

What Should You Call a Transgender Person in Your Documents?



If the name hasn't been legally changed, can you use it in your minutes and other legal papers?

Q I'm the secretary of a nonprofit group. We have a transgender person on our board who would like to use their new name (which isn't legally registered) on all documents. Is this acceptable or should I use their legally given name until the name has been legally changed? I know that the minutes of our meetings constitute a legal document. I'm concerned about the law in this matter.

A I don't think there's any legal requirement on this question. I would recommend that you use the name the person uses and wants to be called.

Name changes aren't unusual in our society. If a woman marries and wants to be called by her "married name," even though it's not a "legally registered" name or a legally required name, most people don't have any problem calling her what she wants to be called. If she doesn't want to

"change" her name, most people don't have a problem calling her by her name before the marriage. If the couple wants to use a hyphenated name, no problem. If a woman gets divorced and wants to be called by her pre-marriage name, even if that's not a part of a divorce decree, most people have no problem going back to using the pre-marriage name. Name changes may take a little time to get used to, but most people accept and use the name the person uses.

Transgender issues often evoke a much greater emotional reaction than these marriage or divorce situations, but I think you ought to react the same way. Use the name the person wants you to use. As long as you use it consistently, your minutes will be fine and everyone will know who you're talking about. And your board colleague will feel significantly more accepted and respected.

Don Kramer, Nonprofit Issues, nonprofitissues.com

What's the "Right" Amount of Communication with Donors?



Are you doing enough to retain donors?

Q We send our donors an e-mail every month to apprise them of new happenings, but we constantly wonder if that's enough – or too much. What's the "right" volume of communication with donors? Also, what's the best content to send?

A My short answer is that you need to do more than you're doing. One e-mail a month isn't likely to do the heavy lifting of relationship building.

And when it comes to content, focus on communicating impact. The best way to do so is to tell a story. Stories show donors their impact in action. Here are three places to incorporate stories:

- **Thank-you letters** are a great place to tell a story of impact. It needn't be long, but it should surprise and

delight donors and explain how their gift solved a problem or met a need.

- **Donor newsletters** too often just report updates. Make the whole newsletter about donor impact, which includes telling a variety of stories.
- **Gratitude reports** showcase stories of program participants, clients, and beneficiaries of your work.

As you evaluate the volume of your communication, I encourage you to ask yourself: Is this enough to build a relationship with the donor? Then upgrade your content with the help of stories. 

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