

PRWeek Pride in PR: Alisha Alvarez

Account director, Bospar

Words PRWeek staff



Alisha Alvarez is a proud queer Latina and PR and communication professional with a passion for creating award-winning storytelling. Along with her expertise in providing strategic counsel to clients, she is known for her work ethic and ability to lead with empathy and kindness. Alvarez is a firm believer in paying it forward and mentors junior PR colleagues, becoming their biggest cheerleader as they achieve new levels of success.

An account director at Bospar, Alvarez specializes in fintech, consumer and e-commerce industries, with prowess in HR, marketing and enterprise tech. Before joining Bospar in 2017, she was in entertainment PR and marketing at Paramount Studios, where she worked on shows such as 13 Reasons Why, The Alienist and Grease: LIVE. Prior to Paramount, Alvarez held several positions at Allied Integrated Marketing, leading PR efforts for major studios such as Warner Bros., IFC Films and Roadside Attractions in the San Francisco area.

In 2020, Alvarez and her family started The Beto Mena Foundation in honor of her father, Jose Roberto Alvarez, after losing

him to COVID-19 complications. The foundation is dedicated to helping minority families affected by the pandemic.

Alvarez's PR motto is, "no matter where you are in your career, you should always be pitching," and believes the best creatives are those with the most diverse life experiences. She resides in Los Angeles with her wife, Devin.

Preferred pronouns?

She/her/hers

Sexual orientation?

I consider myself queer/fluid.

What are the challenges and responsibilities for LGBTQ communicators working in today's polarized and febrile social and political environment?

As a Latina in the LGBTQ+ community and someone who had a harder time coming to terms with my sexual orientation due to societal pressures, it's important now more than ever for us

to remind people, in the work we produce, that diversity — in its many, beautiful forms — no longer means the minority. The more LGBTQ+ kids and adults see themselves celebrated at the stores they visit, in the ads they see, the TV and movies they watch and the articles they read, the more they'll see there is so much beauty in being who they are and in living as their true, authentic selves. As communicators, we have a big hand in what people consume, so it's imperative for us to constantly think about that and evolve to be more inclusive.

Representation isn't enough, though. We are also responsible for championing our community and other underrepresented communities. If you told me 10 years ago I'd be working in my dream profession at a PR firm that is not only LGBTQ+-friendly but also celebrates LGBTQ+ and people of color, I would have been shocked. I also wouldn't have believed I'd be in a loving relationship with a woman — a relationship that is celebrated and accepted by everyone around me, personally and professionally, because it wasn't something I was seeing every day.

I'm aware not everyone has the privilege of being in an environment where they are celebrated and accepted for who they are. But the more we make it clear through our work that we genuinely support people in our communities, the more we might be able to drown out some of the hate.

How can colleagues be true allies beyond Pride Month?

I'm a big fan of the June Pride celebrations and I'm a sucker for Pride merch. I got married to my amazing wife the weekend of LA Pride in 2019 and you better believe I went to the parade with a shirt that said, "I love my wife" in big, rainbow-colored letters. I also love a good "happy Pride Month" among colleagues at the beginning of June. But Pride is more than that. And as an ally, Pride should mean you take pride in your LGBTQ+ friends and colleagues.

A true ally is someone who goes above and beyond Pride celebrations and takes time to get to know you and your community, educates themselves and has your back. I'm lucky that I've had the opportunity to work with people from all backgrounds who have grown up in entirely different parts of the country — and are straight! And among these colleagues, I have met some of the most beautiful people who are accepting and proud to know me.

So, for anyone reading this and wondering what they can do to support their LGBTQ+ colleagues, remind them you are always in their corner, value their experiences and are proud to know them the other 11 months of the year when Pride Month isn't center stage.

Celebrate the impact LGBTQ individuals have had on the PR industry.

LGBTQ+ and BIPOC individuals have a big hand in creating true and authentic stories that represent people today. As PR and comms professionals responsible for creating work that can change minds and hearts, we've had to learn what it truly means to be represented in today's culture. As LGBTQ+ people, we've had to figure out early on who we are and how we want people to know us — and be confident in that, which is PR 101.

The impact we have on the media and what people see is huge, and I'm so proud to be part of a community that is collectively looking to be more inclusive and represent people in the work we do.

I would be remiss not to celebrate the efforts of my agency Bospar to advocate against the Don't Say Gay bill in Florida and the extreme Texas anti-abortion law. I am in awe of how we stand up to these human injustices and don't cower and conform in fear of "bad PR."

How important is it for young LGBTQ PR pros to see people like them in the senior ranks of the industry as role models to emulate? Who were your mentors?

It's so important because it means 100% acceptance. And it means these roles are attainable.

You also feel more comfortable being your authentic self when you see someone you look up to thriving in their career and being true to who they are. Seeing yourself represented in your workforce fosters creativity and encourages you to be you — your best.

What advice would you give young LGBTQ PR pros making their way in the industry?

Find a work community that celebrates you. After these recent years of great turmoil, we're all looking for a place to belong and make a difference. If your workplace doesn't build you up and stand up for important issues, find a place that does.

Always embrace who you are and bring your background into everything you do. Those differences are what make for creativity. The industry will be a better place if you do.

Be the manager and mentor we all wish we had. People remember the bad ones, but they also cherish and learn from the good ones.

And last but not least, use your skills as a communicator to effectively convey the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community and your personal story to those in your life who may not understand. Words are powerful and changing one mind is the start to changing the world.

PR is regarded as an LGBTQ-friendly industry. How true is that perception?

Overall, PR professionals are LGBTQ+-friendly, though not all industries we service are to the same degree. What's important is there's more awareness now and companies are working toward being more inclusive.

But there is still a lot of work to be done. We need to see more people of color, women and LGBTQ+ individuals in leadership positions to truly feel accepted by the industries we work in.

Describe an example in your career where you faced discrimination based on your sexuality or gender identity?

I'm happy to say I have never experienced outright discrimination, but I have heard homophobic comments from people who assumed I am straight.

I am what some call "straight passing," which means people don't often identify me as part of the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, I try to make it clear early on in all working relationships so people understand who I am.

Whether it's true or not, I like to think it's an aspect of my identity people want to learn more about, as opposed to wanting to discriminate against that and me.