



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 back and not available tion, she said, "Can we h and have you do your w that we [can record it], I want to lose you." I said, about I take it and make 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 does not address the culture. Now the hard work begins. How do we transform the culture so that people don't feel [merely] tolerated but feel valued? That's the heart of my presentation, and those ideas are resonating with.

So how do you transform the culture?

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?" is a question of being invisible at work. The reason for that is not the fault of the heterosexual colleague or ignorance. Their strategy is to avoid 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 not an industry— and I sometimes hear myself when I'm doing the training that the financial industry is ahead of other cultures in the world. They want to attract the best and brightest people. The message to them is, You have to focus on attracting people by having policies that protect them and keep them? —Interviewed by Lisotta