


SUPPORTING LGBTQ+: OUR CULTURE OF INCLUSION AT SYNEX AND HYVE BY STEVE ICHINAGA

President of Hyve Solutions and
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This year SYNEX and Hyve have invested in our growing commitment to DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion). In doing so, I was moved by the stories of our SYNEX and Hyve family members and saw how the sharing of these experiences can create awareness, understanding and support throughout our organizations. So, in honor of Pride this year, I thought I would share my own coming out story in the hope that I can contribute in a small way to cultivating a culture of love, respect and equity for all within our SYNEX and Hyve family.

 HERE'S AN IMPORTANT TIP: write down the dates of important events, even those you think you're certain to remember. Why? Because even though you may be able to relive the moments, you may not remember the specific date or even year. At least that's how it is for the many times I came out. First to myself, then to my family and friends, and finally to my co-workers, customers, and suppliers during my time at SYNEX and Hyve.

Surprisingly, I did write down the date I came out to myself: February 3, 1985. I was 23 years old. For many years before then, I (like so many LGBTQ+ people) struggled with coming to terms with my sexual orientation. I have yet to find an LGBTQ+ person who realized and happily and immediately embraced this difference from the start. For me, initially, it felt like an unwanted stain that I would have gladly removed, if I could. Self-hate, depression, fear, confusion, and the sense of failure were the main feelings that I experienced during my struggle. But on February 3, 1985, something finally shifted in me. I desired to live a full and true life, which became greater than my fear of all the stigma associated with being gay. That realization made me very happy and I was amazed at the possibility that my life might turn out pretty good.

About a year later I started to tell my family the news. Most learned during the holidays later that same year. The response was met primarily with sadness, tears, grief, and a sense of loss. My parents feared the loss of my life as a happy, "normal" person. They felt the loss of my having a spouse and kids and all of the dreams they had for me as their child. They worried for my safety and about my ability to have a successful career. This was 1985 and AIDS was decimating much of the gay community so the additional level of fear and concern from both the virus and the prejudice in others made this especially challenging for my parents.

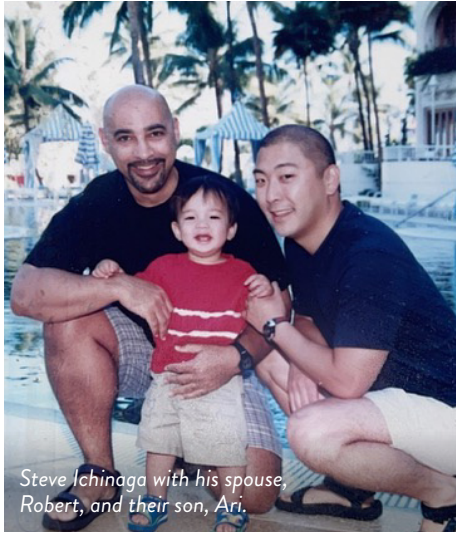
I came out to my Compac (pre-SYNEX name) family around the same time. I remember talking with Peter Larocque one day in a conference room and somehow during that conversation I came out. Peter had a few questions, but it was pretty clear that my being gay was a non-issue. We got along well just as before. I remember the day I came out to our Founder, Bob Huang. We were coming back from a series of sales calls and were heading back over the San Mateo Bridge. Like Peter, Bob was accepting and I knew being gay would not hinder my progress at SYNEX.

In the 1980's it was pretty common for people to make racist, sexist, or homophobic comments in business. Most of this language came from customers and vendors. I remember I was in a meeting with Peter and the sales manager for a major HDD supplier. This particular person made a homophobic statement in the meeting. After I left, Peter continued on with the meeting but later asked me back to his office where he had this person apologize. I didn't want to make waves with this supplier, so I said, "It's ok," at which Peter remarked that, "It's not ok." This was the 80's. That was an important supplier. I walked away knowing where our values were as a company and so did that particular vendor.

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Steve Ichinaga with his spouse, Robert, and their son, Ari.

1989 was a very special year for me, because that's the year I met Robert, the person I would later marry and build a life with. About a year or so into our relationship I brought him to a company function where he met many of my colleagues, including Bob and Lily Huang.

It was a bit nerve wracking at first, but that all disappeared when Bob and Lily approached and introduced themselves to Robert. That moment always stuck with us, and those warm feelings created that night still remain in our memory. Today we would call out the acts of Peter and Bob and Lily as allyship. And that allyship has a huge positive impact on individuals, companies, and ultimately our broader community.

Over the years, I largely experienced support from SYNEX leadership, employees, customers, and our suppliers. I say largely because I was not universally supported. At times we had our disagreements. I remember when companies began to offer Domestic Partner health coverage to LGBTQ+ couples. I asked for the same from SYNEX and felt angry and let down when we did not offer this while most other technology companies supported it. Back then we were much smaller, and we had no visibility to the size of our LGBTQ+ workforce. And not all insurance providers offered the program or offered it conditionally. But ultimately after a number of years, we did get there and this support was offered to our team members.

Looking back decades, I can tell you that the DNA of our company was founded on honesty, and treating everyone with respect. Back then we understood and saw those values lived out. Today we are much larger and so we need to do more to demonstrate and show support to all our communities. We will have disagreements, and we will be left disappointed and even angry. But that's normal and it's going to happen. But as always, we will continue to move forward.

And speaking of moving forward – my extended family and I are closer than ever because we are sharing our true lives and selves with each other. Robert and I adopted our son, Ari, in 1998 and married when it became legal in California. And finally, I was able to have a great career and a life that has turned out pretty good so far! Certainly, better than I imagined back in 1985!

I'm very happy that SYNEX and Hyve support the United Nations Global Standards for LGBTQ+ Equality and participate in the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index which rates workplaces on LGBTQ+ equality. This year we are showing our support at Pride Events in San Francisco, Memphis, Birmingham, UK and Taipei, Taiwan. To my LGBTQ+ SYNEX and Hyve family: I know it is not always easy, but as you take steps forward in being your authentic self, we will work to ensure that you can do so and be supported here in your workplace.

Happy Pride to all! And thanks to everyone building a better workplace and community for all of us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Ichinaga".

Steve Ichinaga
President, Hyve Solutions &
Hyve Design Solutions



Steve Ichinaga with his son, Ari.

