Toyota Employees Share Why They’re Proud to Be Spectrum Members

June 21, 2022

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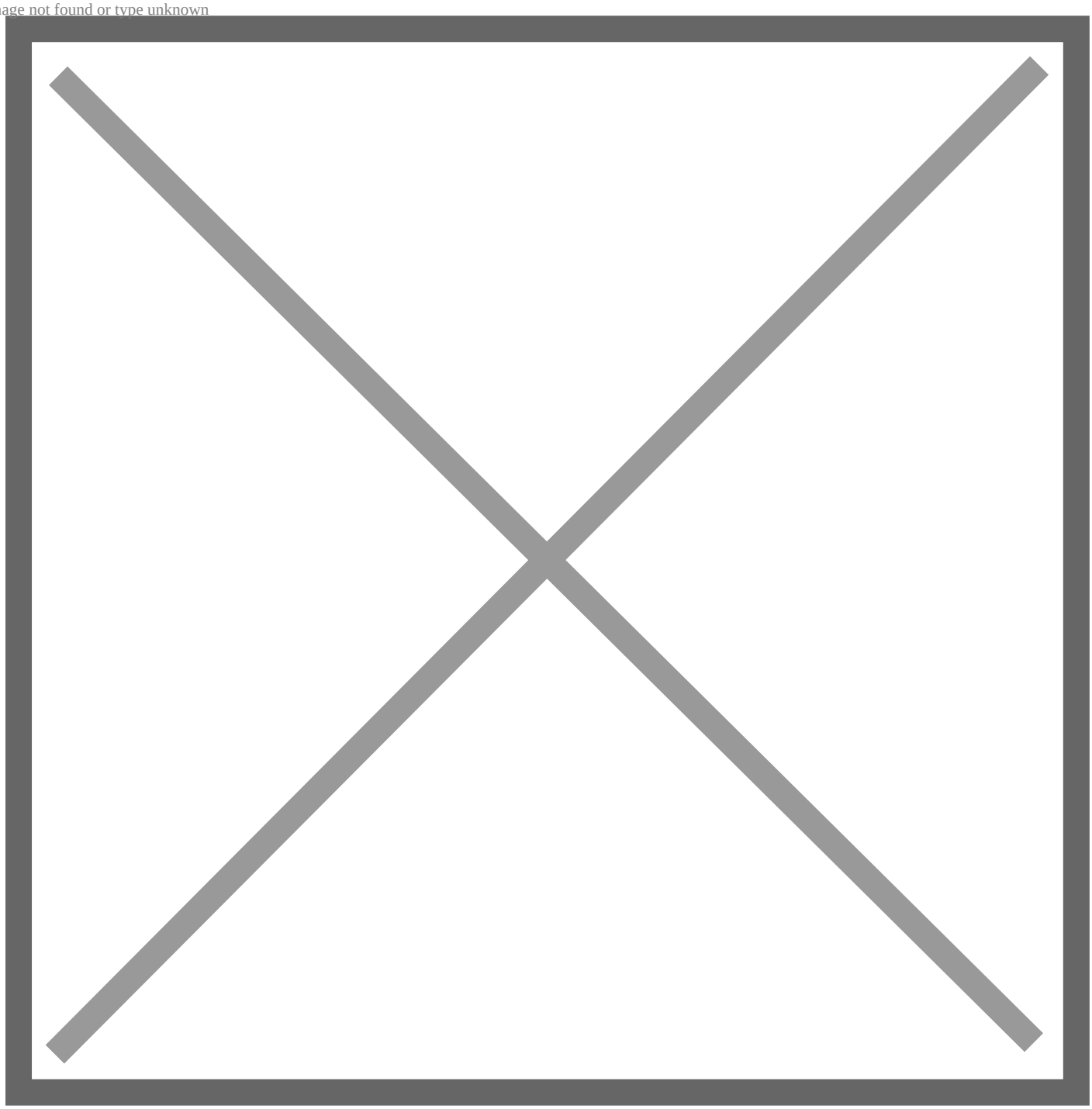
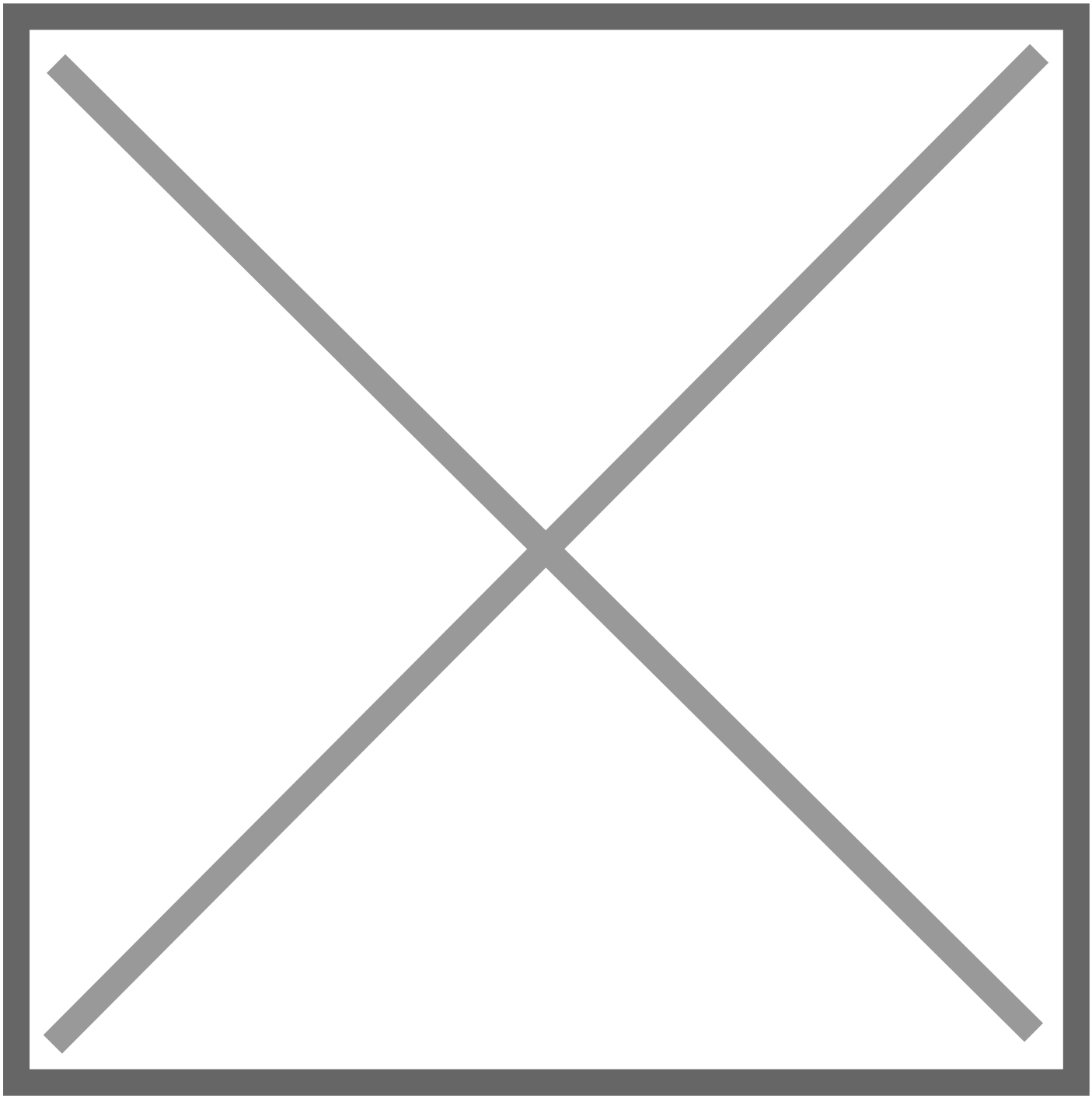


When Toyota employees join Spectrum, one of the company's business partnering groups (BPGs) dedicated to the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community, their reasons for doing so may vary.

But whether they're transitioning, seeking support from like-minded peers or simply committed to being an ally, they all have one thing in common: They're making an impact.

Since Spectrum's launch in 2003, the employee-driven network has remained dedicated to fostering a safe and welcoming environment where LGBTQ+ team members and allies can discuss relevant issues and unique challenges as well as get the support they need all year long.

Feeling Seen and Driving Change



Percy Sergeant

For Percy Sergeant, a contract specialist at Toyota Financial Services' Dealer Funding Team West (DFTW), working at Toyota for the past seven years has been a positive and empowering experience. He feels fortunate to work for a company that celebrates his identity and provides so much support.

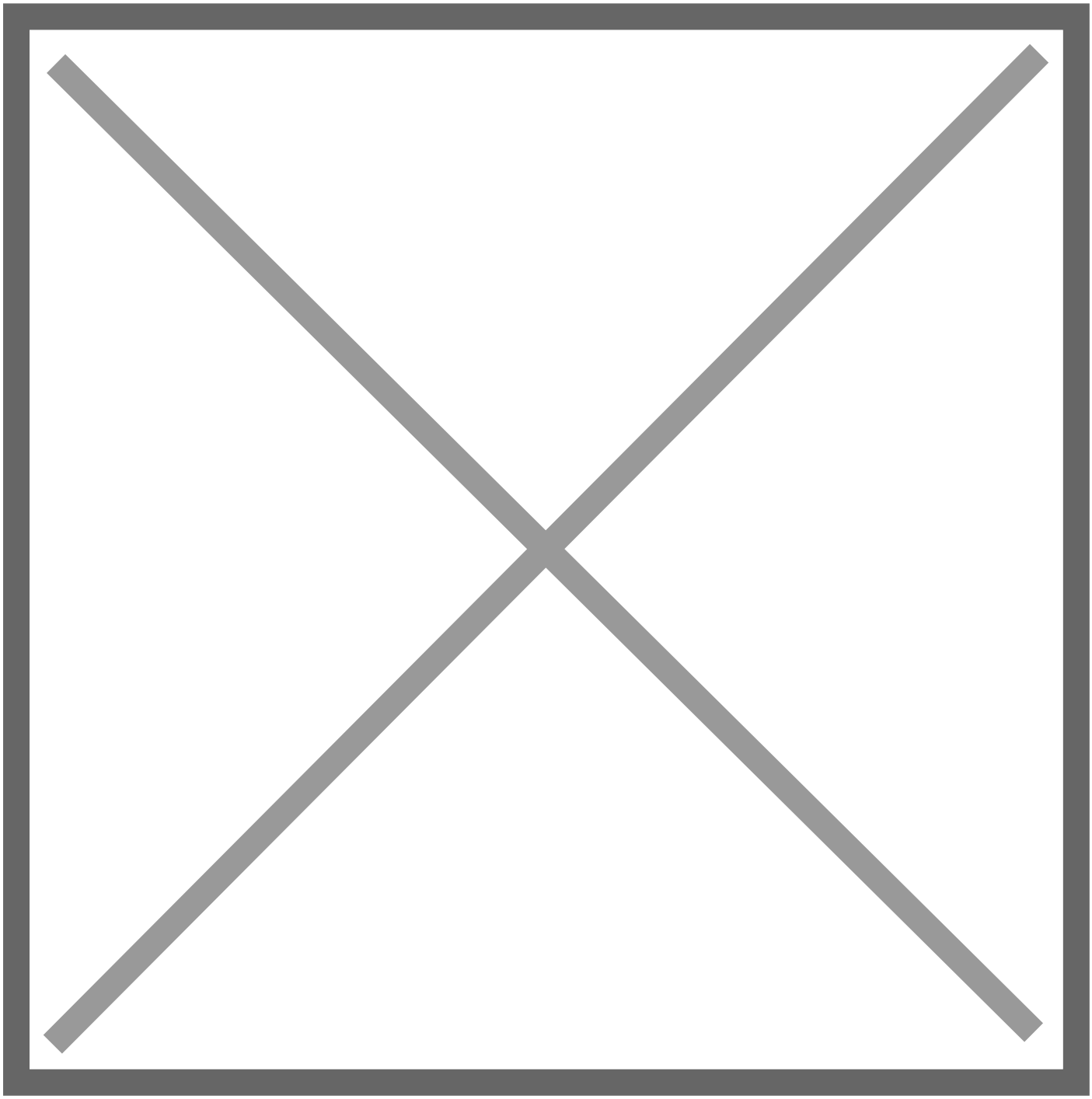
"When I made the decision to come out, I went to my supervisor first. And she was fully supportive, as I knew she would be," he says. "But she also helped me prepare an email to leadership, which I was very nervous about.

I like all of them, but you never know how people will react. Their immediate reaction was fully embracing everything I had said. They each wrote me back an email and were very intentionally including the name I was now using. They called me Percy immediately. It was extremely validating to have them say, ‘Thank you for sharing who you are with us.’”

That kind of support makes Sergeant, who is also the communications cochair and outreach coordinator for Spectrum West in Arizona, feel proud and appreciate working alongside people who champion and respect his individuality. One kind gesture in particular left a lasting impression.

He adds, “One very significant action my supervisor took to support me was to draft an email to our team ‘reintroducing’ me to them. In the email, she included links to educational sources regarding pronouns, being transgender and how to be a good ally. She also let them know that if they had any questions, they could ask her. This was exceptional on her part as an ally — she removed the emotional burden of explaining my existence to those curious about my transition by offering to educate them herself.”

Fostering Allyship and Building Connections



Susan Grayson

All Toyota employees can join Spectrum or any BPG. For Susan Grayson, a corporate finance manager at Toyota, being a part of these groups is a professional and personal priority.

“I’m an ally, and the first thing I did when I became a team member was join all the BPGs: Spectrum, Women Impacting and Influencing Toyota (WIIT), TERRA (Toyota’s Environmental Resources for Responsible Actions), the African American Collaborative (AAC) — you name it,” she says. “Spectrum has always been

near and dear to my heart. I began as a regular member, but over time I started getting more involved."

Her ongoing participation and allyship led to an opportunity for parents of LGBTQ+ children to connect.

"I presented at one of Spectrum's weekly Coffee Talk events and monthly Deep Dives," she says. "That's when you go deep into a topic and present it. I partnered with some other parents at Toyota to share our children's coming out stories and how well or not-so-well we handled them."

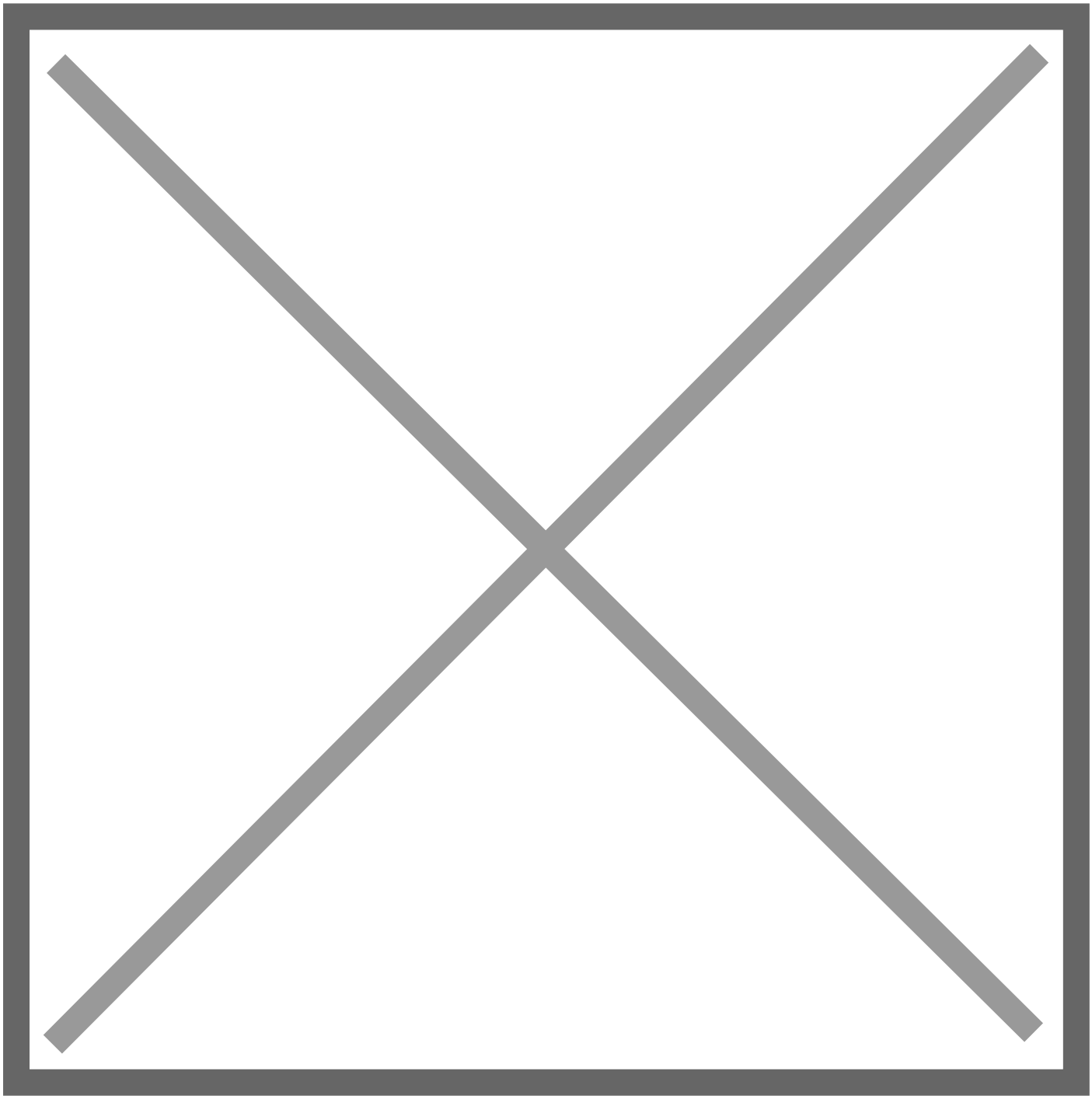
Those open, much-needed discussions turned into a subset community group that now meets regularly.

"I had told Spectrum that I wish the weekly coffee events were longer and more often because I loved attending them. I suggested we do something a little lighter, and that's how the Decaf Coffee talks and events were born. It's my little baby — we call it the 'lighter side of Spectrum,' where we get to dig deeper into topics like current events, superheroes, books and movies. Decaf Coffee is just a fun way for me to give back and connect with people."

Simply put, allyship is essential to progress. And in professional settings, it can be invaluable and should be encouraged at all levels.

"I've always had phenomenal management who have made it part of my yearly goals to be active in BPGs," Grayson says. "They've really allowed me to be involved and supported me in those activities. I think allyship is important, and I'm always blessed that my management agrees and sees the value in it, too."

Accelerating Career Opportunities



Alex Gamso, right, and his partner

Like Grayson, Alex Gamso, who’s worked with research and development (R&D) for four years and is currently in the Prototype Development group, believes that everyone benefits from joining BPGs.

“It’s important that younger team members understand that there are potential leadership positions in these groups where you can not only show off skills, but you can also gain skills,” he says. “You can truly hone in on what it means for you to be a leader. And when you join a BPG, you can volunteer and raise your hand — truly

making an impact within the workplace and in your community."

Since joining Spectrum as an openly gay man, he's seen firsthand how being affiliated with a BPG can help advance careers.

"One of the biggest benefits is that they give minority individuals the opportunity to take on leadership roles and truly network outside of their normal silos — to meet other leaders and share ideas and then be recognized for them at the corporate level," he says.

While Gamso believes that Toyota does an excellent job of making members of the LGBTQ+ community feel welcome and comfortable in the workplace, he thinks there's still more work to be done.

"It's really good to celebrate where we're at now and that it's an improvement from the previous years," he says of DiversityInc's ranking of Toyota as the No. 6 top company for LGBTQ+ employees. "Moving forward, there needs to be more understanding and training about transgender and non-binary individuals. The next generation coming to work here will be even more out and queer than we millennials are who've already been working at the company for several years."

Amplifying the voices of Toyota's LGBTQ+ employees and providing them and their allies with a safe space where their identities can be celebrated and embraced are Spectrum's ultimate goals. Pride Month highlights the strides made for the LGBTQ+ community and what needs to be done to continue advancing.

"It's a time to reflect on how far we've come from where we were in 1969 and before then, with all the riots," Gamso says, "and celebrate where we're at now and remind ourselves that there's still further to go."