

Apple CEO Tim Cook Comes out, Says He Is 'Proud to Be Gay'

The CEO of Apple announced he is gay in an essay that puts him among the highest-profile publicly out business leaders in the world.

"I'm proud to be gay, and I consider being gay among the greatest gifts God has given me," Tim Cook, who took the reins of the world's most valuable company from the late co-founder Steve Jobs, wrote Thursday in *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

The highly private Cook has never publicly acknowledged his sexuality, though it was widely rumored outside the company, and he wrote that colleagues at Apple already knew.

Cook likes to tell people that his predecessor, Steve Jobs, urged him to be himself when he took over the iconic U.S. tech company upon Jobs' death three years ago. Now that has happened in a big way.

"I don't consider myself an activist, but I realize how much I've benefited from the sacrifice of others," Cook wrote. "So if hearing that the CEO of Apple is gay can help someone struggling to come to terms with who he or she is, or bring comfort to anyone who feels alone, or inspire people to insist on their equality, then it's worth the trade-off with my own privacy."

Cook's decision is unlikely to have any major impact on Apple's global business, said business analysts and professors. But they added that because it was a bold move, it was full of unknowns. No business executive of Cook's stature has ever done something like this before. And while laws legalizing same-sex marriage are sweeping places like the United States, Latin America and Europe, gay-rights advocates are still struggling to secure basic protections in Asia,

where Apple generated 27 percent of its revenue in the fourth quarter.

Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore have laws that punish homosexuality. In China, the site of many of the factories that produce Apple devices, there are no legal protections for gays and lesbians, and the government occasionally cracks down on rights advocates.