



© 22 June 2022, 16:40 (BST)

Pride at Wise: An open letter

Hi, my name's Sharon and I'm the Senior Product Director here at Wise.

I'm much more used to talking about the products we build at Wise, but during Pride month, I know it's important for me to also talk a bit about myself (even if it's something I find quite hard to do!)

At Wise, I know I'm incredibly lucky. I can be myself, and my identity and sexuality isn't something I ever have to hide. It's just part of who I am, and there's not much more to it than that. Which is good because like a great many people I often struggle to find the right words to describe myself. That said, I do - like many of my fellow Wisers - identify as part of the queer community.

But it's not always the case that I could be so open, as I know many people can relate to. When I was growing up and in my first jobs, I always felt different and really struggled to fit in. I didn't meet many people who looked like me and in some cases saw the negative reactions to those who more openly expressed their LGBTQ+ identity. That worry of how someone will react when you mention your partner or some other detail about your personal life can become ingrained, and it's hard to shake off, even when the environment around you becomes more supportive.

While we're encouraged to be open, and tell our story, I know first hand it's not always that easy. But, I'm writing this today because I know how much impact visibility of LGBTQ+ leaders would have had for me when I was growing up and starting my career.

Having role models is so, so important, and while I don't feel like I deserve that title, I know how valuable I would have found it to see more people like me everywhere - but especially in the workplace.

Seeing people like me not having to hide parts of themselves in order to have an amazing career? Hearing people discussing their personal lives in the office without carefully controlling what details they leave out? I would have appreciated it in the past - and still today it helps me build up the confidence to write things like this and not gloss over important details of who I am.

So if me being myself and open about my story helps others do it too, then I will prioritise it.

At Wise, we're now more than 3,000+ people from 90+ nationalities. As a team, it's our responsibility to provide a safe and relaxed space where being who we are is just an everyday thing, and everybody has the confidence to be themselves.

There's a few different things we're doing to help our fellow Wisers. Today, that includes increasing visibility, organising great celebrations, and ensuring we have inclusive policies.

Having visible role models in day-to-day meetings and team gatherings is probably the most impactful thing. So speaking up, and speaking out like I am today, is one of the ways we can be more visible.

Visibility is valuable, but so are the events that our teams run across our offices. They are an opportunity for Wisers all over the world to meet and learn more about each other. This year, we were able to host our first *global* Queerwise meet-up in Tallinn, Estonia. Wisers could meet, discuss their experiences, and align on their personal and professional goals. These activities promote awareness and equality at Wise, while also increasing people's understanding of the issues faced by those in the LGBTQ+ community.

Celebrating is important, but we need to make sure we have policies, and practical things in place to support our people too. This year, we completely overhauled our global parental leave policies. We now offer 18 fully paid weeks of paternity leave, and 26 weeks of maternity leave for birth or adoption, to all Wisers in the UK. As well as 18 weeks minimum paternity and maternity in all other markets.

But we still have so much further to go - not everyone will feel comfortable being themselves and there is more we can do to ensure that our LGBTQ+ Wisers have an equitable experience. We need to drive real change, and make things better for our Wisers, who can in turn make things better for our customers. We want to leave no-one behind on our mission of money without borders.

We know diverse teams are the strongest teams, which means hiring and supporting people from a range of backgrounds isn't just a nice-to-have, it's essential to achieving that mission. I wouldn't be part of the mission at Wise if I didn't feel like I could be myself at work everyday. And I think the same is true for many others.

That's why we need people in all our teams who can help us move forward with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Wise. So if you think you can help us, please do take a look at our open roles.

During this year's Pride, we'll be celebrating all the people that have gone before us, because long before it was a party Pride was a very real protest at the discrimination that LGBTQ+ community faced. We'll be championing our LGBTQ+ Wisers, and spending time learning about each other and our experiences. But we'll also be thinking about how we keep moving forwards, building diversity into our teams, and ensuring that Wise is a company where people can show up as their authentic self as they help us achieve our mission.

Onwards,
Sharon

ABOUT WISE

Wise is a global technology company, building the best way to move money around the world. With the Wise account people and businesses can hold over 50 currencies, move money between countries and spend money abroad. Large companies and banks use Wise technology too; an entirely new cross-border payments network that will one day power money without borders for everyone, everywhere. However you use the platform, Wise is on a mission to make your life easier and save you money.

Co-founded by Kristo Käärmann and Taavet Hinrikus, Wise launched in 2011 under its original name TransferWise. It is one of the world's fastest growing, profitable technology companies and is listed on the London Stock Exchange under the ticker, WISE.

13 million people and businesses use Wise, which processes over £6 billion in cross-border transactions every month, saving customers over £1 billion a year.



Wise