



Navigating Pushback During Pride Season

June 1, 2023

This year, we are celebrating Pride Month against a heartbreaking backdrop. With [41% of LGBTQ young people having seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months](#), community support and affirmation has never been more important. We are so grateful to you for showing up for The Trevor Project and for our community, and for helping us create a brighter future for LGBTQ young people.

At Trevor, we've been proud to work with our partners for years on successful Pride campaigns that uplift LGBTQ voices and position our partners as industry leaders in LGBTQ inclusion. You are part of an incredible community of corporate allies supporting our work, and we are looking forward to an impactful Pride Month together.

We also know that extremist groups are attempting to undermine corporate support for the LGBTQ community. We sincerely hope that all of you enjoy a successful month in which you celebrate our partnership without backlash. However, you may have seen some things in the media about pushback against Pride support this year, so we wanted to proactively address this with you. We recognize that when brands speak up and show their active allyship for LGBTQ people, but they are then met with criticism, this can be distressing and jarring. The experience of receiving this backlash may also be deeply upsetting for LGBTQ people and allies within your companies, as it further amplifies hateful rhetoric against our community that has become all too common across our country.

This type of threat against the LGBTQ community – against our very right to exist – is nothing new. While there are no easy answers, we do have experience navigating these types of attacks and understanding how to do so in a way that centers safety, affirmation, and community. We are proud to offer this resource to partners to help you navigate this challenging time and stay strong in your support of LGBTQ young people. **You'll find lots of guidance below, but the main takeaway is: we are in your corner and ready to support you if you face conflicts or challenges this Pride season.**

Guiding Principles

You Are Not Alone

The Trevor Project is committed to serving as a thought partner and an advisor for you as you navigate any potentially challenging conversations around Pride this year. *Please don't hesitate to reach out to our team if a conversation with our experts would be helpful.* We are always here to support you and hop on a call to discuss your approach; we want to ensure you feel comfortable and confident as you support LGBTQ people and Trevor's life-saving mission.

Additionally, we would be happy to connect you to our other corporate partners who may be navigating similar circumstances to share ideas, best practices, and resources. You are all leaders in LGBTQ inclusion, and we want to open up channels for you to learn from and guide each other. If you

are interested in being connected to other Trevor partners, please reach out to your partnership manager.

Stay Strong and Resilient – Your Support Can Be Life-Saving

We know that corporate support, Pride campaigns, and Pride products are critical sources of affirmation and acceptance for LGBTQ young people who may lack such support in their own communities. This year we have seen over 600 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in legislatures across the country. We have also seen record numbers of LGBTQ young people reaching out to Trevor for suicide prevention and crisis counseling support – often driven by lack of acceptance and the ability to live as their authentic selves. We need all voices to speak up for LGBTQ young people, especially through this challenging time. More than half of LGBTQ young people told Trevor that brands who support the LGBTQ community positively impact how they feel about being LGBTQ. This is an opportunity to continue to align your actions with your values. And for those of you who have already made statements reinforcing your support for the community – THANK YOU!

Center LGBTQ Voices Through This Time

We know that your vocal allyship for Pride and for The Trevor Project makes a strong impact in maintaining brand loyalty, consideration, retention, and positive sentiment from LGBTQ and ally employees, customers, and community members. The majority of Americans are supportive of efforts for LGBTQ inclusion and “70% of non-LGBTQ+ people believe companies should publicly support and include the LGBTQ+ community through practices like hiring, advertising and sponsorships” (Accelerating Acceptance, 2023). Remember: this is your audience. Engage your LGBTQ and ally employees, customers, and partners (like Trevor) in conversation about how we can continue to show support for LGBTQ people together.

Remember the Bigger Picture

We know the backlash efforts are driven by a very vocal *minority*. Trevor's own consumer research has shown that even amongst people who do not self-identify as allies, the majority of consumers would feel either neutral or actually more positive about a company supporting a nonprofit serving LGBTQ youth. But recent high-profile incidents regarding corporate LGBTQ support speak to a larger question for brands: how do you want to build relationships with your customers? In a world where corporations are increasingly called upon for leadership around issues of justice and inclusion, how are you aligning your messaging, products, and policies – and ensuring you have buy-in from leadership – to feel confident in your values and your approach to this important work?

Navigating Crisis Communications

Defining Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is the strategic dissemination of information by an organization to address a crisis that impacts customers and/or the organization's reputation.

Take a Deep Breath

Bad PR can be bad for business – which may feel threatening. But more companies than not have gone through a crisis communications moment. When you're in the throes of a PR debacle, it's easy to feel isolated and overwhelmed, but remember that many companies have gone through crisis comms

challenges and come out on the other side. The first thing you can do is ground yourself and take a beat. Crisis communications is strategic, and you can't lead with your strategic brain if you're in a reactive and frantic place.

General Best Practices

- Monitor the situation and don't make any sudden movements
- Assess escalation frequently
- Don't respond to press inquiries until you have a game plan
- Determine business impact:
 - Who are my audiences? How does this impact them?
 - What is our pain tolerance? How much does this matter?
 - Can this be prevented? Are we already taking the steps?
- Golden rules:
 - Don't answer questions based on speculation
 - Only share what you know
 - The media isn't the only lens through which to tell your story
 - Always set firm ground rules with reporters if you choose to engage with them
 - Don't repeat a negative
 - Avoid making denials
 - Repetition is reinforcement
 - Know your CEO / spokesperson's media ability, and act accordingly
 - If you have to apologize, do it once
 - Never lie or mislead; never go off the record

***If you begin to face a crisis comms challenge, please reach out to your partnership manager at Trevor. We have a skilled in-house Communications team that is well-versed in crisis management, with specific expertise in supporting the LGBTQ community. We can be a resource, a thought partner, and a sounding board for you.**

Creating Safe Spaces in Your Digital Campaign

Pride is an important time of celebration and support, so we know many of you will be posting about our partnership through a Pride campaign on your digital channels. Here are a few tips to support your followers and any influencers you may be working with.

Center Our Mission and Your Journey

You are partnering with The Trevor Project because you care about saving young LGBTQ lives. We encourage you to speak to your core audience and lean into your support of our community. When in doubt, center Trevor's mission, leveraging our [research](#) and [resources](#); reach out to your partnership manager as a thought partner in making sure your messaging feels authentic. You can also speak to your own journey as a company – your DEI mission, your history of support of the LGBTQ community, and where you're going next.

Monitor Comments

Many LGBTQ customers and employees will see content about our partnership on your social media channels. These posts are meant to highlight your allyship to your audience, so they are a great place to demonstrate that hate has no place on your channels. Here are a few tips for keeping the comments sections of these posts clean so your community stays focused on how you're supporting LGBTQ young people:

- 1. Delete Hateful Comments:** We highly recommend monitoring the comments sections of your posts and removing comments that discriminate against or target the LGBTQ community.
- 2. Actively Monitor in the First 5 Hours:** In our experience, the first 5 hours are most critical. If your content doesn't receive hateful responses in that time period, it's unlikely that it will be targeted.
- 3. Use Instagram's Hidden Words Setting:** Using this setting (available at Settings → Settings and Privacy → Hidden Words), you can proactively come up with phrases and words that are offensive or hateful and Instagram will automatically hide these comments should anyone try to reply. You are the expert on what words are unacceptable for your accounts, though we are happy to be thought partners as you set up this feature.
- 4. Use Limits Settings:** For extra preparation, Instagram has a feature (available at Settings → Settings and Privacy → Limited Interactions) where you can turn on limited interactions for one week, meaning that only accounts that follow you would be able to comment. This could be a great way to ensure that no hateful comments will make their way to your post, but it also limits positive community engagement with supporters.

Support LGBTQ Talent

We know that celebrity and influencer partners can sometimes become the face of online backlash and negative press and therefore, we aim to always equip our talent friends with resources and guidance to help them navigate any challenges that may arise. Below are a few tips on how to support talent partners who have joined your campaign.

- 1. Talking Points:** During this time of year, talent ambassadors may face more negativity and challenges when aligning with Pride campaigns. We find it helpful to equip our talent with research, statistics, and up-to-date information surrounding our community and highlighting the importance of our work. They can lean on these talking points if they experience backlash, illustrating why commemorating Pride and uplifting the LGBTQ community is so crucial. Your partnership manager can share talking points to send out to your talent ambassadors.
- 2. Trevor Resources:** Alongside our talking points, our online resources are a great tool to help support mental health and well-being during particularly challenging times. We have a myriad of online resources which are intended for everyone in the LGBTQ community and allies. We can point talent in the right direction to utilize the resources for themselves, or to direct their followers who may also be negatively impacted by any backlash. We also encourage you to share the tips for monitoring comments with your talent ambassadors!
- 3. Reach Out + Tap Us In:** If someone you're working with is experiencing severe backlash, we strongly encourage you to reach out to them directly to offer support and work through an action plan. And of course, we are also here as a resource! Our Celebrity & Influencer Engagement team is happy to speak with them directly to provide support and guidance in challenging times.

Prioritizing Employee Safety and Support

This is likely a challenging time for your LGBTQ employees. Supporting their physical safety and mental health without caving to (and thus emboldening) demands or threats from extremists is of the utmost importance. We encourage all of our partners to consider the following, particularly if you have employees in brick and mortar locations who may interface with customers about our partnership.

- 1. Highlight your company's values.** Our partnership is founded upon your company's commitment to equity and inclusion, and it's important to center your values throughout this month. Share information about your mission, the work you are doing internally, and why your company has chosen to support Trevor and highlight Pride Month. Emphasize the urgency of Trevor's mission: 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, and 56% of LGBTQ young people who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it.
- 2. Ensure your employees are educated about your partnership with Trevor.** Share a campaign overview that explains your relationship to Trevor and the ways your company is supporting the LGBTQ community. Be specific about your impact: how is your company's contribution supporting Trevor's mission? Feel free to ask your partnership manager for talking points about The Trevor Project and our work to share with your employees.
- 3. Invite conversation with your LGBTQ employees.** Hear directly from your LGBTQ ERG members and use their insights to inform the resources you share with your staff – but make it optional and don't rely on the LGBTQ community to do all the heavy lifting. If you have store activations, include LGBTQ store associates in these conversations to understand and address their questions and concerns.
- 4. Support LGBTQ employees and their allies.** Your employees may experience some difficult interactions – whether on the store floor, on a customer service line, or managing a social media account – and it's important for them to feel supported by their leadership. Create an open dialogue between employees and management to ensure that your employees feel safe and valued in the workplace. Consider posting mental health resources in your break rooms, including any options that are available through your benefits plan. Share Trevor's resources around allyship. Empower management and/or security colleagues to step in with customers as necessary. Stand firmly behind your employees and your partnership with Trevor.
- 5. Provide an action plan.** Unfortunately, customer-facing employees may face pushback from a very vocal minority. It can be helpful to empower them with an FAQ of example questions they may receive about the partnership or your celebration of Pride Month so they are prepared to address them. Also, remind your employees of the following:
 - Your company respects customers' opinions, and customers are not required to buy Pride products / round up their donation / participate in any in-store activations. However, hate is not welcome at your stores.
 - Your company is a strong supporter of Trevor, and all employees are part of that.
 - Supervisors, leaders, or security are there to support employees if situations escalate.