

3 under-invested areas of LGBTQ+ inclusion in india inc.





At workplaces, we talk about inclusion as a whole. Drill that down further, and we come to know about women-specific inclusion, where I&D teams have gender ratios to manage. Probe further and we come to LGBTQ+ inclusion. This aspect of inclusion is relatively new for most corporate workplaces.

At Randstad, for our new study '[Inclusion Without Exception: Where India Inc. stands with respect to the LGBTQ+ community](#)', we surveyed 201 people who were managers in organizations operating in India, as part of the quantitative survey carried out during the study. Respondents included HR/D&I leads and CXO level employees.

The data revealed that 70% of this group believes that no significant efforts have been made by the Indian industry to be LGBTQ+ inclusive. That said, there has been a start.

From hiring policies to partner insurance, and sensitization programs, organizations are doing what it takes to make workplaces inclusive in policies, actions, and behaviors. As part of our comprehensive study, we got a view of all that is being done for LGBTQ+ inclusion, and also of the under-invested areas that need to be taken up by organizations.

#1 support for in-transition employees

“Interestingly, companies mostly know how to deal with a person from such communities coming in & starting fresh but not how to handle someone they have already been working with who just came out.”, says Dr. L Ramakrishnan, Vice President, SAATHII, a national NGO headquartered in Chennai.

The same sentiment is echoed with the LGBTQ+ community members who participated in the study. Some of the areas that emerged here were:

- **Do your hiring managers understand what to ask and what not to when they come across a person who is transitioning?**

Focusing on the individual’s talents and suitability for the role over their gender is a common principle that most recruiters follow. However, when it comes to in-transition employees, the unfamiliarity and curiosity can lead to hurtful questions around the gender expression of the individual.

“In interviews that I took before I had transitioned or when I was in transition, I was only asked about my gender expression. They thought it was immature behavior to dress up as an opposite gender.” - X, who identifies himself as a trans man comes with 12+ years of HR experience & currently works in a Corporate based in Bangalore

- **Do you provide adequate financial, medical and mental support to in-transition employees?**

Employees in transition will need many medical interventions staggered over a period of time. Does this mean that they do not have the right to employment during this period? One way to help your employees who are in transition or planning to transition is to provide them with medical and financial support, and encourage them to avail of ‘no-questions asked’ leave.

At this time, managing mental health also becomes important for the in-transition employees. Sruthi Praveen, a pansexual woman, working in the IT industry for the last 4 years, shares her experience and says, “Therapy has been beneficial for me, so the company asked me to pass on the contact details. Soon, a Corporate benefit was rolled out where everyone in team India became entitled to two free sessions of therapy in a month for whoever who needs it.”



- Do you sensitize micro and macro teams for use of appropriate language for in-transition employees?

"Helping co-workers with pronouns to use is a must. In my case, everyone keeps defaulting to a 'he'. It gets annoying after a point", says an anonymous respondent of the qualitative survey who has transitioned as a woman.

Regardless of the number of in-transition employees at present, the point here is to have provisions in place in terms of policies, and awareness sessions for employees, so that the response of the organization in the situation, whenever it arises, is appropriate and welcoming for the members of the LGBTQ+ community.

#2 upskilling of transgender persons

"Especially for a trans person, the struggle is very different. You can't ask a trans person for experience when they aren't given a chance. Give a chance, and see. People are keen to learn.", says Joe, 36yo, trans woman working as a media professional in Mumbai.

This is the voice of an employee who says that though she does not 'look' trans, in general, unlike some members of the LGBTQ+ community, it is harder for trans persons to hide their identity and hence their struggles are very different, right from their education to employment.

Organizations actively looking to hire transgender persons should address the following questions:

- Do you engage in upskilling conversations with NGOs that work for trans hiring?

While most organizations that hire LGBTQ+ members have external partners for hiring and on-boarding support, what is needed are more conversations around specific skill-based hiring and working with hiring partners for equipping trans persons with the skill. Dr. KVJ Sumitra Prasad, Founder & General Secretary of DORAI Foundation talks highly of an Indian employer in the FMCG space that invested in training trans persons for specific jobs and later employed them.



- Do you have trans mentoring modules for employees?

For bringing in trans persons into the workplace and normalizing interactions and work around them, there is also a need to have trans mentoring modules for employees, especially those who are managers.

These would include training managers to understand the strengths of trans team members, identifying roles for their future, areas for upskilling, and encouraging them to sign up for courses that the organization may offer to all employees.

3 specific leadership development programmes for those who need it

During the course of our study, when we spoke with members of the LGBTQ+ community, HR/D&I leaders, community members, or policymakers, there was a unanimous sentiment that emerged around more representation of the community in leadership positions. Along with this, there was also the need that emerged around creating leadership programs within organizations to keep the next generation of leaders ready.

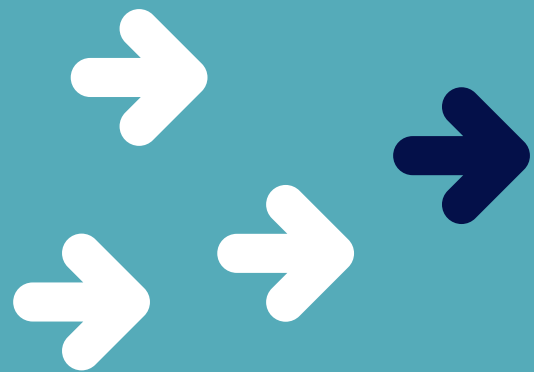
- Do you agree that specific members of the LGBTQ+ community may need specialized leadership development programs?

This is the only and the most crucial question to ask because this requires a mindset shift. Most policymakers may feel that the organizations already have Leadership Development Programmes in place. But here is what the community says.



X, who identifies himself as a trans man comes with 12+ years of HR experience & currently works in a corporate based in Bangalore says, "There is a need to work on advancement and growth opportunities. We have a program for finding and nurturing a diverse talent pool, their retention and people policies, programs for building a sense of engagement, and belonging but nothing on their career growth. This can be achieved by having a dedicated support system for the community as we have for others like the Women Leadership Development program. We need to recognize that not everyone is a born leader and may have gone through a lot in their lives so need support to come out of their own inhibitions."

Diverse voices...diverse ideas and thoughts. There is so much that diversity can bring to your organization. Read our entire [report](#) to learn more about what organizations are doing in the LGBTQ+ space and what the community wants.



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