Professor Thanem Taking Part In Cape Group’s Global Research On Creating An Inclusive Workplace

By Katerina Hanna, Consulting Manager at Cape Group, [www.capegroupglobal.com](http://www.capegroupglobal.com)

The global human capital research and advisory firm Cape Group are currently gathering input from leading practitioners and academics on cutting edge thinking and best practice in creating a more inclusive working environment for all employees. By interviewing practitioners and academics from the UK, Europe, Singapore and Australia, this research shares knowledge and experience in order to support Diversity & Inclusion practitioners in achieving their business goals. The report aims to contribute to the continuous development of more diverse and more inclusive work organisations and to support minority groups in work organisations by raising awareness about the workplace challenges that minority groups are facing today.

Professor Torkild Thanem was invited to take part in this important global initiative and was interviewed earlier this month. Professor Thanem is a globally recognized expert in the areas of gender identity and workplace diversity. Professor Thanem provided Cape Group with valuable insights on how organizations in Scandinavia build and maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce. He pointed out that in order to succeed at this, organizations must demonstrate open commitment to diversity and inclusion. This includes mentoring schemes, but organizations also need to establish and support active role models in the workplace: ‘To go beyond celebratory speeches, you need role models, not just policy. Organizations need to show how they practice what they preach, and they need to make this visible to current employees as well as to external stakeholders,’ he said. ‘If organizations are to become more diverse and inclusive, they need to attract a more diverse workforce.’ This is a first step in promoting a culture that not only accepts employees with different backgrounds, bodies and identities, but also values such differences in the workplace’, said Professor Thanem.

Professor Thanem’s contribution to this research draws on his extensive knowledge of the specific experiences of people in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) community. During the interview, Professor Thanem noted that government policies on anti-discrimination are changing to include sexual orientation and gender identity: ‘Strengthening the legislative rights for everybody in the labour market, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, is crucial to build a more diverse and inclusive workplace. It may help more people come out at work and be out at work. Insofar as LGBTQI identities are still stigmatized in organizations, having the support of government legislation is important for people to fight such stigmatization and to take our whole selves to work.’

‘Transgendered employees are in a unique position’, Professor Thanem continued, ‘because in order to take our whole selves to work we need to visually and physically express our gender identity at work. As argued by participants in my own research, this may affect working relationships positively and negatively. Mind you, transgendered people who I have interviewed do largely not regret that they have come out at work. By being out, you can become a role model for others, not just for other LGBTQI people, but for straight colleagues as well. And in some organizations, straight employees and managers have argued that their transgendered colleague has helped them question their own prejudices, not just their prejudices on gender and sexuality but their prejudices on ethnicity, culture and other things too.’

The full report, containing contributions and viewpoints from Professor Thanem and other global industry leaders, academics and not-for-profit organizations will be published in January 2014. The report will be available on Cape Group’s website.

About Cape Group
Cape Group is a privately owned and operated Human Capital Advisory and Research organisation that provides tailored advice and innovative solutions in all aspects of people management. They practice throughout the Asia Pacific, Americas, Europe, and Africa regions.