



How Remote Work Can Foster a More Inclusive Environment for Transgender Developers

Exploring the Benefits of Remote
Work for Transgender Employees

Presented by-

Venkata Ritish Sunkarnam

Authors

1. Denae Ford North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC, USA dford3@ncsu.edu
2. Reed Milewicz Sandia National
Laboratories Albuquerque, NM, USA
rmilewi@sandia.gov
3. Alexander Serebrenik Eindhoven University
of Technology Eindhoven, The Netherlands
a.serebrenik@tue.nl

Abstract

In this position paper, we claim that remote work offers a mechanism of control for identity disclosure and empowerment of software developers from marginalized communities. By talking to several transgender software developers, we identified three themes that resonate across the trans experience and intersect with the advantages to working in software development remotely: identity disclosure, high-impact technical work and the autonomy to disengage and re-engage. Based on these themes we identify several open questions that the research community should address.



Population Targeted

The population targeted in the above article are Transgender developers who work remotely, Tech industry professionals, human resource managers, diversity and inclusion advocates, and anyone interested in creating a more inclusive workplace for transgender individuals.

Introduction

Transgender individuals face unique challenges in traditional office settings.

Remote work offers a mechanism of control for identity disclosure and empowerment of software developers from marginalized communities

Recent surveys of software developers report that 0.7–0.9% of software developers identify as trans almost twice the percentage of trans individuals in the US population as estimated by Meerwijk and Sevelius



Goal of the study

The paper highlights the benefits of remote work, such as increased flexibility and autonomy, which can help to improve the safety and comfort of transgender individuals. Ultimately, the paper aims to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the tech industry by emphasizing the importance of creating supportive work environments for transgender individuals. We also highlight avenues for future research into the role that software engineering technologies and methodologies play in promoting inclusion.

A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially overlapping the white background. The text 'Literature Review' is written in white, sans-serif font across the center of this circle.

Literature Review

Transgender individuals face unique challenges in traditional office settings, including discrimination, harassment, and exclusion leading to negative mental health outcomes, such as depression and anxiety.

Remote work has gained attention due to its potential to promote work-life balance, provide increased flexibility, autonomy, and safety, reducing likelihood of discrimination and harassment.

Lack of research on how remote work can benefit transgender individuals in tech industry.

This paper addresses this gap and provides valuable insights and recommendations for creating more inclusive work environments.

Key aspects of research design



Qualitative
research approach



Data collection
method



Data analysis
method



Limitations



Research approach

- The paper utilizes a qualitative research approach, specifically a phenomenological approach, which aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of transgender developers in remote and traditional office settings



Data Collection

The paper utilizes semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection. The interviews were conducted with some transgender developers who have experience working in remote and traditional office settings.



Data Analysis

- The paper utilizes thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. The analysis involves identifying themes and patterns in the interview data to generate insights and recommendations.



Limitations

- The paper acknowledges the limitations of the study, including the small sample size and the lack of generalizability to other industries or populations. The paper also discusses the potential for researcher bias and the need for future research to expand on the findings.

Key Findings

The article identifies three themes related to the experience of transgender individuals, which intersect with the benefits of remote work in software development.

Those 3 themes are:

- Identity disclosure
- Economically stable work
- Autonomy to Disengage or Re-engage



Identity Disclosure

The advantage of being a software developer is that they have control over how they share their professional identity across different platforms.

How participants share their professional identity across platforms.(Github vs Stack overflow).

Trans people in the workplace face the documented challenge of not being able to control how they present themselves.(Men vs Women)

Technology careers can offer a layer of protection and authenticity for transgender people. (added layer to next generations)



Economically Stable Work

Economic advantages of working remotely and how they benefited transgender individuals to fight against their hardships.


Participants have acknowledged that they strategically distance their technical merits from their personal identity based on the conducted interviews.

Autonomy to Disengage or Re-engage

Challenges faced by transgender individuals by trusting fake organizations.



Challenges transgender people face in order to identify a safe space especially when these same spaces can make marginalized users a target.



Benefits of online work environments which help in disengaging and re-engaging easily.



Strengths

Unique focus: The paper addresses an important gap in the literature by exploring how remote work can benefit transgender developers and provide a more inclusive work environment.

Phenomenological research approach: The paper collects rich data through semi-structured interviews with some transgender developers who have experience working in remote and traditional office settings.

Thorough analysis: The paper uses thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns in the data, providing valuable insights and recommendations for creating more inclusive work environments.

Ethical considerations: The paper follows ethical guidelines for research involving human participants, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and obtaining IRB approval.



Weaknesses

Small sample size: The sample size of very few like 2 or 3 participants is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Lack of diversity: The sample consists entirely of transgender individuals who work in the tech industry, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or populations.

Potential for researcher bias: The researchers' own identities and experiences may have influenced the data collection and analysis, potentially leading to researcher bias.

Limited scope: The paper focuses specifically on how remote work can benefit transgender developers and does not address other diversity and inclusion issues in the tech industry.

Discussion points

The article suggests that it is crucial for individuals to assert their personal and professional identity to be fully engaged in technical organizations. Moreover, remote work technologies may increase the sense of empowerment for transgender individuals to be authentic and efficient in their work

However, there are also risks associated with remote work such as the possibility of reinforcing traditional gender roles and social isolation. The authors recommend conducting more research on how software engineering tools and methodologies impact marginalized communities and how they can promote greater engagement

Research Question 1

- Modeling the Gender Spectrum
 - GenderMag is a cognitive walkthrough strategy for studying gender inclusiveness in design
 - Treats gender as a construct and is neutral with respect to gender identity
 - There may be nuances to the experiences of transgender women that are overlooked when considering all women in aggregate
 - Future work should aim to explicitly model the gender spectrum to account for the unique experiences of transgender individuals

“In what ways can we incorporate a more explicit modeling of the gender spectrum in our research on gender inclusiveness in design?”

Research Question 2

- Building Inclusive Socio-technical Communities
 - Social media technologies provide a comfortable space for LGBTQ individuals to explore their identity
 - In the software engineering community, social communication channels are widely used for learning and work
 - This has raised questions about the experiences of women in this new environment.

“With gender identity in mind, can these technologies be made more inclusive?”

Implications

- Understanding Depth in Diversity of Contributions

The article states that recent studies have investigated the connection between gender and various software development activities like brainstorming, pair programming, and handling pull requests. Through methods such as interviews, surveys, and empirical studies, researchers have discovered different aspects of gender identity in everyday software development practices.



Targeted technology or application being developed

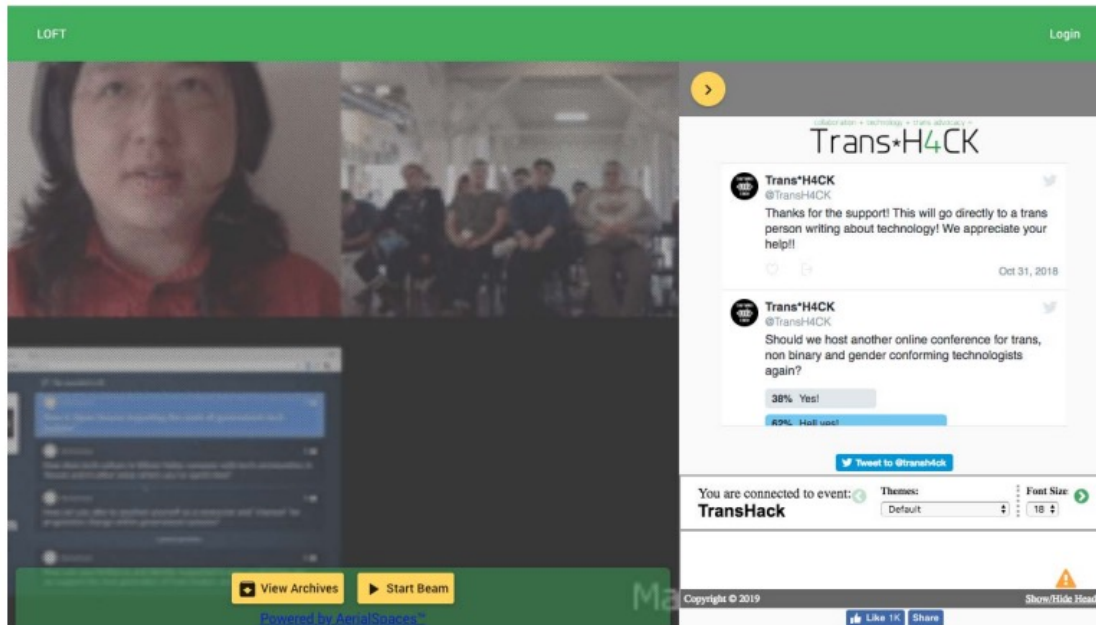
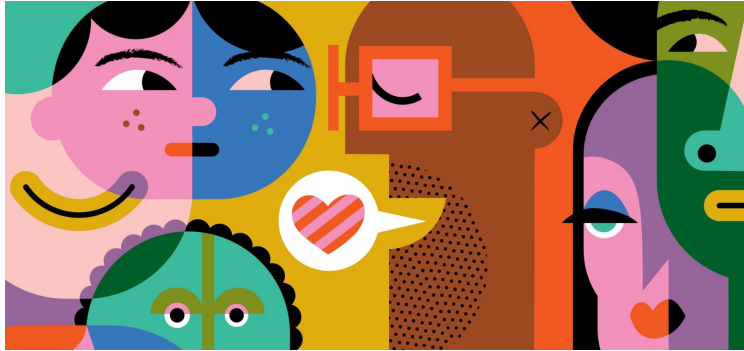


Fig. 1: Trans*H4CK's LOFT, a live collaboration platform, creates safe educational spaces for transgender learners in

- Trans*H4CK is a social justice project that encourages the development of technology that will socially empower trans people.
- It was created by Kortney Ryan Ziegler and was the first transgender hackathon that aimed to address issues specific to the transgender community.
- The project aims to promote attention to or improve services for trans people without homes, that are sex workers, or that are incarcerated. It also aims to increase gender safety and support the overall wellbeing of the community³.

Article: Creating a Trans-Inclusive Workplace



How to make transgender employees feel valued at work

by [Christian N. Thoroughgood](#),

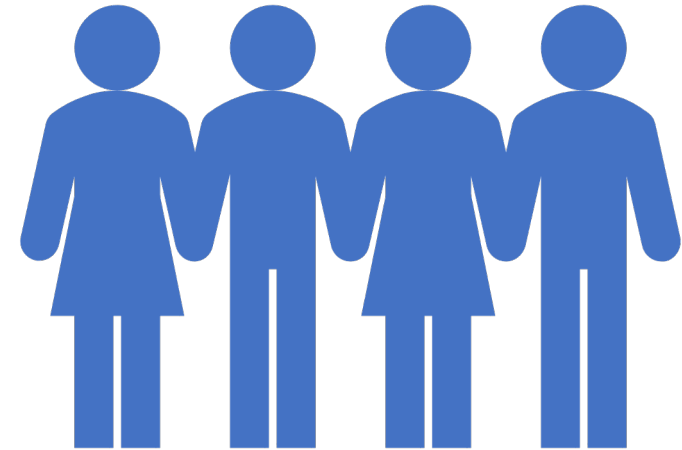
[Katina Sawyer](#), and [Jennica R. Webster](#)

- Transgender individuals face discrimination, hostility, and pressure to hide their identity in social settings, including the workplace.
- This can have negative impacts on job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and emotional well-being.
- Many employers lack the knowledge and policies needed to support trans employees.
- Research suggests interventions in four key areas can help cultivate a more inclusive workplace:
 - Basic signs of trans inclusivity (bathroom use, dress codes, pronouns)
 - Effective support for gender transitions
 - Trans-specific diversity training
 - Building resiliency

[Creating a Trans-Inclusive Workplace \(hbr.org\)](#)-> Link to the article

Conclusion

- Remote work technologies can provide more control over workplace interactions for transgender developers
- Technology can empower and encourage underrepresented communities to participate in software development
- Equity-forward design in software engineering is important
- Initiatives like Trans*H4ck and TransTech can support and empower transgender individuals in tech
- The research community has a role in advancing these issues.





Personal Thoughts

- This paper sheds light on the experiences of transgender individuals in the software development industry and benefits of remote work.
- It is important to be aware of the risks and potential biases that may be reinforced through remote work, such as gender role reinforcement and blurring of personal/professional boundaries.
- As an emerging software individual, I believe it is crucial to create inclusive environments for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression.
- As a human, I always believe in respecting each individual and would like to fight against the problems rather than searching for alternatives.

Any
Suggestions/Questions?

Feel free to share your ideas and
opinions



Acknowledgement

- This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. DGE-1252376. Sandia National Laboratories is a multimission laboratory managed and operated by National Technology Engineering Solutions of Sandia (NTESS), LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Honeywell International Inc., for the U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration under contract DE-NA0003525. This position paper describes observations captured from informal and formal interviews. Any subjective views or opinions that might be expressed in the paper do not necessarily represent the views of NTESS, the U.S. Department of Energy, or the United States Government. SAND2019-2938 C.

References

- [1] C. Groskopf, “For programmers, the ultimate office perk is avoiding the office entirely,” April 2017, retrieved February 1, 2019 from <https://qz.com/950973/remote-work-for-programmersthe-ultimate-office-perk-is-avoiding-the-office-entirely/> data at <https://github.com/Quartz/work-from-home>.
- [2] S. Overflow, “2018 stack overflow developer survey,” February 2019, retrieved February 1, 2019 from <https://stackoverflow.com/insights/survey/> 2018.
<https://github.com/Trans-H4CK/gender-overflow>
- [3] C. A. Ehmke, “Contributor covenant,” 2014, retrieved February 1, 2019 from <https://www.contributor-covenant.org/>.
- [4] S. Stryker, Transgender history. Seal Press, 2008.
- [5] F. Zlotnick, “Github open source survey 2017,”
<http://opensource-survey.org/2017/>, Jun. 2017



ELIGIBILITY

Thank you