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First Ever Forum of Openly LGBT Executives Highlights Corporate Closet in Today's Workplace Culture

Key issues discussed included lack of representation in top business roles as well as importance of LGBT role models

April 8, 2008 - San Francisco, CA - Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people remain under-represented in top corporate executive positions based on the small number of openly LGBT C-suite executives at Fortune 500 companies.

The first annual [Out & Equal](#) Executive Forum, gathering 24 high-ranking corporate executives from diverse industries, discussed this challenge and the potential to continue increasing LGBT representation at the top levels of leading companies.

Participants discussed the unique challenges of being openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in management positions, the barriers to more equitable representation, the competing demands of business interests and personal interests and ways to build a network and support one another despite coming from different industrial or service sectors of the marketplace. Over the course of the program, the executives dedicated themselves to being more visible as LGBT people and role models for other executives or potential executives who may fear that coming out will cost them opportunities for success.

"This is the first step toward our goal of all executives being free to live and work authentically," said [Out & Equal Executive Director Selisse Berry](#). "Our hope is that we have created a space and a network that will ripple outward from this event, allowing more and more LGBT executives to be open about who they are, as well as the hundreds of thousands of employees worldwide who look to them as an example of how to be successful while being true to oneself."

"Being with other openly LGBT executives was a rare and unique opportunity," said Donna Griffin, Managing Director at Chubb.

"Seeing other executives who are facing the same challenges, and have the same kinds of intimidation, the same kinds of excitement, and the same kinds of opportunity was very exciting for me," said Ken McNeely, President of AT&T California. "It was very rewarding to see my peer group around the country and very encouraging."

"It felt as if something special has begun," said Melinda Haag, an Executive with Crowe Chizek and Company, LLC. "We have all committed--to each other and to the people who are not here and those people who may come after us--to keep this going."

The event was held at Hotel Vitale and featured keynote speakers Rayona Sharpnack, founder of the Institute for Women's Leadership; Chip Conley, founder and CEO of Joie de Vivre; Maggie Stumpp, Chief Investment Officer of Prudential; Kenneth McNeely, President of AT&T California; and Donna Griffin, Managing Director of Chubb. Christie Hardwick served as moderator.

Executives who participated include:

- **Ed Baklor**, Senior Vice President, Adventures by Disney (Burbank, CA)
- **Selisse Berry**, Executive Director, Out & Equal Workplace Advocates (San Francisco, CA)

- **Scott Beth**, Vice President of Procurement and Order Management, Intuit (Mountain View, CA)
- **Tara Bunch**, Vice President Global Consumer Support and Service, Hewlett-Packard Company (Fort Collins, CO)
- **Jim Freeman**, Vice President, IBM Global Services, IBM (San Francisco, CA)
- **Michael Garrison**, Director of Marketing, Global Services, Dell Inc. (Austin, TX)
- **Donna Griffin**, Managing Director, Chubb (Warren, NJ)
- **Melinda Haag**, Executive, Crowe Chizek and Company, LLC (Chicago, IL)
- **Jane Harper**, Director, Collaborative Innovation, IBM (Half Moon Bay, CA)
- **Julie A. Hogan**, Vice President, Xerox Services, Pacific Region, Xerox Corporation (Pleasanton, CA)
- **Michael Jungen**, Director/ Ticketing & Gift Card Services, Walt Disney Parks & Resorts (Celebration, FL)
- **George A Kalogridis**, Chief Operating Officer, Disneyland Resort Paris (Paris, France)
- **Judy Lively, MD**, Physician-in-Chief, Diablo Service Area, The Permanente Medical Group (Sebastopol, CA)
- **Uxio Malvido**, EMEAC Diversity and Work Environment Leader, Merck & Co (Madrid, Spain)
- **Pat Martel**, City Manager, City of Daly City (Daly City, CA)
- **Cynthia Martin**, retired Vice President Blue Shield of California and Eastman Kodak (Berkeley, CA)
- **Kenneth McNeely**, President, AT&T California, AT&T (San Francisco, CA)
- **Tom Moore**, Partner, Ernst & Young LLP (San Francisco, CA)
- **Steve Sears**, Vice President Marketing, Stacy's Pita Chip Co. (Randolph, MA)
- **Rayona Sharpnack**, Founder, Institute for Women's Leadership (Redwood City, CA)
- **Kayla Shell**, Legal Director, Dell Inc. (Round Rock, TX)
- **Michael Welch**, Partner & Chief Financial Officer, Stephan Pyles Concepts (Dallas, TX)
- **Gary Wright**, Distinguished Engineer, IBM (Tacoma, WA)

In addition to the Executive Forum, Out & Equal offers a wide array of programs and services to promote LGBT workplace equality. Upcoming activities from Out & Equal include the First Annual Out & Equal Dinner and Gala, June 12, 2008, Hotel Nikko, San Francisco; and the [2008 Out & Equal Workplace Summit](#)--the world's premier conference on LGBT workplace equality--September 10-13, 2008, Austin Convention Center, Austin, Texas.

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates™ is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Out & Equal champions safe and equitable workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. The organization advocates building and strengthening successful organizations that value all employees, customers, and communities. See our website, www.outandequal.org, for more details.

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Video clips (suitable for web) and hi-resolution photos (suitable for print or online) from the Executive Forum are available upon request.