

5 best practices to make your gender sensitization program truly effective



Welcome to Inclusion 2.0, which means far more than ensuring a certain male-female ratio in your organization. If your organization has in place a gender sensitization program, including training on bias, creating a workplace that is welcoming of all and free of harassment, being an ally, or other aspects of inclusion, it is time to check whether your program is also inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community.

To be truly effective in including members of the LGBTQ+ community at work, gender sensitization programs have to:

- Go beyond the binaries of male and female
- Think beyond heteronormativity when it comes to sexual orientation
- Be creative in order to help people internalize often unfamiliar contexts and
- Receive support from leadership

As Rene, a 34-year-old gender-fluid person working in sales in a Tech company says, “What is in front as marketing or CSR, or corporate communications is very different from what they do. Policies are there but not many people follow them.” Consistent and creative sensitization training is crucial to bridge this gap.

At Randstad, our new study, ‘[Inclusion Without Exception: Where India Inc. stands with respect to the LGBTQ+ community](#)’, helped us identify some of the best practices that can help you sensitize employees towards active inclusion. (44% of the organizations surveyed do not yet run sensitization programs, which also indicates that there is scope for all of us to do more!)



- **Center the experience of LGBTQ+ employees:** Many sensitization programs have little input from those who have lived experience of facing bias or discrimination. Including employees from the community (or support groups from outside) can help your program be more effective.

"If you want complete inclusion, then first before making the policies, form a committee which has representation of everyone, the non-binary the transgender, the lesbian woman and the gay man to gauge what their community is feeling. You cannot have binary people making policies." - Ritushree Panigrahi, Lawyer & D&I professional

- **Go beyond formal education:** Many employees report 'training fatigue' and may attend such sensitization programs just to ensure compliance. Including innovative methods such as role-play, theatre, movie screenings, etc can help people to truly understand the context and visualize themselves as allies, then as passive onlookers.

"People attending these workshops will be slightly dismissing – they think we already do a lot for inclusivity, we don't need to learn more..." - X (he/they), a 27-year-old queer person working in Bangalore

- **Set an example with leadership:** When leaders lead, participate in, or even attend sensitization programs, they demonstrate that inclusion truly matters and that it is worth spending time in unlearning one's own biases.

- **Include all employees:** Extend such sensitization programs to all employees, including those in areas such as factory, security, or housekeeping.

"They should have awareness starting with their security person. We've already faced so much discrimination outside the society. When you enter the Corporate, you've to go through the security check where they don't understand the community." - Shanthi Muniswamy, Transgender person

- **Bring in experts where needed:** Not every company will have a wealth of expertise, or even people to draw upon internally, to make sensitization programs successful. Be open to identifying the knowledge gaps you have, and including external resource groups that may have expertise in specific areas.



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