

Job Search Strategies for the Trans* Community

Finding a job is never easy. For trans* people, there can be particular challenges. What name do you put on your resume? How can you make sure your references will use the right pronoun? What do you wear to the interview? Based on Davey's experience connecting hundreds of trans* job seekers with trans*-friendly jobs in their fields, this workshop offers concrete tools and strategies for navigating the job search while being yourself.

Resource Packet

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Resume FAQs for Trans* Job Seekers

Adapted from Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative, "Resume FAQs for transgender and gender-nonconforming people," 2009

What name should I use on my resume?

The short answer: **It depends.**

The long answer:

- You can use any name, whether or not it's the same as the name on your id. You can also use a short version of your legal name (e.g. Alex instead of Alexandra) or just initials. (However on a job application form, you usually must use your legal name.)
- Your resume is usually the first image of you that a potential employer will have. Using your current name may help prime the hiring manager to see you the way you want to be seen. On the other hand, it can also out you as trans*.
- This is a complicated decision, and job seekers will make different choices depending on their identity, transition status/plans, how employers are likely to see them, and other factors.

Can I include jobs I held under a different name / before my transition?

The short answer: **Yes, and you should!**

The long answer:

- Many people are concerned that by including a job on their resume, they are giving future employers permission to contact the former employer. This is not true. If your former employer is transphobic or simply knows you as a different name/gender, you can include that job on your resume without giving new employers permission to contact them.
- It may raise a red flag for employers if you ask them not to contact a former employer without providing an explanation. If your new employer is trans*-friendly, you can explain why you don't want them contacting the old employer. Or, you can provide contact info for someone other than your supervisor, such as a friendly coworker who knows about your transition and can confirm that you worked there.
- Transitioning should not have to mean "starting over" professionally. Even though you may feel like a new person, you still benefit from all the skills and experiences you gained in previous jobs. Make sure that experience counts!

How do I account for time I was out of work because of transition or discrimination?

The short answer: **The same way you would account for any other gap.**

The long answer:

- When you list dates of jobs that you held for more than a year, you do not need to list the months. This gets you out of explaining gaps that didn't cover a whole calendar year. (This is not true on some application forms however.)
- Were you doing *anything* professionally relevant during your time out of work? Were you volunteering, consulting, working part time, or taking classes? If so, you're all set – there is no gap.
- You can use your cover letter to explain longer gaps, using general language that won't out you as trans*. For example, "After being out of the workforce for two years due to personal obligations, I am ready and eager to return to work for a dynamic company like XYZ."

What about jobs that out me (i.e. jobs in trans*, LGBT or gender-specific organizations)?

The short answer: **It depends.**

The long answer:

- If you have worked for a trans*-specific organization and now want to be stealth, you may want to leave that position off your resume. Or, be prepared to explain why you worked there / your connection to the trans* community in a way that doesn't out you.
- If you worked in an LGBT organization, it won't necessarily out you as trans*. Employers may assume you are gay or lesbian, or that you may be an ally. Be prepared to explain why you worked there / your connection to the community in a way that doesn't out you in a way you don't want.
- If you worked in a gender-specific organization (a women's center or the Boy Scouts) it doesn't necessarily out you. Many men work in women's organizations and vice versa.
- If you choose to leave a position off your resume, make sure the skills you used there are demonstrated somewhere else in your resume.
- If your resume is chock-full of trans*- or queer-specific jobs, make sure to highlight aspects of those jobs that are transferable to other groups of people (such as "counseling skills," "at-risk youth," or "managed a busy office").
- In some cases you may be able to replace LGBT with "diversity" (e.g. a committee that provides LGBT awareness trainings to staff can be said to provide "diversity trainings"). Be prepared to elaborate on your work in a way that is truthful and highlights your skills and accomplishments.

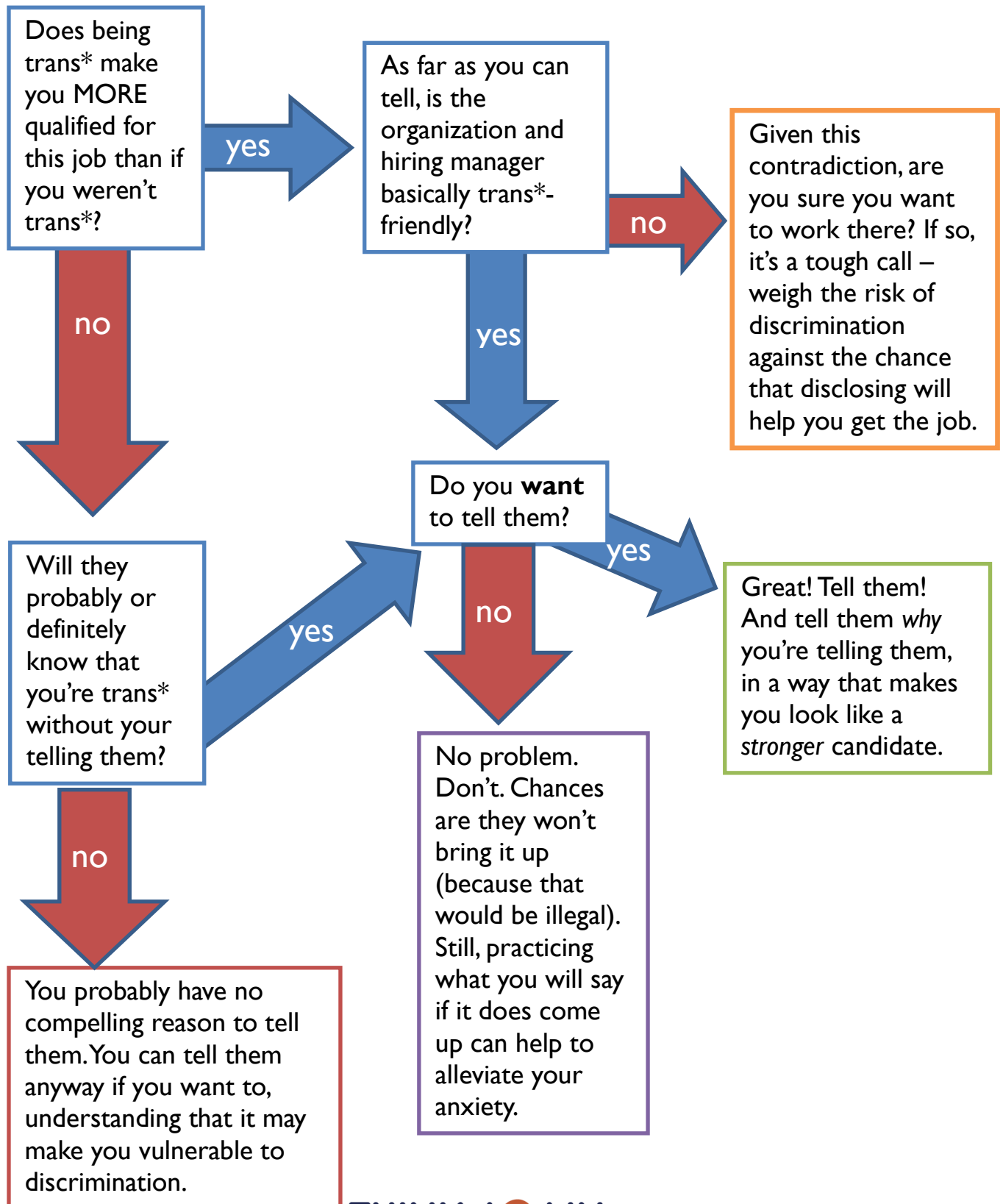
Is being trans* a job skill?

The short answer: **No.**

The long answer:

- Being a trans* organizer is a skill – it's called organizing. Being a trans* educator is a skill – it's called teaching, or public speaking, or writing. Any work that you do around trans* issues is valid work experience, whether you're doing it as a trans* person or as a cisgender ally.
- Possessing a depth of cultural competence with a variety of trans* communities or with a particular trans* community is a relevant skill for some positions. Being trans* and having trans* friends does not automatically make you culturally competent.
- Even if you are in an area where it is illegal to discriminate against trans* people, and even if your employer is trans* friendly, providing irrelevant personal information during the job search process can make you seem unprofessional. If you want to disclose your trans* identity because you believe it is relevant to your application, make sure to articulate its relevance very explicitly.

Should I come out in the job search process?



Know your rights

Federal Protections

The federal **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)** has held that discrimination against an individual because that person is transgender (also known as gender identity discrimination) is discrimination because of sex and therefore is covered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

(<http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/otherprotections.cfm>)

Some federal courts have issues similar findings; however this varies by district and case.

State Protections

California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and the District of Columbia

A list of smaller jurisdictions with trans* rights protections can be found at <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/ndlaws/index.htm#jurisdictions>

More detailed info about specific rights can be found at <https://www.aclu.org/translaw>

What do these laws get you?

In those jurisdiction with the best protections, trans* employees have the explicit legal right to

- Be called the name and pronoun they prefer
- Dress professionally in a way that reflects their gender expression
- Have equal access to a restroom that matches their gender identity
- Have their privacy respected
- Have support from management to safeguard their rights
- Be hired, promoted and assessed according to their qualifications

No law guarantees that discrimination won't happen. It does give you legal recourse, should you choose to pursue it, if you experience discrimination. Employment discrimination is extremely difficult to prove, and usually only the most blatant and explicit cases are prosecuted.

Resources

Trans Rights Organizations

Mass Trans Political Coalition (MA) - <http://www.masstpc.org/>

National Center for Transgender Equality - <http://transequality.org/>

Transgender Law & Policy Institute - <http://www.transgenderlaw.org/>

Transgender Law Center (CA) - <http://www.transgenderlawcenter.org/>

Job Search Resources

Hampshire Career Options Resource Center -
https://www.hampshire.edu/index_corc.htm

Career Gateway - <http://www.gatewaytocareers.com/>

JVS (SF – has online resources) – <http://www.jvs.org>

Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative – <http://www.teeisf.org/>