

Gay and Transgender Issues in the Workplace

Bisexuality & Gender Expression: The Shared Experience

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If it is safe to tell the truth, the majority of people are both bisexual and transgender.

Suggesting that most people have the capacity to be physically attracted to both sexes is not new and revolutionary. The renowned Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung asserted as much. If there were neither cultural taboos, nor fears of ramifications on a relationship, the majority of men—and certainly of women—would acknowledge their "bi-curious" nature. Very few people are completely same-sex oriented and very few people are exclusively other-sex attracted.

In saying that the majority of people are transgender, I am positing that most men and women have in their nature the capacity to express both their masculinity and their femininity. Without social taboos, women and men would regularly express all aspects of their gender make-up. Very few people are truly completely incongruent with the sex of their birth. If everyone were allowed to express him or herself as they feel called, there would be far less need for sex reassignment surgery.

In response to a recent piece I wrote on the contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people to industry, my good friend and colleague, Susan Gore, reminded me that many of the names I listed as gay, such as Malcolm Forbes and Leonard Bernstein, were actually bisexual. Susan got me thinking about the many people I know who say they are gay or lesbian but who are actually bisexual, and the many people I know who label themselves as straight but are in fact bisexual. That got me wondering what our world might look like if everyone who is bisexual could say so without worry of negative ramifications.

Most people in heterosexual marriages are bisexual but can't say so. When I say that they are bisexual, I don't mean that if given the chance they would enjoy homosexual sex as much as they do heterosexual sex—although that would be true for some. I am simply saying that if given the chance—in a world without social taboos—the majority of the women and men would like the opportunity to explore their curiosity. That's bisexuality.

Think of all of the famous people we know who identify as gay or lesbian. Now let's make a list of all of the famous people we know who identify themselves as bisexual. Though every study of human sexual behavior has shown that more people report having had sex with both sexes than sex with people of the same sex, there are very few people who publicly say so. Why? Because they fear that if they say they are bisexual, they will lose their community of support, be it gay or straight. But what if the culture embraced the reality that most people are bisexual, and valued it as the norm? Would supermarket tabloids need to speculate anymore as to whether Tom Cruise, John Travolta, and Oprah Winfrey are gay? Would we be spending millions of dollars every year battling over same-sex marriage? Would having gay people serving openly in the military be an issue? And would corporations need to spend so much time and energy educating their employees about the issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues?

In the often (but irresponsibly) used acronym *GLBT*, the *B* represents the biggest group of employees, but it gets the least attention. Today that makes little sense. Remember, this is coming from a man who identifies as gay and who has made his living speaking and writing mostly about what it is like to be gay. There now needs to be a shift in focus.

The same holds true for the *T* in *GLBT*. To begin with, it seems silly to add the *T* to the acronym if a company isn't going to give the issue the attention it deserves, but when the subject is discussed it should focus on the common experience of diverse gender expression and not just on the transitioning of one person from male to female, or vice versa. Transsexuals would welcome a broader discussion of the transgender nature of the majority of the population. They know that if their colleagues are able to acknowledge and embrace their own place on the gender continuum, fewer eyebrows will be raised when someone behaves in non-traditional ways, or enters a restroom that feels appropriate to their gender expression.

Corporations have for many years been in the forefront of education on these issues. Companies understand that a workplace in which every person feels safe and valued is more likely to attract and retain the best talent, maintain the highest levels of productivity, and effectively market to the widest possible audience. Future educational efforts should include increased emphasis on bisexuality and gender expression to achieve these goals. Doing so will certainly guarantee more buy-in by the largest number of employees.