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Pride month, and the 'rainbow bandwagon'

It's June, and for many people that means the start of summer with all the good and bad things that come with it; shorts in the office, picnics in the park, pool parties, hay fever, air conditioning bills, and for New Yorkers: 'that smell'. But for many of us, June means something else, it is Pride month, which also comes with some good and some bad things.

One inevitable conversation that comes up every year is that of 'rainbow capitalism'. It seems like every year there are more and more companies slapping a rainbow on a pair of sneakers, printing 'love is love' on a t-shirt, and waiting for the 'pink pound' to come flowing in.

It's very easy to be cynical when you see companies who show no overt sign of giving support to the LGBTQ+ community 'cashing in' on a month that still represents a struggle to many of us. But there's far more nuance to the question than is often considered, and this year I've seen a push-back against the singular narrative that has felt absent for the last few years.

This push-back has been, in my experience, predominantly from the 30+ generation. To those of us born before 1990, who grew up in the shadows of the AIDS crisis, anti-sodomy laws, Section 28, Don't ask Don't tell, and all of the repression that came before it, the idea of seeing your city decked out in rainbow flags holds a special kind of joy.

If a 13 year-old me, convinced that I was the only boy who liked boys, had seen posters of happy gay and lesbian couple in my local H&M then he would probably have had a much happier teenage experience. To underestimate the power of visibility, and of how the reach that corporate endorsement gives it above and beyond our typical clusters of exposure, is to ignore or forget our own cultural experience.

So how do we, as the LGBTQ+ community balance the fine line between grabbing the kind of visibility and overt support that was unimaginable just twenty years ago, with the need to ensure that we don't simply become a 'cash cow' for big business? How do we make the distinction between those companies that are supporting us, and those that are using us?

For me, the first thing I look at is the effort, risk, and reward involved. If a company is making very little effort, taking very little risk, but getting a significant reward, then there's a good chance that they're not actually being very supportive.

A big thing for me here is whether a company is using a cause to sell something. A company that is selling rainbow shoes or pride t-shirts needs to do a lot more than tell the LGBTQ+ community that they support us. For firms who aren't 'selling rainbow merchandise', then maybe just creating an inclusive workplace where their LGBTQ+ employees feel safe, respected and valued is enough.

Putting rainbow avatars on your Twitter can be seen as putting little effort in, but it still indicates to prospective LGBTQ+ employees that they will be welcomed. In a country where you can be fired without legal recourse simply

for being LGBT, there's a lot to be said for a business simply saying "you're safe with us", let's not underestimate that.

As LGBTQ+ folk at NCC Group we pretty much just get on and do our jobs like everyone else; most of the time there's very little for us to ask for and it's easy to dismiss that. If inclusion and equality is the real end goal, then we're actually doing pretty well. There's always more that can be done, particularly around visibility and education; and that's what this Pride month is all about.

PS. If you are shopping for rainbow merch this Pride season then check out Mic's list of organisations who will put your pink pound to good use supporting LGBTQ+ causes: <https://www.mic.com/articles/1...>

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As global experts in cyber security and risk mitigation, NCC Group is trusted by over 14,000 customers to protect their most critical assets from the ever-changing threat landscape.

With the company's knowledge, experience, and investment in research and innovation, it is best placed to help organisations assess, develop and manage their cyber resilience posture.

With circa 2,000 colleagues in 12 countries, NCC Group has a significant market presence in North America, Europe and the UK, and a rapidly growing footprint in Asia Pacific with offices in Australia, Japan and Singapore.

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