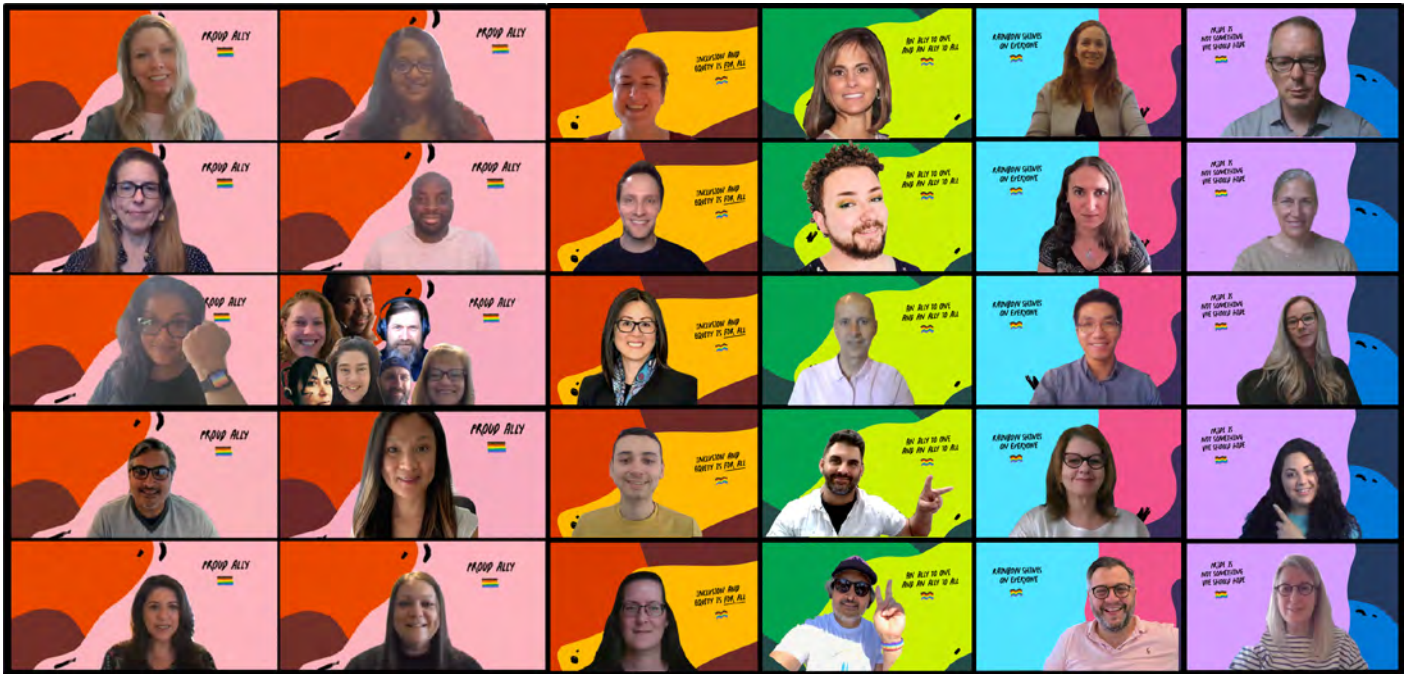


Come.As.You.Are+

By: Sonny Kalsi





The final pieces of art are now hanging on the walls of our newly designed New York office, the culmination of a vision that our team had dreamed for this space that is so much more than fabrics and color swatches. It was a feeling we all longed for, one that was beautiful and free, expressive and re-assuring, functional and fun, and accepting of the full array of personalities that make our team the special group that they are. We longed for a space that spoke to each of us, to say: “Come as You Are”; the same sentiment that has been the driving force behind our equity, diversity and inclusion efforts for BGO’s LGBTQ+ community.

As we draw closer to the one-year mark since the formation of BGO’s P.R.I.D.E. (People Respecting Individuality and Diversity Everywhere) Alliance, it’s hard not to stand back and feel a sense of excitement at what has transpired. The P.R.I.D.E. Alliance, now numbering over 60, have established their own leadership team, charter, and operating framework to give clarity of purpose and definition to the movement and its membership. Concurrently, P.R.I.D.E. established an online internal community to help its membership organize and find kinship in a space that is safe and nurturing. If Come As You Are was the spirit with which we had hoped the P.R.I.D.E. Alliance would find its purpose, this group has showed us all so much more.



The “+” in all of this has been all the proactive ways in which this group has contributed to our understanding, our learning, and our betterment as a company. P.R.I.D.E. taught us about the use of pronouns, and how linguistics touches so many lives in ways we might not have comprehended. Through P.R.I.D.E.’s presence, we are learning about micro-aggressions and the silent but debilitating ways that those experiences impact our colleagues. This group’s influence has been profound and immediate and is showing up in company policies like our most recent revamp of our Parental Leave guidelines that are clear of binary descriptors and our employee-self-identification data that now includes gender identity . Even as we attempt to better understand the makeup of our own employee base and their experiences, the presence of P.R.I.D.E. gives us an essential perspective that would otherwise be missing or underserved. Leaders, members, and allies are banding together to organize BGO’s first internal PRIDE month with a series of events designed to educate, build community, and celebrate diversity. Finally, our philanthropic endeavors have been enhanced by the advocacy of P.R.I.D.E. in helping us to direct corporate funds to organizations that are addressing societal issues including violence, discrimination, and the social welfare of the LGBTQ+ community.

Come As You Are has transformed beautifully into Learn Where We Are Coming From and in so doing, has fostered greater empathy, employee unity, and individual growth at our firm. The work continues and there is much that is still required of us to correct the many issues that have long affected the LGBTQ+ community. Our open-concept offices must also come with open minds and hearts. In the month ahead, our firm will harness the positive energy from our P.R.I.D.E. Alliance to add that finishing touch to our spaces - both physical and virtual - with the vibrant colors of their perspectives.