

How to create a more gender-friendly workplace

Most South African organisations want to do the right thing when it comes to gender sensitivity in the workplace. However, because it is an area that they might not have an understanding of, it becomes easy to make mistakes.



Photo by TimMossholder from [Pexels](#)

“How people of different genders are treated is still a significant obstacle to overcome for organisations across industry sectors,” says Nicol Myburgh, head: HCM Business Unit at CRS Technologies. “And even though laws are in place to prevent this from happening, the reality is that these concerns are still widespread around the world.”

Complicating matters is that there is no longer a male versus female dynamic taking place, but rather a significantly more gender fluid environment of which companies must be cognisant. Fundamentally, gender (or sex) discrimination involves treating someone unfavourably because of their sex, whether they are applying for a job or are a current employee. This becomes especially apparent in more traditionally minded organisations that are struggling to adapt to a world where gender entails more than the binary male/female concept.

A matter of identity

Discrimination in this regard centres on gender identity and how the employee identifies themselves. Such discrimination can include terminating a transgender employee after the employer finds out about the employee's gender identity or planned transition; denying a transgender employee access to workplace restroom facilities available to other employees; requiring a transgender employee to use a restroom not consistent with the employee's gender identity or presentation; the list goes on.

“In simple terms, an employer cannot legally ask a person to identify their sexual orientation. Of course, the person can volunteer the information, but the employee cannot be discriminated against because of their orientation. Gender identity is a person’s deeply-felt, inherent sense of being male, female, or an alternative gender. The only focus of an organisation is whether that person is able to perform their job functions,” adds Myburgh.

Misgendering a transgender employee is often unintentional, but it does highlight a broader issue – companies often assume something about a person based on their appearance, manner, or voice. For instance, using the wrong pronoun for someone can be upsetting and management must learn to shift their policies to be as gender neutral as possible.

Overcoming stigma

“One of the most effective ways to do so is through common courtesy, respect, and awareness. Training sessions become useful enablers in this regard where all employees gain a better understanding of how to approach issues of gender and the support required to make transgender workers feel comfortable,” he concludes.

Now is the time for management to question whether their workplace is truly inclusive for people from all walks of life. Part of this entails examining what changes can be made to create a more positive environment and operate more effectively as a business.

Download the free white paper here: <https://www.crs.co.za/gender-classification-whitepaper/>

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>