

Gender Transitions in the Workplace

Best Practices, Tips, and Q&A

Cris Land and Kerry Johnson

Presenters

- Cris Land has over 20 years of experience speaking about GLBT issues. He has worked as a Senior Manager and Senior Research Associate at OHSU, and recently served as Board Chair for Basic Rights Oregon. He currently works in management consulting and coaching.
- Kerry Johnson is a Sr. Civil Rights Investigator in the Civil Rights Division of the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries. In 2004, Kerry transitioned from female to male while employed with BOLI.

Course Objectives

- Understand why Trans issues matter: Trans people will continue to increase as an employment base, and also as a recruitment base. The courts and legislatures, both statewide and nationally, are recognizing the reasons why trans people are vulnerable to discrimination and why they can, or should, seek some relief. All of these actions create issues for employers and HR managers.
- Understand and be able to articulate recognized and common terminology regarding gender issues. We'll explore terms like "trans", "transsexual", "transgendered", and "sexual orientation," and how these terms relate to you as employers and to your potential and existing employees.
- Understand the importance of monitoring laws and company policies that may apply to trans people. Laws and policies regarding trans issues vary from state to state/city to city, and company to company. If your current policy is out of date, you'll learn how to best to revise it. Mission statements and EEO/ AA statements also need to be up to date. We'll cover best practices and provide resources to help.

Course Objectives

- Understand the need to establish policies related to trans inclusive solutions in the workplace, including messaging, protocol, and outcomes as a means to recruit and retain valued employees.
- Raise questions, discuss experiences, and share advice with peers as an integral part of the session.

Course Agenda

- Introductions
- Terminology & Transition Basics
- Kerry's Transition in the Workplace
- Cris' Transition in the Workplace
- Current Laws in Oregon and Best Practices for HR
- Do's and Don'ts for Allies of Trans Folks
- Q&A/ Discussion

Trans Terminology

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- **Sex:** Refers to a designation of the biological differences between females and males. While this is the term for what makes males and females different, not everyone fits into binary male or female categories.
- **Gender Identity:** A person's self conception of their gender, which may or may not be congruent with physiology. This describes how people perceive their own internal sense of maleness, femaleness, or other gender identity- not necessarily about their sex as assigned at birth.
- **Gender expression:** The outward manifestation of one's gender identity, often expressed through clothing, accessories, mannerisms, chosen names and preferred pronouns.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Describes who people are romantically or sexually attracted to. Transgendered people may be straight, gay, or bisexual, just like non-trans people. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity, although some laws define gender identity as a subset of sexual orientation for sake of legislative convenience.

Trans Terminology

- **Trans man or “female-to-male” (FTM):** A person who is assigned female at birth but identifies as male.
- **Trans woman or “male-to-female” (MTF):** A person who is assigned male at birth but identifies as female.
- **Gender-queer or gender-non-conforming:** People who may think of themselves as being both man and woman, as being neither man nor woman, or as falling completely outside the gender binary.
- **Cross-dresser:** Someone who dresses in attire of a different gender. Cross-dressers generally do not have a desire to change their sex or gender.
- **Drag queen or drag king:** Someone who dresses in attire intended to strongly emphasize gender as a personal expression, sometimes within the context of the entertainment industry.

Trans Terminology

- **Intersexed:** Intersexed people have physical characteristics that do not match the typical manifestations of male and female primary or secondary sex characteristics. Some intersexed people identify as transgendered, while others do not.
- **Transgendered (Trans):** A broad umbrella term that applies to people who embody an innate sense of gender identity other than their assigned sex at birth. This is generally seen as the term that is most inclusive of gender-variant people.
- **Transsexual:** People who live, or seek to live, in a gender different than the one assigned to them at birth. Transsexuals may or may not seek medical intervention (through hormones and/or surgery). Transsexuals generally live full time as a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth.

Trans Terminology

- **Transvestite:** An outdated term for a cross-dresser, drag king or drag queen. Trans people generally dislike being referred to by this term.
- **Transphobia:** Discrimination or prejudice against transgender people.
- **Transition:** The process of living and being perceived as a gender other than that assigned at birth. The process of transitioning varies among transgender individuals. It may include counseling with a professional therapist, undergoing hormone therapy, having surgery of the face, chest, genitals or other areas, legally changing one's name and sex status, or simply changing preferred pronouns, and/ or dressing as the preferred gender. Some transgendered people do not undergo any or all hormonal or surgical procedures, because of financial, physical or other personal reasons.

Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Respect the privacy of trans people's status. If you are unsure if their gender identification or trans status is something you can share with others, ask them.
- Refer to the person with their preferred pronoun and name. If you are unsure what name or pronoun is most respectful to use with them, you can politely and privately ask, "What name would you prefer to be called?" "What pronoun do you prefer?"
- Respect the rights of transgendered people to define themselves, and use the terminology they prefer.
- Recognize that there might be circumstances where one name or pronoun is OK, but at other times you need to use gender-neutral pronouns or the person's birth name. This can be especially important for people who are in the process of transitioning, but haven't fully "come out" at work, etc.
- When in doubt about terminology in general, the most accepted terms are:
 - "transgendered" or "trans" as umbrella terms
 - "Gender identity" is the way to talk about trans status, not "sexual identity" or "sexual orientation"
 - Use "cross dresser" instead of "transvestite"
 - Use "intersexed" instead of "hermaphrodite"
 - Use "two-spirit" instead of "Berdache"

Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Educate yourself on issues that are of importance to transgendered individuals and communities.
- Ask questions respectfully; recognize that it takes a lot of energy and courage for transgendered people to hear and answer your questions, and that they are justified in not answering any questions that make them uncomfortable.
- Take transgendered people and their concerns seriously, even if you do not understand their concern or why it is so important to them.
- Accord transgendered people the same credibility, privacy, respect and courtesy that you would desire, especially in regard to their medical, legal, or other trans-related information.
- Be proactive in addressing the concerns or potential concerns of transgendered people, including questions about resources, facilities, policies, etc.

Do's and Don'ts

Don't

- Divulge a transgendered person's status (i.e., "out them") without their expressed permission.
- Assume an individual's sex or gender identity based upon their appearance.
- Refer to a transgendered person as "it" or as a "he-she" or "she-he".
- Put the chosen name, chosen pronouns, or self-identification of a transgendered person in quotation marks; this conveys a belief that the individual's chosen name, pronoun or identity is ultimately invalid, in question, or false.
- Ask transgendered people about their body, genitalia, or sex lives unless you have their permission to do so. When in doubt, don't.
- Assume that, because you cannot visually identify anyone in a room as transgendered, there are no transgendered people present.

Organizations and Resources

Oregon

Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries:

<http://www.oregon.gov/BOLI>

Cris Land Solutions:

<http://www.crislandsolutions.com>

Basic Rights Oregon:

<http://www.basicrights.org>

Portland Q Center:

<http://www.pdxqcenter.org>

National

National Center for Transgender Equality:

<http://www.nctequality.org>

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation:

<http://www.glaad.org>

Lambda Legal:

<http://www.lambdalegal.org>

National Center for Lesbian Rights :

<http://www.nclrights.org>

Organizations and Resources

National

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force:

<http://www.nglftf.org>

Transgender Law Center:

<http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org>

Human Rights Campaign:

<http://www.hrc.org/issues/transgender.asp>