



Anticipating needs:
**Transgender and
non-binary inclusion
recommendations**

November 2023



Executive Summary

Based upon experiences shared by transgender and non-binary employees from several organisations in the technology sector, this paper aims to provide a set of practical recommendations to drive a more supportive, inclusive workplace for transgender and non-binary people within the industry.

The recommendations are the outcome of a roundtable held in July 2023, and a focus group held in June 2023 where transgender and non-binary employees confidentially shared their experiences of working in the sector. This has been set up and organised by Pride Matters in Tech, a group created in June 2023, consisting of DEI practitioners, and LGBTQ+ employees and allies in the technology sector.

We believe that a collective effort is needed to ensure transgender and non-binary voices are heard and organisations drive action in anticipation of their needs, which are not currently being met. For more information on Pride Matters in Tech, see the appendix to this document.

The paper is organised as follows:

Part 1: The need for action - why we believe transgender and non-binary inclusion is an area where we need to act.

Part 2: Focus group feedback – a summary of the feedback from the June focus group for those with lived experience. This covers the themes of health, safety and wellbeing.

Part 3: Recommendations to tech organisations - these include quick wins and longer-term actions. Examples include:

- Quick win: engage with benefits providers to find out what gender affirming care is available.
- Quick win: ensure that any written dress codes include examples of what is appropriate to wear as a nonbinary person.
- Longer term actions: build in requirement within systems to support name changes and non-binary identities, ensuring this is consistent across the organisation. An annual tidy up/audit is recommended.

We hope that you find this useful and welcome any follow-up questions you may have, concerning our methodology and how to go about implementing the recommendations.

Part 1: The need for action

As an increasing number of transgender and non-binary people come out and make the decision to navigate the workplace authentically, leadership and HR buy-in are crucial.

Over the course of the past two years, verbatim feedback from Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practitioners and LGBTQ+ network leads within tech has highlighted that organisations who have progressed with regards to transgender inclusion have done so often because of the energy and dedication of individual transgender individuals. This is often at a cost to these individuals in terms of emotional burden.

One of the central tenets of the DEI philosophy, which is to anticipate diverse needs, is not being met for transgender employees and this is something we need to address.

The Pride Matters in Tech group consists of DEI practitioners, LGBTQ+ employees and allies in the technology sector who believe that a collective effort is needed to ensure transgender and non-binary voices are heard and organisations drive action in anticipation of their needs. For more information on Pride Matters in Tech, see the final page of this document.

Part 2: Focus group feedback

The aim of the focus group was to provide meaningful insights to a 'roundtable' group made up of HR and DEI decision makers and influencers in tech businesses. The focus group was conducted as a virtual listening session and hosted by a trainer and facilitator who is part of the transgender community, with the emphasis on creating a safe space.

Next is a summary of the feedback from the session grouped under the key themes of Health, Safety and Wellbeing. If you would like to further discuss the feedback that informed this document please contact Inclusion@Colt.net. The experiences outlined have been anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

Themes



Theme 1: Health

The wait time for transgender healthcare globally is very long (between three and six years to see a medical practitioner for the first time). It's rare that a first appointment leads to any form of treatment, thereby extending the wait for medical support even further.

The treatment is also costly and prohibitive for some. For this reason, offering transgender inclusive healthcare cover is seen as one of the biggest things a company can do to support transgender employees.

“I can't imagine how life changing it would be to work for a company that offers trans inclusive healthcare cover.”

Despite this, the state of transgender inclusion in company policies and benefits varies greatly between different companies and within these companies, between locations.

Healthcare providers often do not promote these benefits to their organisations and there is a lack of awareness with some of the benefit providers. HR professionals often don't know what to ask of their providers and so where this benefit exists, it has often been hard won.



Theme 2: Safety

Here we have shared feedback on the employee experience in general and specifically around transition at work support. It is clear there are key points in the employee lifecycle where transgender and non-binary employees feel vulnerable to bias, in particular as a new employee being onboarded into a business or during internal moves to a new team or location.

The set up and flexibility around systems, processes and facilitates all make a big difference to the overall experience. For instance, many people spoke of examples of IT systems dead-naming. When this happens, the burden is on the transgender employee to report and fix it and they are sometimes in the position of having to explain why to a variety of contacts, some with greater awareness than others.

“When someone misgenders me, several colleagues show support, so I don’t need to stand up for myself all on my own.”

The experience of those transitioning gender in the workplace varies. However, a common theme is that the transition process is ongoing and continuous. Those supporting a transgender colleague may need to surrender any preconceptions that there is an end point.

There are examples where people have already transitioned and then transition back in a non-inclusive workplace before transitioning again when they felt safe to do so. Another clear finding is that those with the most positive experiences had very supportive line managers who were also able to support the employee in navigating people processes and systems.

“When I transitioned, I was introduced to the team as a ‘new’ employee. This worked well for me, and the symbolic new start made me comfortable.”



Theme 3: Wellbeing

This theme focuses on workplace culture, such as colleague behaviour, language use and overall inclusion. This theme also considers safe spaces and psychological safety. It’s important to consider these in the context of the current portrayals of transgender and non-binary people in the media and the inevitable impact on wellbeing. The creation of safe spaces is incredibly important in this context.

To summarise the feedback under this theme, it’s important to highlight that seemingly simple acts, such as using correct pronouns, is incredibly important and yet this is not always done well in the workplace. The transgender employees in our focus group shared multiple examples of being misgendered. Transgender employees in customer facing

roles or those working with other external stakeholders, can be more at risk of being misgendered or experiencing microaggressions and this should be recognised. However, having vocal allies who are willing to support and even step in when needed, is valuable and makes a dramatic difference to feelings of inclusion.

Another key finding from the focus group is that companies need to be cognizant that awareness raising without follow up actions is meaningless. It’s also crucial not to rely solely on transgender colleagues to do the work to educate those around them – the work can be extremely emotionally exhausting with little recognition.

“My company tries hard to create a safe space but doesn’t always get it right and often goes back to the same person just because they’re ‘vocally and visibly trans’. However, there are other people in the business who can pick up the work too.”

The rising visibility of transgender and non-binary issues in mainstream culture has had a significant impact on the way transgender and nonbinary people navigate the workplace. This impacts wellbeing.

Our focus group shared that the current media narrative is emotionally exhausting to see and be made aware of. For some, it was felt that it can impact workplace performance however, it’s felt that when work colleagues get to know transgender people they can see through the negative discourse out there.

Part 3: Recommendations

This list of quick wins and longer-term actions are not meant as an exhaustive plan. Instead, we have focused on using direct feedback from those with lived experience and translated these into the actions that we believe would make the biggest difference in addressing this feedback.

Many of the items within each overlap and support each other, so any interventions considered should look at how employees are supported across these areas.

While it was important for the group to share some recommended actions following the feedback gathered, it is important for business stakeholders to be aware that each person's experience and needs are different.

Quick wins

1. Engage with benefits providers to find out what gender affirming care is available.
2. Publish clear information for your employees on what benefits and support are available to transgender and non-binary employees and how to access them.
3. Ensure that any written dress codes include examples of what is appropriate to wear as a non-binary person.
4. ID cards can cause anxiety for a gender fluid person depending on how they choose to present and if it matches with their ID card. Introduce ID cards with multiple sides so that both gender identities can be reflected.
5. Ask all employees to choose their email ID when onboarding.
6. Publish guidance on how to support team members and colleagues who are transitioning – in particular, ensure managers are aware that employees are entitled to time off for recovery and return to work.
7. Ensure that a commitment to transgender and non-binary inclusion is included in any statements on LGBTQ+ inclusion.
8. Provide communications and guidance on the importance of correct pronouns including examples in other languages. Be mindful not to refer to preferred pronouns as it suggests choice rather than necessity.
9. Request that managers lead the way in sharing their pronouns within meetings.
10. Ensure that sharing of pronouns is enabled on all relevant platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and other internal platforms – give guidance on how to change them.

Longer-term actions

1. Conduct a deeper dive into the different healthcare options available and what good looks like. Recommend consulting with your LGBTQ+ employee networks.
2. Lobby healthcare providers to make the support available more transparent, appointing a senior executive to support if needed.
3. Publish a Transition at Work policy and train managers on how to support people through this journey.
4. Build in requirements within systems to support name changes and non-binary identities, ensuring this is consistent across the organisation. An annual tidy up/audit is recommended.
5. Introduce a one stop shop or easy way to report any systems that may be dead-naming or appoint one point of contact and ensure they are adequately trained.
6. Consider introducing transition leave to allow people to take time to focus on their needs. A best practice example is one company which allows 33 weeks off to focus on transition.
7. Use “nudges” to change behaviours. For instance, reshape positive behaviour (“we know you are already doing this but here are more ways to share your pronouns”). This helps people to feel part of the change.
8. Collaborate with Learning & Development teams on how to hold inclusive conversations, how to give inclusive performance feedback etc.
9. Review policies to ensure they are gender neutral including parental leave policies.
10. Ensure that LGBTQ+ awareness or allyship training includes transgender and non-binary inclusion and examples of how to be an ally to these communities.

Pride Matters in Tech

Pride Matters in Tech is a group of LGBTQ+ employee networks and allies in the technology sector who want to ensure that all voices are heard, including **Pride Matters** from Colt Technology Services, **Pride@Now** from ServiceNow, **Oracle Pride Employee Network (OPEN)** from Oracle, **Rainbow Network** from euNetworks, **Pride Network**, BT and **Equal!** from Nokia.

This informal group comes together to create safe spaces, support each other, share best practices and experiences.

Our core values:

Community: Building a supportive community that unites individuals driving LGBTQ+ inclusion in their organisations, facilitating accessible support, and engaging non-LGBTQ+ employees.

Equity: Helping organisations achieve LGBTQ+ inclusion standards, establishing consistent best practices in the tech industry, ensuring inclusive policies, and fostering knowledge and experience sharing. Creating a workplace where all employees feel safe, valued, and respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Impact: Supporting employees in building successful business cases for inclusion and garnering support from other tech and telecom companies. Using our collective voice to advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the tech industry and beyond.

If you would like to get involved, please contact inclusion@colt.net or inclusion@eunetworks.com.

You can also join the [Pride Matters in Tech LinkedIn group](#).