



Chie Davis

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Writer @powertofly

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5 Awesome Groups That Support The LGBTQIA Tech Community

June is usually a celebratory time for the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) community. National Pride Month kicks off, a series of events and initiatives that educate people about the contributions of LGBTQIA people. But this year's celebrations were marred by a deadly hate-filled massacre on June 12, in Orlando, Florida. Now known as the "deadliest shooting attack in U.S. history, at least 50 people" were gunned down at a popular gay nightclub, leaving the world devastated and looking for answers, not only about terrorism, but also tolerance.

Prior to the Orlando attack, the editorial team at PowerToFly compiled a list of prominent LGBTQIA tech organizations and the support that they give the community. This list seems to be even more relevant now, as thoughts of support, healing, change, action and resolution all have a renewed and raw sense of urgency.

Here's our list of five LGBTQIA tech organizations that are focused on professional networking, advocacy and changing workplace dynamics, to make the corporate space a more inclusive one for all.



Courtesy of StartOut: Women's group event

1. StartOut

Created in 2009, with a mission to end LGBTQIA discrimination through economic empowerment, StartOut helps entrepreneurs launch their own businesses. “There’s a good ‘ole boys network that still exists in the tech world,” StartOut Board Member and Mentorship Director, Carla McKay tells PowerToFly. “Even though we as entrepreneurs certainly are living in a better world than it was five to ten years ago, we recognize that females need even more support than their male counterparts in the entrepreneur/tech world.” Carla attributes StartOut’s success in their Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston and Austin chapters, to their resource-based Lesbian Entrepreneurship Mentoring Program. It started in 2012 with 12 female mentors and mentees. As a former mentee turned business owner, Carla says that she directly benefited from the program. “It helps them to see that they won’t be out them on their own and forced to eat macaroni and cheese! We’ll help them secure funding or join an incubator program, just to get a foundation and hopefully succeed in their business,” she explains.

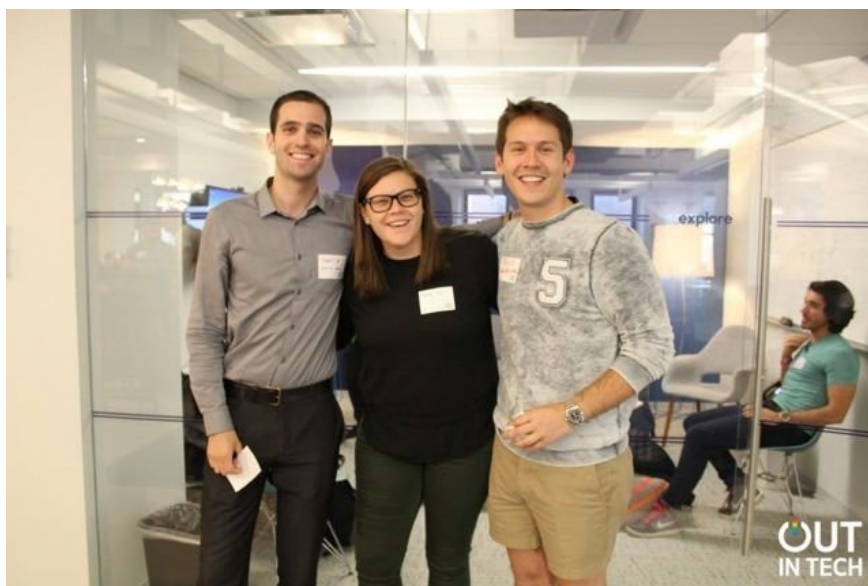
In addition to StartOut’s mentoring program, which it has now opened to male and transgender members, it produces bi-monthly networking events to activate and support LGBTQIA tech entrepreneurs. “We also do two demo days (twice) a year where we invite LGBTQIA

entrepreneurs to demo their products and services in front of VCs,” Carla adds.

2. Lesbians Who Tech:

Lesbians Who Tech is a global network of over 15,000 queer women on a mission to support and increase the visibility of lesbians in the tech field. Founded by Leanne Pittsford, they have local chapters in over 35 cities globally, and host events in nearly 40 cities. They also produce three annual conferences, as detailed by the San Francisco Business Times, “in San Francisco, New York and an international location ... created a coding scholarship, hiring and recruitment opportunities as well as a new project called ‘Bring a Lesbian to Work Day.’”

According to their website, in 2014 and 2015 Lesbians Who Tech facilitated a partnership with the White House LGBT Tech and Innovation Summit. The goal was to “empower participants by connecting them with Federal government information, resources, and opportunities.” Being represented at a national level was symbolic for Lesbians Who Tech, as they seek to increase the number of diverse, queer women in tech. Their CEO explains, “We at Lesbians Who Tech made a statement that we would be 50 percent women of color and have held ourselves to that at every summit.”



Courtesy of Out in Tech: L to R: Gary Goldman, NY Chapter Head; Kara Lee, Board President; Julio Alvarez, Board Vice President (PHOTO CREDIT: Joel Fineman)

3. Out in Tech

Out in Tech came to life after a group of friends in New York realized that there were no local social networking spaces for LGBTQIA people in tech. In 2012 they created a non-profit to unite the community, and according to Andrew Lowenthal, Out in Tech's Executive Director, "encourage underprivileged LGBTQ youth to pursue tech internships and post-secondary training by ensuring they have career access at levels currently enjoyed by their heterosexual and/or cisgender white male counterparts." Connecting youth to LGBTQIA employees, Andrew says, boosts their self confidence during a crucial time. "Inspiring young people with an ambitious career goal can give them something meaningful to wrap their arms around during their high schools years, when 74% were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation," he tells PowerToFly.

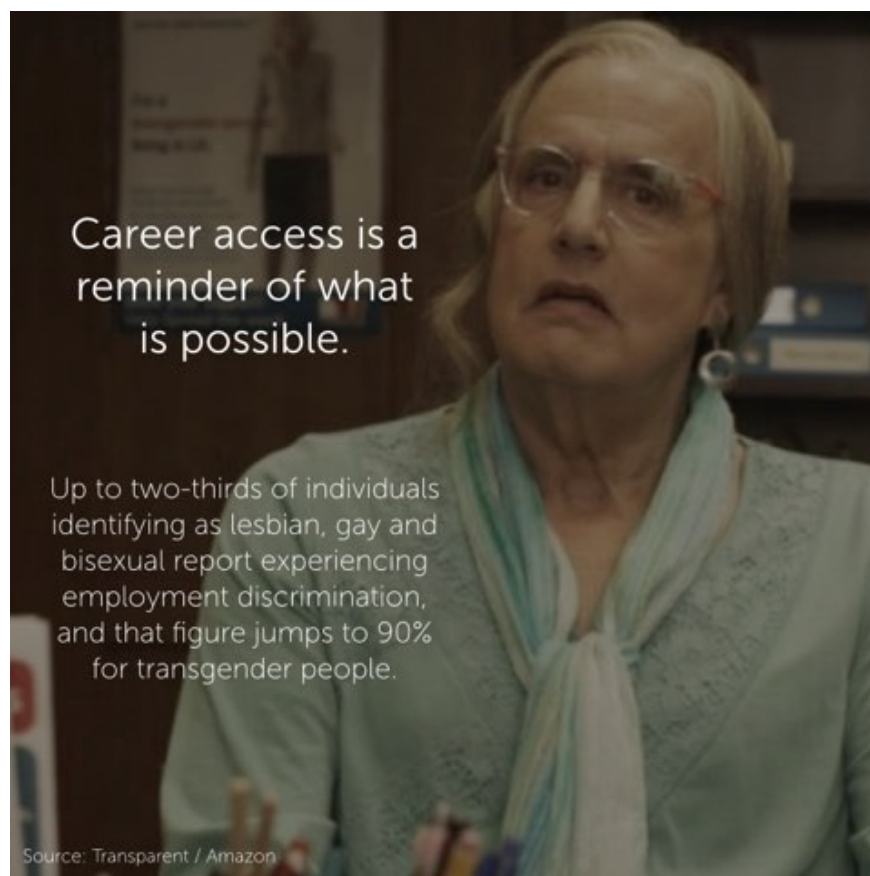
In addition to strengthening networking opportunities for LGBTQ youth and employees, Out in Tech actively works with companies to change workplace dynamics and empower workers. "When weighing an offer or evaluating an organization's diversity and inclusion, ask to speak with someone from another team. Ask to shadow a meeting or work an event to gauge whether the environment feels collegial and respectful, and whether it's somewhere you could visualize being your authentic self every day," he explains.

4. TransTech Social Enterprises

Chicago based TransTech Social Enterprises is a co-learning and coworking incubator that seeks to educate, employ and empower transgender and non-gender conforming people in the tech field. Tech entrepreneur, actress and activist, Angelica Ross, started TransTech in 2013 after being shut out of the professional world. 10 years after starting her own design firm, with the help of a fundraiser, the self taught graphic designer and multimedia producer now helps others facing similar challenges.

As detailed on their website, TransTech offers tech workshops, peer coach training, study buddies and graphic design and web development apprenticeships. They also have job placement through their in-house design studio and remote learning opportunities. In addition to facilitating job creation, TransTech seeks to reduce the

amount of discrimination experienced by transgender employees. According to a study mentioned in Fast Company, “90% of the transgender people surveyed reported experiencing “harassment, mistreatment, or discrimination at work. Transgender individuals are also twice as likely to be unemployed as the rest of the population.” TransTech works to combat these instances by offering cultural competency training and speaking out in the media. Angelica told The Grommet that inclusivity starts with a company’s creation, “This means including LGBTQ, trans and non-binary folks, people of color, women, and all of the intersections in between in advisory and focus groups, and serving on your boards and committees.”



Courtesy of Out in Tech: A graphic made for crowdfunding campaign (PHOTO CREDIT: Jenner Deal)

5. GLEAM

With over 2,000 members globally, GLEAM is Microsoft’s internal LGBTQIA employee resource group. Their mission, as described on their website, is to “drive LGBT-friendly changes in company policies and the work environment, provide support and networking

opportunities for our members, and promote activities within Microsoft that raise awareness about our LGBT community.” Since 1993, Microsoft has made strides to include their LGBTQIA employees in their company structure. They were one of the first corporations to include “sexual orientation in its corporate nondiscrimination policy” and “offer employee benefits to same-sex domestic partners.”

In addition to donating “software, services and equipment” to LGBTQIA civil rights groups, GLEAM also partners with multiple organizations to promote events; including Pride Month celebrations, [The Microsoft Day of Caring](#), and national conferences like the “[National Out & Equal Workplace Summit](#), [Lesbians Who Tech Summit](#) and [UK Stonewall Conference](#).”

**Bonus: In addition to the awesome groups listed above, the [Queer Tech Club](#) and [Queer Coders](#) are two upcoming organizations that are also doing great work to support LGBTQIA people in tech. The [LGBT Technology Partnerships](#) is also a helpful resource. To learn more about [PowerToFly's](#) support of the LGBTQIA community, check out our [Twitter Q&A conversation](#), in honor of Pride Month.*

Join [PowerToFly](#) today to become part of our fast-growing network of all-star women in tech. You can also learn about the best ways to hire and manage a distributed team by downloading our [free e-book](#).

With reporting by [Megan Kelley](#)

