



TRANSCRIPT: PRIDE Branding Guide Conversation with John Line, Copacino Fujikado

Speakers

John Line, Tara Buchan, Dani Carbary

Transcript

Dani Carbary: Hello and welcome everyone to Collabor8 Conversations! Collabor8 Conversations is an event series for Collabor8 Employer Collective. For our members and for our community, we're so happy to collaborate with you all. Some of you may be new to Collabor8 Employer Collective - we are a DEI community of employers representing different industries, sizes and company types who come together to learn and share best practices in order to create a sense of belonging and true inclusion in the workplace. We like to look at the entire employee experience and view all 8 stages of that experience as opportunities to infuse diversity, equity and inclusion into practice. Before we start today, we would like to make sure to say thank you to our Collabor8 partners who generously support our work. We'd like to specifically recognize Bank of America, US Bank, and Washington State Office of Financial Management, and say thank you to them and the many other organizations who invest in making their

workplaces better for all of their employees. If you have questions about Collabor8 or want to learn more about how your organization can be a member we encourage you to check out our site or connect with Tara or I, and with that I'll turn it over to my lovely partner in crime, Tara Buchan.

Tara Buchan: Hello to everyone! Dani and I had the joy of working with Copacino Fujikado in past iterations of our work over many years. Their creativity and execution as an ad and branding agency is incredibly consistent, but our connection with them goes beyond being impressed by their creativity and is tied to how deeply connected their desire is to elevate DEI initiatives and making sure that comes out in their work. One fantastic element of that is the PRIDE Brand Guide they created: Rainbow with a Cause, with the intent of assisting brands to create more thoughtful, purposeful and inclusive PRIDE content. We are lucky enough today to have John Line from Copacino Fujikado here to share more about the guide. John - thank you for taking the time today with Dani and I today. We are hopeful you can get us started by sharing more about your background, your current role and why - either personally, professionally or both - this topic around inclusive PRIDE content is important to you.

John Line: Tara and Dani, thanks so much for having me. It's great to be here. I am John Line and the head of client services at Copacino Fujikado. I use he/him/his pronouns and our agency is about a 50-person agency based in downtown Seattle, and we work with a lot of Pacific Northwest brands like Premera Blue Cross Life Insurance Company, Visit Seattle and a host of other great brands, and personally identify as Queer. So it's really important to me when I look out at the landscape of what's happening with PRIDE to think about what marketers are doing and how they're showing up authentically and one of the reasons that we created the PRIDE guide is because we were starting to see a lot of what's been labeled "rainbow washing" or companies were showing up and wanting to sell things to the Queer community, but were not necessarily looking at their own internal operations and asking themselves, What are we doing to support our Queer employees or what are we doing to actually support the Queer community beyond trying to market and sell to us? So this was a topic that was near and dear to our heart and something that we were really excited to tackle. And I feel really

fortunate to work in an organization that gave us the resources to be able to do this because it wasn't funded right? This was all kind of after hours work and taking from a little bit of client work time that we could have been doing something else, but they felt like this was important.

Dani Carbary: Thanks for sharing that John. And that is what really really interested Tara and I: That internal employees at Copacino Fujikado were instrumental in the creation of the PRIDE Brand Guide. Can you expand upon that a little bit and can you share with us the guide's origin story and its purpose?

John Line: Back in 2019, which was the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot. So really big year for the Queer Community wanting to kind of a momentous year right, to think that 50 years later and how far we've come and yet also still how far we had to go, but there's a lot of celebration happening around PRIDE in 2019. And we have an internal group that is our internal kind of DEI Council and they had an idea of "hey given that this year is so important to the Queer community, is there something that we could be doing as an agency to support not only our Queer employees but to maybe support the community at large?" So we came with a proposal to the owners of the agency to the partners of the agency and said hey, would you be willing to give us some resources to do a marketing campaign around PRIDE and the owners of the agencies said "heck yeah," Which it is great to have allies. That's what we all need. And so we followed what we would normally do for a client. So we wrote a brief around PRIDE and what it means to employees and what we wanted to try and accomplish and we really wanted to try and focus on "What do we as an agency, what's our superpower? And what can we bring to this conversation that maybe nobody else could?" And so we wrote the brief and then we did a kickoff with our creative team and lots of folks on the creative team decided to participate. Only one person on our creative team at that time identified as Queer the rest were straight allies, and we decided hey, let's go to an LGBTQ+ gay bar and have this experience in the bar and do the kickoff there. And for many folks that was our very first time being in a Queer space like that, but we did a kickoff had some drinks talked about the importance of PRIDE what it means to us as Queer people and started to brainstorm around what could we do that would be meaningful. And really add to the conversation,

and one of the ideas that came up was what if we were to create a style guide for the PRIDE flag because at that time and still to this day, there's a lot of conversation around the flags, right and the flag has evolved over the years and I think there was a lot of confusion among straight allies but even within the Queer community about what do each of these flags mean and how should they be used? So that was really the genesis of the guide is saying "hey we could do this to help marketers figure out how to more authentically connect around how to use the flag. But also, If you're going to use the flag, What are you doing internally? What are you doing to help the community and then make sure you're using the right flag that communicates the thing that you want to communicate. So that's really how it was born and really fun that it all started in a Queer bar.

Tara Buchan: I love that story, its so fantastic. I love that it started with a heck yeah. For organizations that are listening, when your employees come to you with a brilliant idea like this, heck yeah is the response. Um, and then I just love that you mentioned like how important allyship was in this. It wasn't that it was you know, it was something that you saw that could clearly be improved upon and everyone at your organization thought that, and its just fun. Its a really great origin story, John. Um, the guide speaks to the importance that brands should be thinking about their "why" and why its important to not participate, as you mentioned earlier in "rainbow washing" Can you explain what are some initial steps that you think brands should take when they decide to celebrate and raise awareness for PRIDE?

John Line: Yeah, I mean, I think the first step is to look internally right, look at yourself and say am I creating an inclusive workplace for my LGBTQ+ employees. And if you're not, I think that's the first thing that you need to do. And then I think second is what am I doing for the LGBTQ+ community at large? So if my employees are taking care of and I have inclusive practices that's number one, and number two is there something else I can do for the entire community? And then I think number three if you can check yes on both of those then let's go celebrate PRIDE. Let's go march in the parade. Let's sell a product that's maybe giving back to the community. Let's put rainbows on things like all for that. But if you don't have number one and number two done, number three falls a little bit flat. So I

would encourage for brands HRC the Human Rights Campaign is a really great resource. They have a Corporate Equality Index and they have some really specific factors that they look for within companies around, sexual orientation and gender identity being a part of their non-discrimination policy, parity and benefits including benefits for transgender inclusive care creating an inclusive culture, all of those things. So if you're not familiar with the Corporate Equality Index would highly encourage folks to go check that out on the HRC website.

Dani Carbary: Thanks, John. The information you've shared has already been so informative that you already answered my next question, but I'll ask it anyway. The PRIDE Brand Guide was obviously created for brands in an external fashion. And we're talking about external branding a lot, but our group Collabor8 Employer Collective focuses on creating inclusive spaces and ensuring that belonging is felt internally for employees at all organizations. And so, can you talk a little bit about how to view the PRIDE Brand Guide through a lens of internal PRIDE initiatives and how to ensure that external actions are mirrored in the workplace?

John Line: Yeah, I mean, I think it really does come down to taking that first internal look right so do you have LGBTQ+ employees? And are you creating a welcoming environment for them? Are they treated at parity in terms of pay and benefits as their non-Queer peers. Does your health plan offer transgender affirming care? I think if the answer to any of those things is "no" you might have some internal work to do before you start to think about externally. Also just thinking about creating an inclusive environment that starts from day one, or even before day one and making sure that you have inclusive hiring practices that you're making Queer folks feel comfortable and in that interview environment, and then once they're onboarded, and for I think many large employers having employee resource groups is such a great way for LGBTQ+ employees to feel supported and to feel like they have a resource and they can kind of find that common link within the company. For us, we're like a 50 person organization. It doesn't really make sense for us to have multiple ERGs that we'd have one or two people in each of them. So for us it's that we have kind of a Diversity Council that everyone's welcome to participate in and then that council works to provide training to the agency to provide a little bit of accountability to leadership to plan

cultural activities for our employees. So I think that all of those things kind of working together. Focus there first and then think about what you can do externally and I think the guide really encourages folks to kind of start internally before you focus externally.

Tara Buchan: Its great. I love the guide, I am excited that everyone listening is going to have access to it. Thank you for making it so accessible, and not gatekeeping that good information. Thank you for those tips as well for organizations. A lot of our conversations come back to consistently “listen to your employees.” They kind of have all that they’re sharing and their feedback is really what you should be incorporating into your policies both external and internal. So, we have another question for you, John, you kind of already touched on this. And again we love that origin story, but for individuals who are at organizations that might be listening and maybe they aren’t seeing as much of that inclusive behavior happening at their organization, do you have any advice for individuals for how to shine a light on that in a productive way? It's never the individual’s responsibility to make sure the culture at an organization is positive and healthy and inclusive, but if there was someone thinking that I would like to make some of these positive changes at MY organization, do you have any advice for them?

John Line: Yeah, I think find an ally is probably number one, right, and I think that in so many workplaces it's not that people aren't supportive, it's just that they don't see it the same way that we see it. So I think that was a really big lesson that I learned in doing this is we had a very supportive leadership team but they would never have come up with the idea of doing a PRIDE brand guide or doing something for the 50th anniversary of Stonewall, right? They’re cisgender, straight. It's just not on their radar the same way it's on my radar. And so it was really incumbent upon myself and other Queer people within the organization to say, you know, what? Hey, we want to do something around this and going and making the ask and then we were very fortunate to have really supportive allies who said, “My Gosh, what a great idea. Of course, we're supportive of that. Yeah, let's go do it. Have a great time. Can't wait to see what you do.” But if we hadn't asked it never would have happened because it's just not on the radar. It's just not as important to them as it is to us, right? So I do think if you work in an

environment that is generally inclusive you ask the question try to find an ally, if you're a more Junior employee, try to pair up with a more senior employee who might be able to more clearly or easily voice what's needed or what the desire is to Senior Management, but I do think you take a little risk and make that ask, and I think probably more often than not you'll feel that support.

Dani Carbary: Thank you so much John! We're really hopeful that those listening have actionable ideas and new knowledge around the importance of making sure that PRIDE branding and external or internal initiatives are more thoughtful. We're looking forward to linking the guide for everyone as a reference point from our conversation. For our Collabor8 members, we have some additional written content that we'll be sharing to accompany this conversation. Thanks again to our wonderful partners and to John with Copacino Fujikado for giving your time and knowledge in this space. If you are watching and not yet a member of Collabor8 Employer Collective, please reach out to Tara or I for more information. We are happy to schedule a chat with you, and we hope everyone has a great day!