



Brian McNaught

Corporate diversity on DVD

For 33 years Brian McNaught has been training corporate executives and the general public how to handle gay and transgender issues in the workplace. The author of four books, McNaught, who himself was once fired for being gay, has become

one of the most sought-after corporate diversity trainers in the world. But the intense amount of travel was wearing heavy on McNaught, so he decided to offer his gay diversity training through a four-part DVD series that seeks to build bridges of understanding at work.

stations. But when the diversity at Merck heard that I was back and not available for the position, she said, "Can we have you do your work and have you do your work that we [can record it], but I want to lose you." I said, "about I take it and make it other companies?"

Is the workplace better for employees than it was?

Initially our focus was to get companies to pass policies that made it easier for people to feel safe, such as nondiscrimination policies, domestic-partner benefits, and gay and lesbian employee networks. Most companies have done that, but it's not address the culture. Now the hard work begins. How do you transform the culture so that people don't feel [merely] tolerated but feel valued? That's the heart of my presentation, and the parts that are resonating with.

So how do you transform the workplace?

Gay people are not afraid of being fired for being gay; they're afraid of being marginalized. They're afraid of having someone ask on a date. "How was your weekend?" instead of "How was your workweek?" of being invisible at work. The reason for that is fear of the heterosexual colleagues or ignorance. Their strategy is to be openly gay people. My message is: Avoidance is not a successful strategy, personally or professionally.

Are some industries, such as entertainment, better than others? Or is that a myth?

I think that's a myth. It's a matter of time—and I sometimes hear myself when I'm doing the training that the financial institutions are ahead of other cultures in the world. They want to attract the best and brightest people. The message to them is, You have to be open in attracting people by having policies that protect them and keep them? —Interviewed by Lisotta