

FAQs for Trans* Job Seekers

Whether you are seeking your first co-op or full-time position, changing careers, or advancing in your current role, RIT Career Services, online resources, and community resources can help you successfully navigate challenges you may face as a transgender or non-gender conforming individual.

Should I out myself in my application, resume, or cover letter?

It depends. This is a very personal decision; there is no right or wrong answer. You will need to make a decision based on your own level of comfort and interest in sharing your gender identity with others weighed against the research you have done about the company.

Which name should I use on my resume?

Again, it depends. A resume is not a legal document, so it is acceptable to use your preferred name. Some individuals prefer to list their first initial followed by their preferred name (e.g., T. Michelle Richards) or identify their preferred name in quotes (e.g., Taylor “Michelle” Richards).

Remember that your resume is usually the first image of you that an employer will have. If you are early in your transition, are genderqueer, and/or don't “pass” as the gender that you identify with, using the name that goes with your current gender identity/expression will help your employer see you the way that you wish to be seen.

On the other hand, if you are very early in transition and are sure that you won't pass, using your new name can “out” you. If you're not sure about the trans-friendliness of the employer, it might be safer to go with your old name. After you are offered the job, you can explain your situation.

When do I need to use my legal name?

Your legal name should be used for background checks, on social security documents, and on insurance forms. If you have taken steps to legally change your name, then you may use your new legal name for these purposes. Remember that Human Resources managers are required to maintain confidentiality, but there is always some risk of disclosure.

You can use your preferred name in your email, phone directory, and company information.

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

Yes, and you should include them. Many people are concerned that by including a job on their resume, they are giving 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 the new employer permission to contact them.

It may raise a red flag for employers if you ask them not to contact a former employer without giving 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 doesn't 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.

What if my references don't know I'm trans? What if they don't know I've changed my name/transitioned? And/or, What if my references do know I'm trans, but I don't want new employers to know right now?

You have three options. You may choose one of these strategies, or a combination, depending on your situation:

1. Talk to your references. Explain that you're applying for jobs and you'd like to continue to list them as a reference, but that it's very important they refer to you by the name and pronoun you use now.

This option can seem intimidating, especially if you've been out of touch for a while, but it's often worth a try. If they respect you and your work, they may be willing to learn about your new situation and support you in your job search.

2. Talk to potential employers. Explain that even though you go by a particular name and pronoun now, people from your past may not be aware of this and may refer to you by another name. Ask them to help maintain your privacy when they call your references, by using the name and pronoun with each reference that you provide to them.

If you are concerned about your former supervisors or co-workers knowing about your transition, make sure to clarify to the hiring manager or the person who will be calling your references that you do not want other employees to hear about your new name and/or gender.

3. Use new references. If coming out to references or employers is not an option for you, you may need to find new references. This option is particularly useful if you're switching careers and/or it's been a long time since you worked. Some ways to get new references are volunteering, working in unpaid internships, and taking classes where your teachers can serve as references. This does not mean you're starting over. Your new supervisor may be able to speak to skills/experiences that you acquired in previous jobs, especially if you're staying in the same field of work.

No matter which option you choose, you can also have a friend call your references and pretend to be an employer to double check that your references will get it right.

Should I out myself in the interview? How should I present while I am transitioning?

Dress professionally for the gender you would like to be seen as; this will reduce pronoun confusion on the part of your interviewer. Many select professional but gender-neutral clothing choices. Again, this is a highly individualized decision. You may want to conduct a mock interview to help prepare yourself, whether you wish to out yourself in the application process or not. Your program coordinator can help you set up a mock interview.

What about health insurance? Can I list my preferred gender while signing up for coverage? Won't that out me?

Here's another complex question. While privacy regarding the gender marker on insurance coverage is covered by Human Resources, health insurance is highly gender specific. It is highly recommended that you consult with a trans-savvy medical provider or legal counsel to select which gender you will use for health care purposes.

Which career areas are trans-positive? How do I find out about the environment for transgender people at a particular company?

You can start by reviewing company websites and talk to anyone you know who works at the company. Your Program Coordinator can help you find connections. While it is difficult to truly understand how inclusive an organization is, good clues of a supportive environment include: anti-discrimination policies which include sexual orientation and gender identity, domestic partner benefit policies, diversity education programs, employee resource groups (ERG's), gender neutral bathrooms, and commitment to diversity present in the company's mission statement.

There are also a number of resources to help job seekers find LGBT friendly employers.

[Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index](#)

[Transgender Workplace Law and Diversity Blog](#)

[Transgender Job Bank](#)

[Transgender Economic Empowerment Initiative](#)

[Federal Globe: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Employment in the Federal Government](#)

I'm already employed and I plan to keep my job while I transition. Anything I need to know?

There is no universal set of rules; it is best to use your comfort and preferences should guide the process. There are a number of resources to support you in this process as well. Some companies (American Airlines, Chevron, and Ernst and Young) have guidelines that you may consult.

Other resources include:

[Human Rights Campaign Workplace Gender Transition Guidelines](#)

[The Complete Guide to Transgender in the Workplace](#)

[Out and Equal at Work: From Closet to Corner Office](#) (Case studies of LGBT professionals, available in the Career Services office)

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