
APPENDIX B

TRANSITIONING ON THE JOB

With a Little Help From Your Friends

Presented by

Keith Rogers

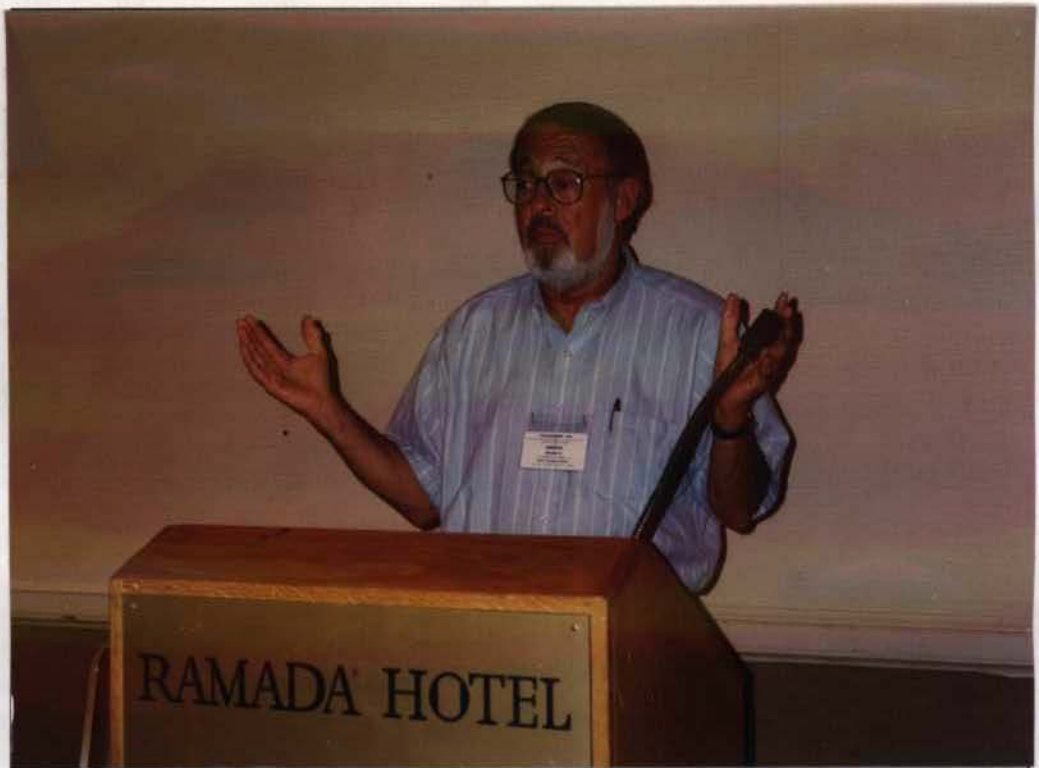
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We suggest that if you want to stay in the loop or network of people who actually run your organization or your profession, that you try and go with the flow as much as possible. It sounds trivial but in the eyes of your corporate bosses or your professional colleagues, the most important crisis in your transition may be whether you're going to hit from the ladies' tees or the men's tees in the organizational outing. If that's the case, show them you're cool, comfortable, and have a sense of humor – split the difference and hit between the two. And really smack that sucker. This is one of many anecdotal formulas for successful transition we have picked up in our research on a possible positive book on transgenering over the course of many interviews across the country.

Our message is not a scientific study but it is based on real solutions by real people. If you want a technical and legal guide to transgenering there are many excellent articles in leading gender journals. And you can always confront and demand your rights if you wish. You may win the day, but we suggest it will be hard to win the war.

In other words, stick around for the long haul. We feel the basic principles of transitioning on the job apply either way, FTM or MTF, but the bulk of my



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experience and research so far has been MTF, so this is the basis I will use. If interest warrants, we may do a further presentation which gets into any specifics that refer to female to male transition.

Certain basics are a given — try to condition people to your transition as gradually as possible and accommodate their small prejudices where you can without compromising your own values or long-term plan. And remember, if you're serious, you have to start stopping to commence to begin to get started to get ready to announce your transition. You have to do it. An old line employee in an established Texas computer company, who had the longest hair in the corporation male or female, was having trouble getting off the ground. We counseled and she started with a letter to close office friends and went from there. It worked. She is making the rounds now one-on-one, much as a professional friend in Atlanta did to complete her successful transition.

Andrea B. was a very productive male lawyer who then went out and gumshoed. In other words, did a lot of foot work with her peers, prospective clients, and judges, one-on-one. She definitely tried to condition her associates to her change as carefully and comfortably as possible. This principle generally applies. No one likes to feel blind-sided. We all want to have time to think through the rational responses to radical actions, appearing rational and "cool" ourselves. Mike's initial appearance as Angela came on stage teaching at a seminar in front of several hundred colleagues and went off without a hitch because she had laid the ground work. Also, try to role-play or rehearse your presentation of your case for keeping your job. Practice may not make perfect, but it will make you a lot more comfortable.

In addition, use your chain of command or your reporting relationships as much as possible. If you can carry through the proper protocol and keep everybody happy, it should help you later on. Try not to vent your frustration and anger over your situation in the office or with professional colleagues. Take these feelings to friends or to a therapy group.

How do you handle the very special form of sexual harassment you may face from some quarters? Try to get as much accurate information about transgenderism and yourself into the real company information network, including the "cafeteria telegraph". Don't waste your time trying to persuade everyone to be comfortable with your cause. Usually you're wasting too much energy. Settle for a working majority. Volunteer to help other people's civic and political projects and charities. This should help you develop allies.

When you run into resistance with your local management, try your corporate headquarters employee assistance program. These are more sophisticated pros who know the policy and should be inclined to help you. Plan ahead for the specifics of your new wardrobe to blend into your corporate culture. And, plan ahead and be prepared for the whole gamut of questions from colleagues, including the inevitable ones about your sexual preferences ("we're discussing my gender identity, not my sexual preferences", if you wish). Be forthcoming but be aware that what is paramount in your life is still peripheral to most other people. If they ask, they're interested, so tell them. But try to not to overload folks.

Even if you're not scheduled to make your case with your boss until a month from now, get ready ASAP. The boss can move the meeting up and change the agenda. You can't. Expect the unexpected. Have handy whatever medical and legal certification you can show. Endorsement by others is usually helpful. When trying to build personal support in your organization, remember you are still climbing a competitive ladder. Expect that even some of your friends will use your special situation against you in some shape or form in the organization.

Tell religious ranters that God is not finished with you yet. Try to have some of your closest supporters with you when you make your case. There is spiritual comfort in your friends.

Consider the proper timing of all these steps in your process towards a safe, sound and successful transition on the job. Now, tee up your ball and smack that sucker hard. And, always remember that if they still try to run you out of town, get far enough out in front to make it look like a parade.

Rogers is a former journalist who retired as a corporate vice president in a fortune 500 company. In more than 30 years on various organizational ladders, he has been on both sides of managing, motivating and delegating. He is a spiritual and financial supporter of ICTLEP as well as AEGIS and IFGE. This presentation is the basis for an article which will appear in the next issue of Chrysalis.