



The Glass Closet: Why Coming Out Is Good Business

John Browne

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Part memoir and part social criticism, *The Glass Closet* addresses the issue of homophobia that still pervades corporations around the world and underscores the immense challenges faced by LGBT employees.

In *The Glass Closet*, Lord John Browne, former CEO of BP, seeks to unsettle business leaders by exposing the culture of homophobia that remains rampant in corporations around the world, and which prevents employees from showing their authentic selves.

Drawing on his own experiences, and those of prominent members of the LGBT community around the world, as well as insights from well-known business leaders and celebrities, Lord Browne illustrates why, despite the risks involved, self-disclosure is best for employees—and for the businesses that support them. Above all, *The Glass Closet* offers inspiration and support for those who too often worry that coming out will hinder their chances of professional success.

The Glass Closet: Why Coming Out Is Good Business Details

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From Reader Review The Glass Closet: Why Coming Out Is Good Business for online ebook

Caroline says

Not massively interesting. No juicy corporate gossip. Story of a man taking his mum to business functions.

He has a theory about gays in the work place that is difficult to believe. It is not clear what a man who spent his life in the closet has to add to that discussion.

Geoff Lehr says

When you've built your whole life around the notion of being a capitalist, you look to the corporation as a fix for all problems.

That said, in its context as a business book encouraging employees to come out and corporations to be more inclusive and seek diversity, I think it does its job fine.

!Tæmbu?u says

KOBOBOOKS

Reviewed by The Independent (1 Jun 2014)

Taron says

Although a little dry - it is written like one would expect a book from a CEO to be written - I really liked reading this. I think everyone should read about discrimination of minority groups to understand when they can be expressing unconscious bias and how to be supportive. And I am always glad to see people sharing what they have learned through their own difficult experiences with others. A really important book. (I am hopefully not being mean about his writing style, it's just he is not primarily a writer!)

Bellish says

From his perspective of having had a high-flying career while in the closet, Browne surveys the state of play for LGBT+ people in business in 2013, with details of what businesses can and are doing to help LGBT+ people, and what they are not. There are persuasive sections on the benefits of being out at work, and I imagine it might give strength to some who are closeted but working towards coming out. Overall though, there is nothing particularly groundbreaking in here, and I am not really the right audience for it. I'm giving it 2 stars with the usual caveat that 2 stars is not a *bad* review!

Grace Chen says

I understand that homophobia is an issue and that people are really suffering from this prejudice. However, I am a Christian and I really can't convince myself to support homosexuality. Although I don't agree with legalizing same-sex marriage and all that, I also believe that I have no right to judge anyone who belongs to the LGBT community. I think discrimination is bad, but special treatment isn't the way either. They should just be treated like normal people, not like people who needs help, because facing your real identity and the true aspects of one's nature is hard for everyone, not just the LGBT people. I understand this book is about trying to let everyone know being LGBT in the workplace shouldn't be such a limitation, therefore it may not be as neutral as I wished, so I still think it's a pretty decent book since it uncovers some startling truths. Yet I would not recommend it to anyone who is against LGBT but not LGBT people to read this book, because then you would be left feeling like you have done something wrong by not supporting the LGBT cause, when in fact there is no right and wrong with holding your own point of view, as long as one doesn't commit sin when trying to lobby your ideas.

Frank Norman says

An insight into John Browne's experience, and a great reflection on the need for equality, diversity and inclusion in today's world of work.

Bookmuseuk says

John Browne (Lord Browne) was CEO of BP, until he was outed by Britain's tabloid press in 2007. At the time he wrote this book, there were no openly gay CEOs in the S&P list of the top 500 companies. Since then, there is now one: Tim Cook of Apple. Despite the passage of nine years since Browne's outing, little has changed in the boardrooms of big business.

This book is a fascinating read. Browne explains why he thinks there is a continuing reluctance for senior executives to be open about their sexuality. As he once said in a radio interview, "It is a clubby experience. I mean, I think many people have an unconscious bias, they do tend to select people like themselves, and so therefore they [exclude] people who are a bit different."

Starting with his own experience, he vividly paints a picture of loneliness and isolation. There are powerful emotions at work here. He goes a long way to explaining why he remained closeted throughout his corporate career. At one point he reveals that his mother was a Holocaust survivor. She would tell him, "Don't be different, because difference is always picked up when something goes wrong."

His interviews with people in senior positions describe casual homophobia from senior managers and peers, both male and female. All those that he interviewed remained closeted. Their fear is revealing and sad.

Browne's argument ultimately is a simple one. People who are unable to be themselves in the workplace, who have to lie, or at least conceal the truth, are less effective. The emotional energy they consume as they pretend to be someone else, day-to-day, is bad for business. He makes a well-argued case. But he fails to come up with sufficient ideas for how homophobic corporate cultures can be changed.

Writing this book seems to have been important therapy for Lord John Browne. In some ways, he is refreshingly honest. After all, this was a man who repeatedly ducked the opportunity to be a role model for LGBTQ executives. A man who continued to lie to the court when questioned about his sexuality. So when I came to the final chapter, it became clear to me that what he had left unsaid in the book revealed much more about Lord Browne.

Sarah Benamer says

An important read that contemplates the vital nature of being our whole selves in every area of our lives, the often painful reality of coming out and the potential rewards of taking the risk. John Browne conveys the importance of collective responsibility for diversity and the power of us all to make necessary social change.

Eddie says

A quick, easy read in a field where there aren't (to my admittedly slim knowledge in the area) currently many books. I thought there were many nice anecdotes throughout the book, but in general, I didn't feel like any breakthroughs were made, nor do I think it will have a significant influence on companies' diversity policies or employees' decisions to be open in the workplace. The author even admits that companies don't change because they're inherently good-- it's all about their interests. Furthermore, at times I felt like Browne wasn't an appropriate authority to speak on such matters, as he often encourages people to do something that he wasn't capable of doing (and who knows if he ever would have done it, had he not been outed by the media). Still, an easy book that I didn't mind spending a day or two reading.

Paige says

Though I hope that today this is less necessary in today's modern workplace, that's probably rose-colored-glasses thinking. While I personally don't care one way or the other what my employees' sexuality is, it's good to get this perspective from someone who's lived it so that we can sympathize with those who feel threatened by sharing their sexual orientation.

Neil H says

It's a short book which can be read quickly. John Browne's coming out saga and his eventual support for coming out in the workplace has seen its fair share of discrimination and surprising support from colleagues who have decided to come out of the closets (provided they take the first step). He revises example from the earliest time in the 70's where people in public offices share gay lives unashamedly to the current crop of public figures from politicians to football stars living their much publicised lives out in the open. We may have read or seen examples of these individuals, but Browne has placed them all here. From the most conservative sphere to the entertainment arena, we see examples of how coming out is lesser an evil than we all thought. Browne may not be the best writer but he makes a compelling and passionate case arguing the possible drawbacks and the numerous benefits to emerge from coming out of the closet. His business accomplishments provide the legitimacy and the public profile in the public library for change. To me any desire to come clean and be honest in this short life is all about breathing easier and letting your soul

experience freedom. As Browne said, do not let the minority who are prejudiced destroy your chance in life and love.

Madd Wood says

This was an interesting and uplifting read about LGBT people in white collar jobs, and many of the stats and interviews were enlightening. However, this is out of touch with the younger generation(s) of LGBT people, and much of the advice this book offers seems irrelevant in today's world. Browne also says that the "A" in LGBT[QI]A is for "straight allies," which nearly made me barf. It's for asexual, not allies. While Browne makes a point to separate men's and women's issues and correctly states that women (straight or gay) have it much harder in the business world than men do, he wasn't very intersectional about race or ethnicity. I would've liked a more in-depth analysis on the convergence of different minority groups, but I did enjoy the narrative nature of this book and Browne's openness about his own coming out journey.

Blake says

There's a lot of honesty in this book, which is what I really liked. There's equal amounts of despair/realism as there is hope/optimism. It never fully tips into militaristic activism, and it plugs the business case for LGBT inclusion to the hilt, which is the most healthy and effective thing it could do, I think. Sure, at times it reads more like PR for the LGBT initiatives of various companies than like an unbiased commentary, but I think if companies are really throwing their weight behind the cause then they deserve all the public spotlight we can give them.

It's not the most eloquently written book, I think. A lot of running from quote to quote and interview to interview without a great deal of overarching story or point to it all. But if you think about it as lots of little photos that blend together like a mosaic to create an impressive larger picture, it's definitely not on the bad side.

At the moment it might seem like the world and certainly certain parts of society are overly obsessed with LGBT things, but reading this made me realise that the goal is for it all to just be a matter of course, a natural and fully reasonable part of society and people's lives, nothing special or out of the ordinary at all. For the whole thing to just become a non-issue would be a burden off so many people's shoulders. I wonder how long it will take for us to get to that stage.

Samuel Daniel says

John Browne does a good job in trying to chart the history of the gay movement in the modern world and argues for the need for more gay people to come out in the closet especially in business. He also is honest enough to admit that he did not do so. He clearly chose to live a closeted life because he feared the social environment of his times did not support someone living an openly gay life and could harm his career prospects and acknowledges it in the book. However he **never really answers why he did so** and further acknowledges this fact in the last few pages.

In our present day Olympic of Oppression, it is hard to know if the claims of the claimant are *just or as some allege, eating into some other deserving oppressed group's share* of the social justice and rewards pie. Gay white men predominantly in the past decade have started raising all sort of claim of oppression including in

employment, social honours and marriage that raises a lot of questions given that just half a century ago they were quite privileged and powerful both by racial and colonial gendering ideology.

The tragedy of this book is it *misses the opportunity to shed some light on these questions by answering why the author specifically choose not to come out in spite of a changing milieu*. Did he do so because of his commitment to some other agenda rather than the gay agenda and if so what would that be? The book can at times get repetitive yet still a good read because it does give you a glimpse into gay history and also how gay men in spite of their power were forced to hide who they were and some still do.
