

# Goldman sued by gay former exec who alleges firing was discriminatory

 [cnbc.com/2019/06/05/goldman-sued-by-gay-former-exec-who-alleges-firing-was-discriminatory.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/06/05/goldman-sued-by-gay-former-exec-who-alleges-firing-was-discriminatory.html)

- Goldman Sachs has been sued by a gay former executive, William Littleton, who alleges that his firing by the Wall Street bank came after he complained about discriminatory conduct by managers.
- Littleton's suit, filed in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, includes allegations that a Goldman superior excluded him from a client call because "he sounded too gay."
- Littleton was a leader of Goldman's internal LGBTQ network.

Goldman Sachs has been sued by a former vice president who alleges his firing by the Wall Street bank is a case of sexual orientation discrimination.

William Littleton, who was a leader of Goldman's internal LGBTQ network and openly gay, says complaints he made about a discriminatory atmosphere on the job led to his retaliatory dismissal by the bank.

Littleton's suit, filed in the New York State Supreme Court on Wednesday by the law firm Wigdor, alleges that after he raised a formal complaint of sexual orientation discrimination and detailed several examples of mistreatment, he was abruptly fired in "a blatant act of retaliation."

The claims made in the lawsuit include a supervisor who allegedly excluded Littleton from an important conference call because he "sounded too gay." Littleton was also allegedly asked "What's wrong with you? Do you act this way because you're gay?"

A 2018 Human Rights Campaign study found that 53 percent of LGBTQ workers report hearing jokes about lesbian or gay people at least once in a while at work.

Goldman managing director and head of U.S. product strategy group Rachel Schnoll and Sirion Skulpone, head of the specialty solutions team, were name named as defendants in the suit.

Littleton complained directly to the Employee Relations team in at Goldman in 2018 saying he had been subjected to numerous incidents of homophobia and discrimination. The lawsuit alleges that after Littleton complained, Schnoll and Skulpone included "significant unwarranted criticism in his performance review." The lawsuit alleges these criticisms were used to create a paper trail for using performance as a reason for termination.

Goldman Sachs did not immediately respond.

In recent years, Goldman has made many moves to support the LGBTQ community and promote its inclusivity, but the lawsuit calls the efforts “lip service to LGBTQ diversity.”

In its 2018 partners’ report, Goldman noted that 5% of partners identified as LGBTQ. The bank covers sexual reassignment surgery for employees, and since at least 2017, it has asked job candidates to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender when they apply for the job, using a method similar to the data requested by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for other demographic factors. The information is removed from the hiring process but can be used by the bank as a subsequent check on its workforce diversity. Goldman also has promoted recent events focused on its LGBTQ network.

Goldman received a perfect score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign’s 2018 Corporate Equality Index.

Littleton was an employee for eight years and according to the suit had years of “outstanding” performance reviews. He was on the specialty solutions team within the product strategy group at Goldman, where he focused on investment products for clients and institutions, including use of the firm’s recently introduced successful exchange-traded funds.

He also had several leadership positions in Goldman’s LGBTQ network. In 2014, Littleton became the head of the network’s analyst and associate engagement pillar, a position he maintained through 2016. He then became the co-head of the network’s “ally pillar,” which helps drive inclusion, education and engagement of non-LGBTQ members of the firm, a position he held until he was fired.

Littleton started at Goldman after graduating from Amherst College in 2010 and worked his way up from an analyst position to vice president by 2016, at the age of 27.

“Wall Street continues to struggle to create an environment that is inclusive and accepting of LGBTQ+ employees,” said David E. Gottlieb, partner at Wigdor, in a statement. “Mr. Littleton’s experiences demonstrate that Goldman Sachs in particular has failed to embrace this important responsibility. We intend to send a message to all businesses in New York, and Goldman in particular, that this type of treatment towards LGBTQ+ employees will not be tolerated.”

The lawsuit notes a 2017 Institutional Investor feature that found widespread issues on Wall Street related to treatment of LGBTQ workers.

Littleton’s lawyers plan to file with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to pursue a case in federal court under the Civil Rights Act.