

Why Do We Care How Many Openly Gay Attorneys We Employ?

by Andrew Chapin

To help boost recruitment and retention of your staff — that’s why we care! With attrition rates being so high, can you really afford to be regularly losing up to 10% of your attorneys because they feel left out? Put yourself in that ten percent’s shoes. Imagine your employer does not count your group amongst their employees, that the firm’s policy is “counting you is an invasion of your privacy.” Imagine your employer does not offer you any benefits for your spouse though they offer a smorgasbord to everyone else at a cost shared by you! Imagine that no one in the company brochure looks like you, nor is your identity mentioned in any way at any company event!

Do these practices convey to you that you are an important part of this company? Gay and lesbian attorneys don’t think so. That’s why gay and lesbian attorneys appreciate NALP’s demographic counts that provide the opportunity to self-identify when they choose to do so. Female attorneys are interested in demographics, as are minority attorneys. In fact, many majority group attorneys are interested in all the numbers because they reveal something important about an employer’s culture. Imagine the effect leaving those boxes blank would have on your hiring of women or African Americans. If your firm isn’t convinced that this is an important issue to your attorneys, especially those who are gay or lesbian, check out your beliefs with your city or state bar association’s committee for lesbian and gay issues and with the gay and lesbian law student associations.

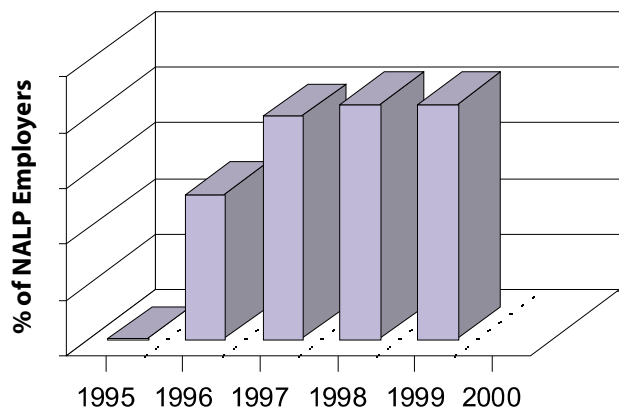
NALP has been encouraging demographics on gay and lesbian attorneys since 1996 at the recommendation of NALP’s Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (GLBT) Committee. The GLBT Committee polled lesbians and gays (both students and attorneys in practice) and learned that the overwhelming majority want to have the opportunity to self-identify (not all said that they would use it, but nevertheless they want to have the opportunity). The GLBT Committee then developed

formats (available from the GLBT Committee simply for the asking) for legal employers to implement this recommendation. More than 20% of NALP member organizations are now giving their gay and lesbian attorneys the opportunity to self-identify; employers in urban centers are reporting at an even higher rate (nearly 40%) in New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

We encourage you to lead your firm toward enhanced hiring and retention practices, and we will be happy to further discuss any issues, problems, or questions you have about this important issue; take a step toward boosting your recruitment and retention rates by calling us today! ■

Andrew Chapin is an active member of NALP’s GLBT Committee and counselor at Columbia University School of Law. This article was written on behalf of the GLBT Committee.

Legal Employers
Listing One or More Openly Gay/Lesbian Attorney



Source: NALP *National Directory of Legal Employers, 1995-1999*. The figure for 2000 has not yet been calculated.

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