

Pride Q&A series: ALLY

5 min read | 15 June 2026

 Isabella Ankerson



Jorge Bárcenas Chocano, Ignacio Meggiolaro and Jaime Chávez Alor

With Pride Month celebrations well underway, Latin Lawyer spoke with the co-founders of LGBTQIAPN+ legal network ALLY about the reasons behind the initiative, the barriers it hopes to break down and how law firms across Latin America can implement effective D&I policies that go “beyond the discourse.”

Formally launched earlier this month, ALLY was created in response to a growing recognition that informal networking alone was insufficient to tackle the persistent challenges facing LGBTQIAPN+ professionals across the region’s legal industry.

The co-founders of the alliance – Benites, Vargas & Ugaz Abogados business development director Jorge Bárcenas Chocano, Martínez de Hoz & Rueda partner Ignacio Meggiolaro and Jaime Chávez Alor, co-executive director at the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice – describe the network as a collaborative platform for both LGBTQIAPN+ lawyers and allies, aimed at increasing leadership visibility, fostering mentorship, generating data and sharing best practices. According to the founders, many of the obstacles affecting LGBTQIAPN+ professionals are both cultural

and structural, ranging from pressures to conceal aspects of their identity to a lack of visible role models and sponsorship opportunities at senior levels.

The trio also emphasise the importance of translating diversity commitments into measurable action, arguing that meaningful inclusion requires leadership accountability, data collection, mentoring initiatives and clear pathways to advancement, rather than relying solely on formal policies or public statements.

Looking ahead, the founders say ALLY's long-term ambition is to help make LGBTQIAPN+ inclusion an integral part of professional culture across the legal sector, enabling lawyers to pursue leadership opportunities without feeling forced to choose between authenticity and career progression.

ALLY was born out of informal gatherings within the IBA. What was the moment or conversation that made you realise this needed to become a formal organisation?

ALLY emerged from a series of conversations among LGBTQIAPN+ lawyers and allies who met through the International Bar Association (IBA) and other professional forums. While those gatherings were valuable, we realised that many of the challenges being discussed were recurring across jurisdictions, firms and generations of professionals.

The turning point came when we recognised that networking alone wasn't enough. There was a clear need for a platform capable of generating data, promoting leadership visibility, sharing best practices and creating concrete opportunities for collaboration – it couldn't all be confined to a single event. Formalising ALLY meant transforming informal support into a sustainable structure to achieve long-term impact and bring together more stakeholders in the legal ecosystem.

Who is the ALLY network for?

ALLY is designed specifically for LGBTQIAPN+ professionals and their allies. Inclusion isn't achieved by asking underrepresented groups to solve problems on their own. Real change happens when leaders, colleagues and institutions actively participate in creating more inclusive environments. Existing gaps and the problems they create are everyone's responsibility; we're all in this together.

We see LGBTQIAPN+ professionals and allies as partners in the same effort. The network provides a space for sharing experiences, mentoring, learning and developing initiatives together. Allies bring influence, sponsorship and institutional support, while

LGBTQIAPN+ professionals bring lived experiences and perspectives that enrich the conversation. Both voices are essential.

Are the existing barriers around retention, promotion and access to leadership roles for LGBTQIAPN+ professionals in law firms primarily a cultural problem, a structural one, or both – and how do you overcome these barriers?

It is both.

Culturally, many professionals still feel pressure to self-censor aspects of their identity, particularly in client-facing environments. Structurally, there are often fewer visible LGBTQIAPN+ role models in leadership positions, which can affect mentorship, sponsorship and career progression.

Addressing these barriers requires more than policies. It requires leadership commitment, visible role models, mentoring opportunities, accountability and a willingness to measure progress. Inclusion becomes sustainable when it is embedded in talent development and leadership strategies rather than treated as a standalone diversity initiative.

Many firms already have diversity and inclusion policies on paper. What does "going beyond the discourse" look like in practice?

Going beyond the discourse means moving from statements of intent to measurable action. It means collecting data, creating mentoring programmes, ensuring diverse representation in leadership, providing training that goes beyond compliance, supporting employee networks and evaluating whether professionals from different backgrounds are advancing and thriving within the organisation.

Inclusion must be reflected in decisions, opportunities and results. Employees can easily distinguish between a company that celebrates diversity symbolically and one that integrates it into its culture and operations. The truth is that, in Latin America, there is a clear demand to delve deeper into this issue, establish clear policies and prioritise this discussion. A few days ago, we published the survey we conducted in the

first quarter of this year, in which 13 countries in the region participated. The message is very clear: the legal sector wants diversity but is not yet putting it into practice.

How does ALLY plan to address that commercial dimension of the inclusion problem – not just the internal culture of firms, but the external pressures they face?

This is one of the most complex and often least discussed aspects of inclusion in the legal profession.

Many LGBTQIAPN+ professionals navigate concerns about how clients, markets or business opportunities may react to their identity. ALLY seeks to create a space where these realities can be discussed openly and without judgment.

Our goal is not to impose a single model of visibility. Rather, we want to equip professionals and firms with tools, best practices and support networks that allow individuals to make authentic choices while helping organisations understand that diversity and business success are not competing objectives. In fact, increasingly, clients expect the legal profession to reflect the diversity of the societies and businesses it serves.

How do you encourage senior professionals to step forward as visible role models without placing an unfair burden on them personally?

Visibility is important, but it must always remain a personal choice. We do not believe anyone should feel obligated to become a public representative of a community. At the same time, when senior professionals choose to share their experiences, their impact can be transformative for younger generations who may not otherwise see a path to leadership.

ALLY seeks to create supportive environments where visibility is recognised, respected and shared. Leadership can take many forms. Some individuals may choose public advocacy, while others may mentor, sponsor talent or support institutional initiatives behind the scenes. All contributions matter.

You've described ALLY's goal as making LGBTQIAPN+ inclusion a sustained policy rather than an isolated initiative. What does success look like in five years?

Success would mean that inclusion is no longer viewed as a special project but as a natural component of professional excellence and organisational culture. In five years, we hope to see more LGBTQIAPN+ lawyers in leadership positions, stronger networks

of allies, better data on inclusion within the legal profession and more firms implementing meaningful, measurable initiatives.

Ultimately, success will be reflected when talented professionals feel they can develop their careers without having to choose between authenticity and professional advancement. If ALLY helps make that reality more common across the legal industry, we will have achieved our purpose.

Hear from Xavier Careaga of Galicia Abogados in the first [article](#) in this year's Pride Month series, and read Machado Meyer Advogados partner André Menon's Q&A [here](#).



Isabella Ankerson

Senior Reporter

Latin Lawyer

Isabella.Ankerson@LBResearch.com

Copyright © 2026 LBR trading as Centellic Company Number: 03281866 VAT: GB 160 7529 10