



**ISA**

34 years old

IT Consulting

[www.itconsulting.net.br](http://www.itconsulting.net.br)

**ISA IS A PROFESSIONAL IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) field.** At the beginning of her career, Isa worked in software factories, where she felt the pressures of machismo and the exploitation of labour on a day-to-day basis. Motivated by the desire to break free from this exhausting and oppressive environment that affected her quality of life and limited her professionally, Isa decided to open her own IT consulting firm, *IT Consulting*.

## BENDING OVER BACKWARDS

The beginning of *IT Consulting* was not easy. Even with her vast professional experience and motivation, Isa had to work hard to establish the company, expand its clientele, and gain financial stability. At the end of 2015, she was in the middle of this process when she learned about Micro Rainbow Brazil and joined the first LGBT entrepreneurship course. The training directly contributed to the development of *IT Consulting* in several ways, such as the design of the business plan and strategies for increasing revenue. After learning how to formally establish a business, Isa began issuing invoices and gaining access to the corporate market, significantly boosting her business:

***“I had no fixed income, I had to bend over backwards all the time, and nowadays I have an income that keeps me going. So, yes, my income has increased quite a lot since then, when I was self-employed, lacked management knowledge and did not have the proper legal status. Now that I have the MEI (Individual Micro Entrepreneur) permit, the proper knowledge, legal status and understand invoices, I am able to sign monthly contracts for computer maintenance, websites and web hosting with small and medium sized businesses. I practically doubled my revenue last year”.***

This increase in income allowed Isa to leave her family’s home to live with her wife, enabling her to make a more balanced contribution to the household budget and giving her a more comfortable standard of living. Achieving professional recognition also brought more trust and intimacy to Isa’s relationship with her mother and sisters, who previously saw her sexual orientation with detachment and distrust. Her financial independence was reassuring for them and opened the door to discuss other concerns, such as their curiosity about her love life. This helped dispel their initial discomfort and create possibilities for reconfiguring family ties on new foundations.

## IT CONSULTANT, WOMAN AND LESBIAN

Isa acknowledges that although she has been self-employed since 2013, the course has helped her fully understand the meaning of being an entrepreneur. For her, entrepreneurship is not limited to owning a small business or not, but:

***“It’s how you do your job regardless of whether you own [the business]. It is believing in the idea without alienating yourself. It is connecting with people and finding out the best way to offer your product or service, and this can be done even when you are an employee, not just the owner. I think this vision changes everything”.***



Isa's learning has not gone unnoticed. Due to her outstanding performance on the course, Isa was elected as teaching assistant for the second class. She maintained this position over the next three courses, answering students' questions and helping them review course content. Isa describes how being a teaching assistant influenced her personal and professional life, both through revisiting course content and having enriching contact with others' lives, which sharpened her sensitivity to LGBT, racial and gender vulnerabilities. She describes the value of this experience, which goes beyond the professional dimension:

***“As a student, I acquired a lot of knowledge and made great friends, but when I began to see from the other side, that of teaching, I began to observe how other students absorbed knowledge and how this changed their lives. This had a much greater impact on me. I am very grateful for the opportunity of being a teaching assistant, it was a very enriching environment for me”.***

Despite the learning and gains described, the challenges for an entrepreneur are still numerous. Isa believes that she has never lost job opportunities because she is a lesbian. However, she admits that she has a flexible and strategic approach regarding revealing her sexual orientation to clients and she maintains discretion in some cases. She also recognises her

position of relative privilege in accessing the labour market, as a white person with “hetero passability”<sup>5</sup>.

If being a lesbian no longer represents an obstacle to employability, being a woman in the IT field still does - and very much so. It is undeniable that many stereotypes disqualify women in the fields of science and technology and the gender issue seems to prevail over others: “You can't hesitate at all, you can't say that you need to learn more about a subject that you don't know in-depth... No one is a specialist in all fields, but a woman in IT has to prove all the time that she knows everything”.

In this sense, Isa stresses the importance of participating in feminist markets and networks such as “Indique uma Mina” (Hire a Chick) as a strategy for socioeconomic empowerment and confronting misogyny in the labour market: “the question of networking is also important because you know who to count on, and you can support people who are victims of discrimination and prevent violence from escalating”. Isa is also a founder of *Pink at Work*, an online platform for services offered by LGBT entrepreneurs (learn more on page 28).

<sup>5</sup> Cis or hetero “passability” occurs when transgender people (those who transition to the gender with which they identify) are seen by society as if they were cisgender (those who identify with the gender attributed to their sex of birth). It can also be applied to lesbians and gay men who are perceived as heterosexual. Cis or hetero “passability” is not intentional or based on modified behaviour, it is a social interpretation about individuals based on physical characteristics and forms of expression culturally attributed to the feminine and masculine genders.



## “DOGS SMELL FEAR”

In Isa's view, prejudice and discrimination against the LGBT community have not become milder or less frequent since she became an entrepreneur, but what has changed is her ability to confront these forces: *“We know that people discriminate, and if the person's self-esteem is not in tip-top shape, then she can become depressed. Now my self-esteem is at a point that I consider wonderful, so I see that there is discrimination, that it exists, but I do not let it affect me”*, she says, with pragmatism.

She also reflects on the impact of this personal and professional shift and increased income on her vulnerability to homophobic violence, which is so frequent in public spaces. Isa confirms

feeling more protected from this type of aggression nowadays. This shows the effectiveness of socioeconomic inclusion on individual empowerment and the reduction of negative social attitudes based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, which is one of the premises of Micro Rainbow International:

***“It's all about how you see and place yourself in the world. The more dispirited you feel, the more people will put you down. Dogs smell fear. From the moment you become empowered, when you see that you are capable, that you are generating income, generating value for society, you feel less vulnerable”.*** ■



Isa and Isaque with former student Hélio (*in memoriam*), in the middle. He was the owner of a famous LGBT bar in the north zone of Rio, “Bar do Hélio”.