

sparks & honey

C R E A T I N G A

T R A N S -

I N C L U S I V E

W O R K P L A C E

7 STRATEGIES FOR THE C-SUITE

## INTRODUCTION

# BE A TRANS ADVOCATE NOW

“

There are 1.6 million trans people in the U.S., but the battle for cultural change is on all of us.

- Melissa Sklarz, District Leader, 30th AD, Queens, New York

There's never been a better — or worse — time to be a trans person in the U.S. This is just one of the many insights that surfaced during sparks & honey's Affirming Trans Rights Summit, hosted in our studio on September 12th. "Many LGBTQ+ programs have not asked, "Are we doing enough for Trans people?" Terry Young, CEO of sparks & honey, said. His welcoming comments come at the height of a year that has seen a proliferation of anti-trans legislation, affecting trans people of all ages. There are currently over 100 bills in legislation that are infringing on the rights of LGBTQ+ people, Elana Redfield, federal policy director at the Williams Institute at UCLA, highlighted.

"This is the moment to step up as an ally," said Sasha Buchert, director, Nonbinary and Trans Rights Project at Lambda Legal. Now is the time to become an advocate, ally and support system for trans and nonbinary people. It's why we hosted the Affirming Trans Rights Summit: to support, amplify and fight for trans people. In a series of panel discussions, we examined topics from healthcare to policy, and the real world experiences of trans and nonbinary people, and those of their families and communities.

"We are calling for leaders everywhere to implement trans-inclusive strategies," said Davianne Harris, chief client officer and head of Equitable Futures at sparks & honey.



“

There's never been a better or worse time to be trans in America. We've never had as many opportunities as we have today. But we've also never been as attacked.

- Elisa Crespo, Executive Director, NEW Pride Agenda

**1.6M**

People identify as trans in the U.S., aged 13+.

Source: [UCLA Williams Institute](#)

**Trans people are**

**2x**

More likely than other adults to be unemployed.

Source: [McKinsey](#)

# AN INCOMPLETE GLOSSARY OF INCLUSIVE TERMS TO KNOW

Terms that surfaced in discussions at the sparks & honey Affirming Trans Rights Summit

(not exhaustive!)

## *Transgender*

An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically.

## *Trans*

Used as shorthand for transgender, and on second reference after first using the word transgender.

## *Non-binary*

Nonbinary is used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of "man" and "woman." Many nonbinary people also call themselves transgender and consider themselves part of the transgender community. Others do not. Nonbinary is an umbrella term that encompasses many different ways to understand one's gender.

## *Gender Identity*

A person's internal, deeply held knowledge of their own gender. Everyone has a gender identity. For most people their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. (See cisgender below.) For transgender people, their gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

## *Cisgender*

An adjective used to describe people who are not transgender.

## *Misgendering*

When other people use the wrong pronouns to address a person.

## *Intersex*

Skylar refers to someone with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive

organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.

## *Rainbow Capitalism*

When queerness is marketed in a way that does not advance queer acceptance.

For more, see:

[glaad.org](https://www.glaad.org)

*Discussing the semantics of inclusivity, moderator Paul Butler, president of New America, took us on the journey of a trans person from a young age into adulthood, a time in which identity and language evolve in tandem and are based on cultural experiences.*

# 1

## THE TRANS SUPPORT NETWORK

# EXPANDING TRANS-SUPPORT IN YOUR ORGANIZATION



From familial support to healthcare and emotional support, trans and nonbinary people and their communities have support networks available to them, yet many are unaware of them. A few support networks that are led by trans people of color, for example, include The Marsha P Johnson Institute, The Brave Space Alliance or Baltimore Safe Haven. It's also a common experience for many trans people to feel a lack of support, particularly in rural areas, or lack access to support networks. Some find support through online groups, while others find safe spaces in conferences for trans people, as Valerie Sullan, a retired lawyer who is trans, highlighted.

Support for trans people is a workplace imperative, too. Understand where your organization can play in

supporting trans and nonbinary employees —and their family members who are on a journey with them. Workplace policies need to consider everyone involved.

Many trans people have not fully come out at work. Building an inclusive workplace means understanding that trans people exist in all areas and they may not necessarily be openly “out” at work. Therefore, policies from pronouns to healthcare insurance and coverage will affect trans people who are your team members — and their families and allies — at work, whether leaders are aware of them or not.

“

On the one hand, I was thrilled for Valerie. But part of my process was also mourning the loss of the male version of my husband.

- Barb Sullan, Dental Hygienist, married to Valerie Sullan

More than

50%

Of trans employees do not feel comfortable being out at work.

Source: McKinsey

“

We are creating a safe space for people to wear the clothes they want to wear, and act how they want to act.

- Dr. Josh Safer, Executive Director, Mount Sinai Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery in New York City

# 2

## ENSURE HEALTHCARE COVERAGE INCLUDES TRANS AND NONBINARY EMPLOYEES



Trans and nonbinary people are facing barriers in access to gender-affirming and preventative care, particularly in remote areas of the country and in states that have limited access due to prohibitive legislation. Understand that the healthcare coverage your organization provides is a vital part of support for trans people and their families. Check the coverage you offer in detail and alter policies for

healthcare related travel, for example, or access to gender-affirming care in your locality.

Inclusivity is not only awareness, but concrete action on every level. Take extra care to communicate and understand the coverage you offer and how you can best activate it as a company.

“

Access to (gender affirming) care is a huge issue. Not being able to access a provider in your area can be extremely troubling.

- Dr. Marci Bowers, Surgeon and Gynecologist, Mills Peninsula Hospital, WPATH President, Trevor Project Board of Directors

“

Don't just say you have inclusive policies, but show people how to access them.

- Blake Plowden, Research Operations Manager, Twitter



# 3

## HIRE TRANS PEOPLE

# MAKE THE WORKPLACE A SAFE SPACE



Trans and nonbinary people face systemic prejudices in many ways, and they are twice as likely as cisgender adults to be unemployed. But, workplaces have a role to play in cutting through biases that are deeply engrained, and in building true inclusivity that also includes trans people. Hiring is a good place to start.

“It’s simple. Hire trans employees,” said Elisa Crespo, executive director, NEW Pride Agenda. It’s a bigger challenge when many trans people do not feel comfortable being openly trans, even in the interview process. “Don’t require people to be more out than they want to be at work,” added Blake Plowden. She emphasized that it requires “immense emotional vulnerability” to be openly out as trans.

Hiring is only the first part. The panel noted that many trans people face obstacles in getting their foot in the door, such as not having gone to college or having engaged in sex work previously. Having fewer barriers in place organizationally may mean challenging some of your traditional hiring practices, such as finding new places to recruit or being open to different educational backgrounds, urges Terry Young, CEO at sparks & honey.

It’s also a question of not only expanding representation within your organization’s walls, but creating a safe space for trans and nonbinary employees to succeed and progress forward.

“

Hire trans people. And once they're there, what is your human process? How will trans people be treated and promoted?

- Elisa Crespo, Executive Director, NEW Pride Agenda

Trans people say it's difficult to understand workplace culture and benefits, and harder to get promoted.

Source: McKinsey



# 4

## INTENTIONALITY MATTERS

# BUILD SYSTEMIC INCLUSIVITY



Hiring is only the first step. Be intentional in all facets of inclusivity, including onboarding and ensuring progress within the company. This may require gut-checking processes with experts to improve the employee experience of trans and nonbinary staff members.

“Be intentional about integrating truly inclusive design into every area of your organization,” said Davianne Harris, head of Equitable Futures at sparks & honey. From communications to the supply chain and employee relations, being intentional about diversity requires training and a shift in culture for most organizations. It also requires boldness. “We live in an era where we are afraid of making mistakes. There’s a fine line between rainbow capitalism and

actual support of LGBTQ+ people,” said Elisa Crespo, executive director at NEW Pride Agenda. Making mistakes, however, is a natural part of the process, as long as the intention is clearly communicated and authentic.

Also, be aware of the intense responsibility and potential emotional labor involved in asking trans or nonbinary employees to constantly be advocates for the organization. Some may want to, others may not.

“

The hard part is changing the culture: Trans youth deserve protection and safety. And their care providers deserve that too.

- Melissa Sklarz, District Leader, 30th AD, Queens, New York



77%

Of trans individuals who held a job took active steps to avoid mistreatment at work.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#), 2020

“

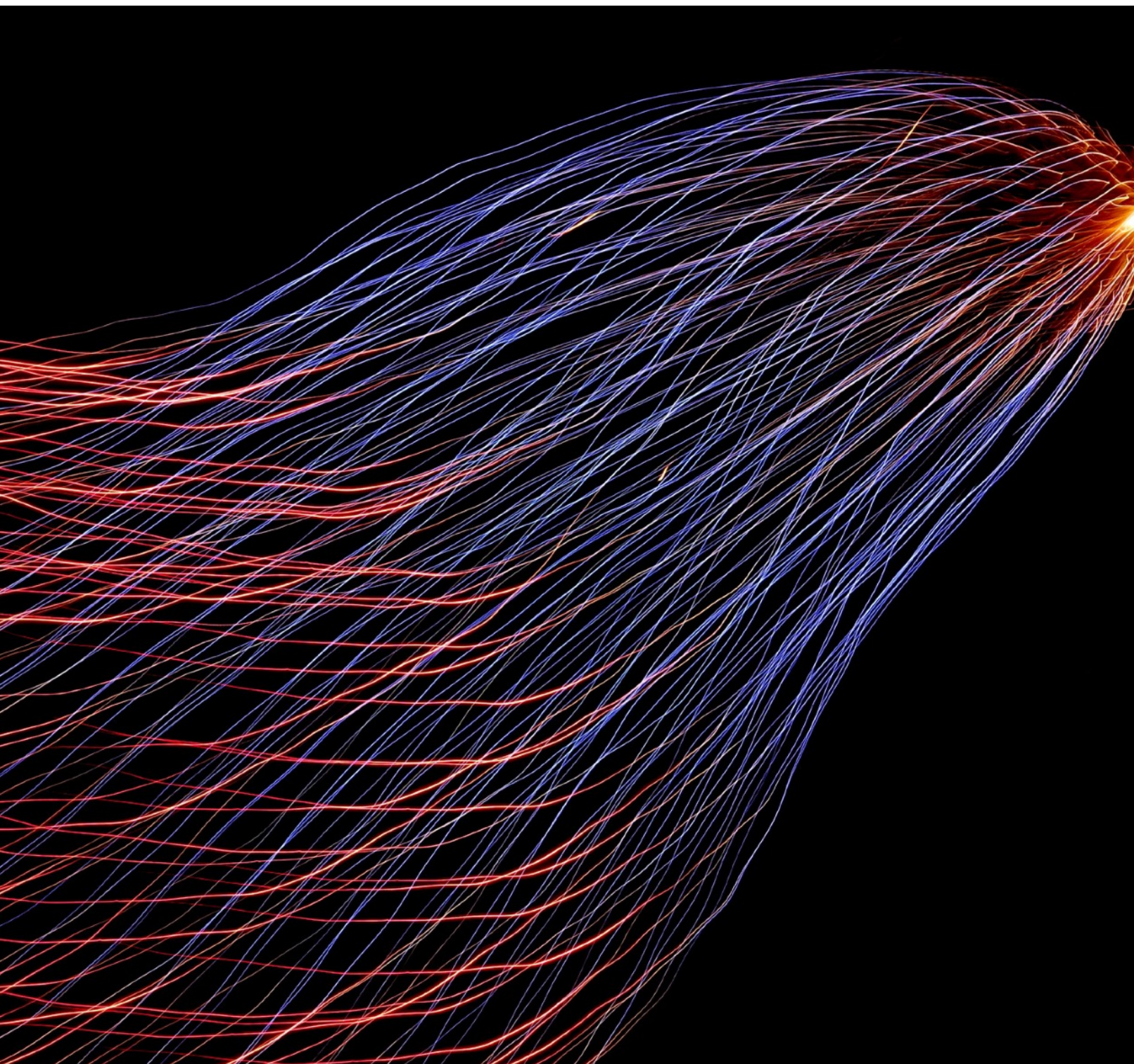
True diversity training requires intense emotional vulnerability.

- Blake Plowden, Research Operations Manager, Twitter

# 5

OPEN UP YOUR DATA

# FLATTEN PAY INEQUITIES AND TRACK PROGRESS



There's an important shift from being an ally to being an accomplice of trans and nonbinary communities in the workplace. Part of that change happens in the open sharing of data related to issues such as pay and progress among employees. Embracing open data when it comes to diversity and inclusion — and sharing it — can make the difference in career progress for trans and nonbinary employees. At the same time, information sharing related to transgender individuals is a way to enhance visibility of the often invisible cohort of trans employees.

Thinking of data as knowledge sharing is a way to both improve culture and battle proliferating misinformation, particularly in parts of the country where anti-trans legislation is growing. Bring in experts from support networks to educate policy makers and employees alike. Knowledge and facts can expel the fear that breeds misinformation that targets the trans community.

“

The medical community needs to advocate for their trans patients, but we need to figure out how to expand that support network — from parents to religious leaders and other leaders.

- Dr. Josh Safer, Executive Director, Mount Sinai Center for Transgender Medicine and Surgery in New York City

**Cisgender employees make**

**32%**  
**More money**

Per year than transgender employees, even when the latter have similar or higher education levels.

Source: McKinsey

“

Learn about the history of trans people and their contributions to civil rights in this country. The place that trans people hold is quite powerful.

- Elisa Crespo, Executive Director, NEW Pride Agenda

# 6

## IDENTIFY ANTI-TRANS SENTIMENT

# ACTIVATE AGAINST ANTI-TRANS LEGISLATION



The rise of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has skyrocketed, particularly this year and in states such as Florida, where the open discussion has been banned with its Don't Say Gay bill. Most recently, Virginia's anti-trans legislation will require trans students to be categorized according to their "biological sex" when it comes to using bathrooms or participating in school activities. Wherever you may operate, make no mistake - the rise of such legislation deeply affects trans and nonbinary communities, and your employees. Anti-trans bills have been escalating in 2022, yet many remain unaware of how the rights of trans and nonbinary people are slowly being eroded. But, more than 60 major U.S. companies are taking a stand with the Human Rights Campaign to condemn

Texas Governor Greg Abbott's continued attacks on LGBTQ+ youth.

Make a point of following anti-trans changes in policy and legislation, especially in your region, to build empathy at the workplace and take action where you can with internal policy changes.

"Be genuine in your approach to this work," said Blake Plowden, research operations manager at Twitter. Understand that any anti-trans news out in the media will leave an imprint on your employees and their communities.

“

The impact and rhetoric (of anti-trans legislation) is really harmful, especially to trans youth.

- Sasha Buchert, Director, Nonbinary and Trans Rights Project at Lambda Legal

Over

**100**

Anti-trans legislation bills have progressed in 2022.

- Williams Institute at UCLA



# 7

FUNNEL CORPORATE RESOURCES

## SUPPORT TRANS COMMUNITIES



Part of being an operator of “good business” is understanding the complete landscape of where your financial and other resources are funneled. Potential employees will do their homework and they will know if your organizations are supporting other companies that are not aligned with their inclusive values.

This is a shortlist of trans-inclusive organizations to support - get started.

**[Trans Agenda For Liberation](#)**

**[Movement Advancement Project - LGBT Equality Maps](#)**

**[Transgender Funding Project](#)**

**[US Transgender Survey](#)**

**[GLAAD's Social Media Safety Index](#)**

“

Look at who your company is funding.  
Encourage people to ask the hard questions  
regarding where they work and who or  
what they are funding.

- Sasha Buchert, Director, Nonbinary and Trans Rights Project, Lambda Legal

WHAT'S NEXT?

# ENVISION A BETTER FUTURE FOR TRANS PEOPLE

Changing your culture at work is about building a more inclusive, creative and safe space for everyone. But it doesn't happen overnight. Consider these strategies as a starting point towards accountability and building a better future for trans and nonbinary people at work — and everywhere.

“Look to the future for solutions, not the past,” said Melissa Sklarz, district leader, 30th AD in Queens.

Thanks for joining us.

Watch the full Trans Summit panel discussions [here](#).

# WITH GRATITUDE AND THANKS TO ALL OF OUR AFFIRMING TRANS RIGHTS PANELISTS

(Panelists listed in alphabetical order)

***Dr. Marci Bowers***

Surgeon & Gynecologist,  
*Mills-Peninsula Hospital*  
WPATH President,  
Trevor Project Board of Directors

***Sasha Buchert***

Director of Nonbinary and Trans  
Rights Projects,  
*Lambda Legal*

***Paul Butler***

President and Chief  
Transformation Officer,  
*New America*

***Elisa Crespo***

Executive Director,  
*NEW Pride Agenda*

***Davianne Harris***

Chief Client Officer and Equitable  
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***Robb Henzi***

SVP of Strategy, Policy &  
Philanthropy Practice Lead  
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***Joon Park***

Senior Cultural Strategist  
*sparks & honey*

***Blake Plowden***

Research Operations Manager, *Twitter*  
Global Co-chair, *Twitter Open*

***Elana Redfield***

Federal Policy Director  
*Williams Institute at UCLA*

***Dr. Josh Safer, MD, FACP, FACE***

Executive Director, Center for Transgender  
Medicine and Surgery,  
*Mount Sinai Health System*

***Melissa Sklarz***

District Leader, 30th AD,  
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***Valerie Sullan***

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***Barb Sullan***

Retired Dental Hygienist

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Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in our NYC Studio – or Live on LinkedIn at 12pm ET.

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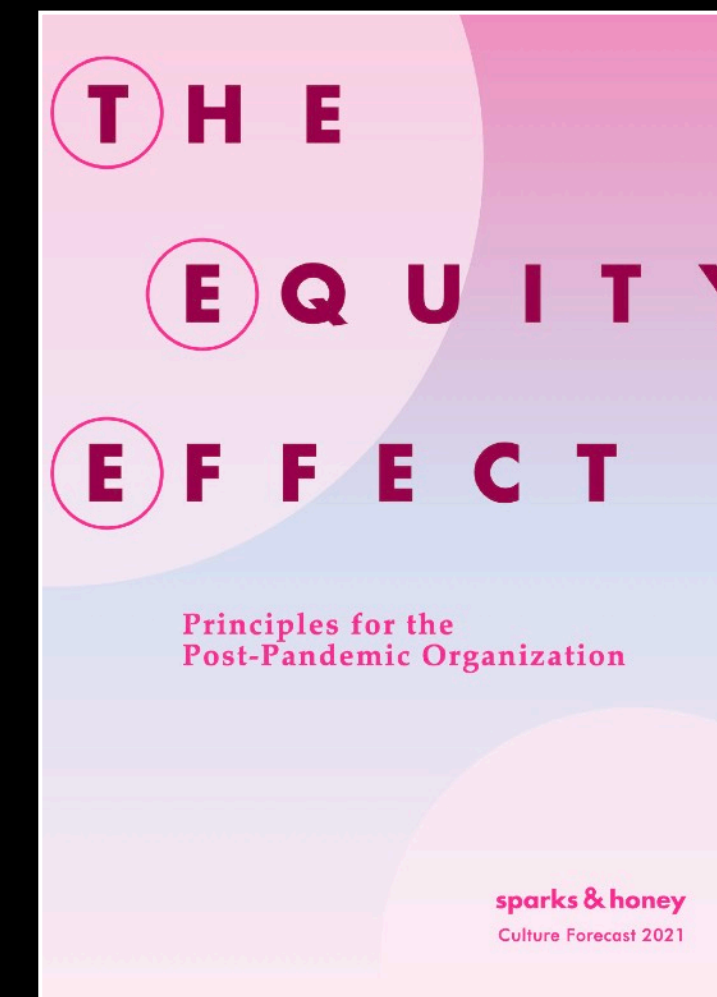
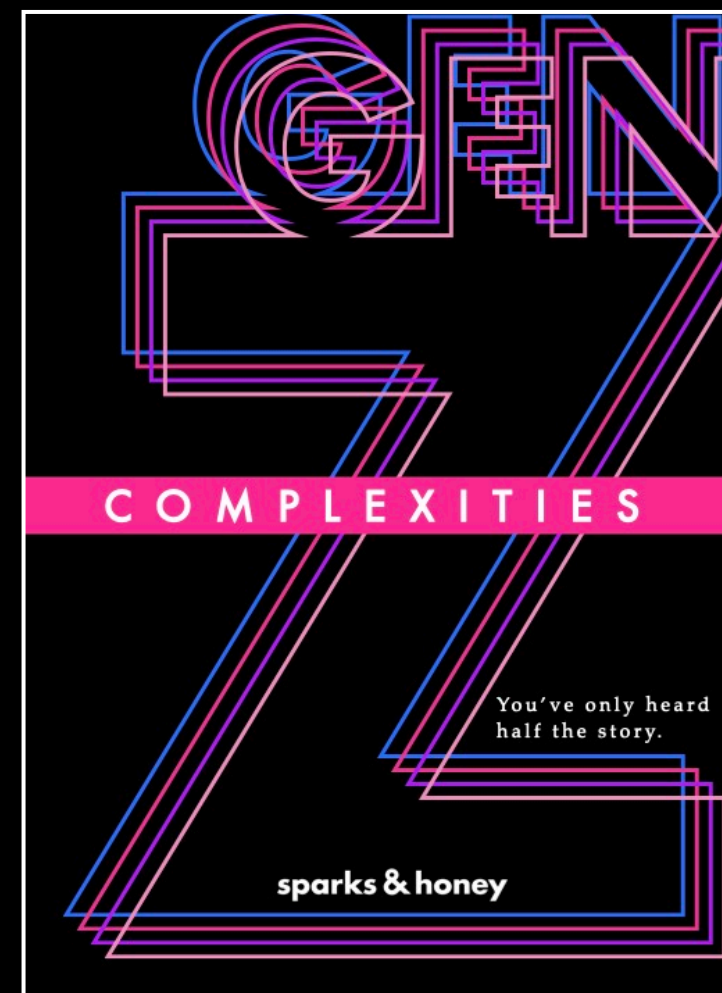
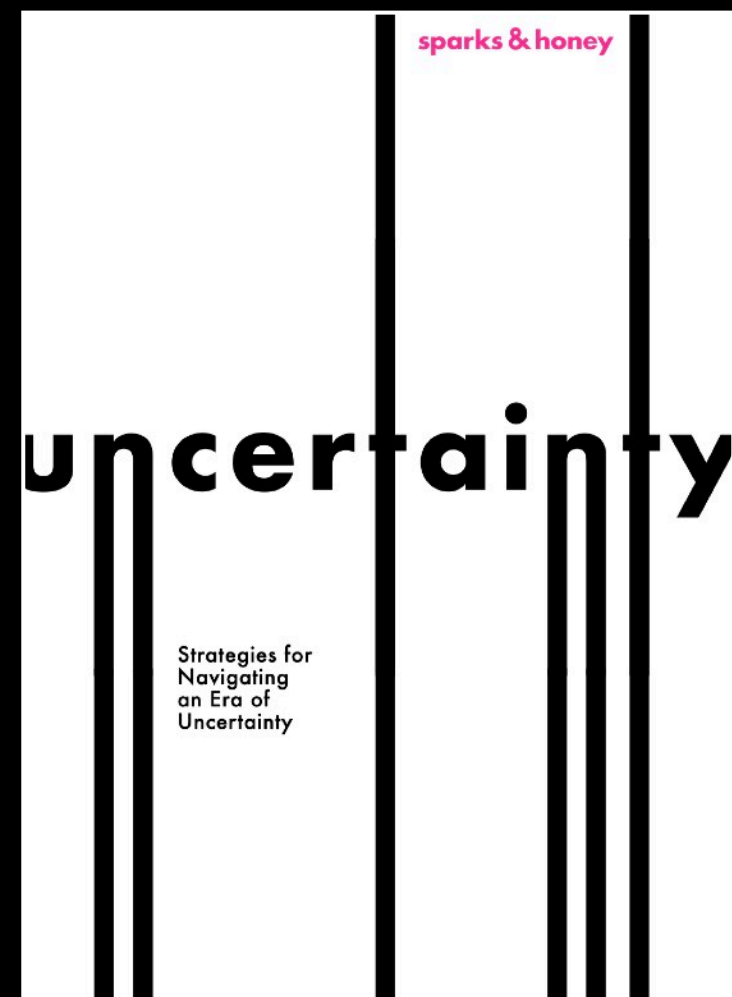
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