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transsexuals, work, transition, talk, people, cheryl, employer, transgendered, funny, company, job, radio, decided, person, heard, woman, care, interesting, months, inaudible

## SPEAKERS

Sarah DePalma, Dee McKellar, Jackie Thorne, Elizabeth Richards, Cheryl Kosta

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C

Cheryl Kosta 00:02

Well, I've had people throw limitations at me. Okay, I have had some restrictions in my life. And back when I thought about going back, I was in radio back when I was in high school in college. Okay. And I worked a little bit with it when I was in the service. And what was funny was I was thinking about going back into radio. But after I changed, I said, Well, there's not much I could do listen to my voice. I mean, I, you know, I can't go back in a radio something like this. And this lady friends and I went to college with was in radio, talk radio, and she says, Well, you've got two choices, you can either go back doesn't matter what gender you are in the radio who's going to see you. Okay. And if you have to make a personal appearance, pull your hair back in a ponytail, if people think you're a rock star. Take that approach to it. Or take the other approach is use your transsexuality as a calling card, people will not hesitate to use it against you, why not turn it around and use it for you. So the mentality we've decided we decided to do as well use it as a calling card. And it did cause some problems. There were some press we ran into some there are some editors in this town, they have refused to write about us, because they thought that their mainstream paper wasn't going to get into this sensational tabloid stuff. And I pointed out to them in several occasions, in some cases, that, guys, if you are treating me a professional individual who works for a fortune 500 company, I am the operations manager for a business talk radio station here in town. And oh, by the way, happened to be a radio comedian besides and you won't do a story about my show that everybody else is doing the story about because you think I'm not moral enough for your readership. And I think you guys have the problem. And that's about the only restriction we've had up until now that I'm getting ready to launch another show here. And within the next month, the business talk station I'm on knows that I'm a computer consultant in my day job, so to speak. And they're asking me to do a show called Business Computer talk. And I that was the last thing I thought I'd get a chance to do. Because, again, my voice doesn't sound exactly the way it is the way people would expect me to. They expect me to talk like this, you know? Hi, this is Cheryl Kosta. And this is business computer talk, you know, and it doesn't work. So I just talked with my voice. This is my voice. This is what God gave me. And it's okay. It's not going to hold me back.

S

Sarah DePalma 02:35

Well, I know you had a problem with some of the folks and you're like, I didn't know where to go.

Well, I know you had a problem with some of the folks are really into political correctness to to.

 Cheryl Kosta 02:39

Aw the political correctness when I hit it, if you ever envision two tractor trailers hitting head on, that's the politically correct, people just absolutely have isolated me. And that's okay. That's okay. Because people say, Well, your show is not politically correct enough. It's not gay enough. It's not transgendered enough. It's not this is not that. And I said, last time, I chose mainstream. It is mainstream, we build it as mainstream, we mark it as mainstream. And it is a commercial show. And we are out there selling commercials for selling sponsors, and I thought it was going to be a hindrance to selling sponsors. It hasn't been.

 Sarah DePalma 03:20

You know, it's a funny thing. Being transgender issues. I mean, they're serious. But this is also a lot of what we do is very funny. If you really stop and think about it.

 Elizabeth Richards 03:30

If you don't have a sense of humor about this, you're never going to make it.

 Sarah DePalma 03:32

Oh, yeah.

 Cheryl Kosta 03:34

It's funny. The humor about it is that as a comedian, I can get away with jokes that nobody in their wildest mind can ever get away with.

 Dee McKellar 03:42

And you've lived them. Well at least some of them.

 Cheryl Kosta 03:44

Well, that I pointed out to some people that, you know, I'm the perfect person to have an affair with. Think about it, you know, you're out with this gorgeous woman, right? And of course, when you're when the wife calls up to the guy's favorite bar and says, Honey, I want to talk to that gentleman. You're supposedly out with Mr. Swartz. How are you?

 Sarah DePalma 04:00



Sarah DePalma 04:07

Well, you know, I did some Monty Python here one night and there's there were several transgender stuff in it. And I got some calls from people who were real upset and they called me and said, How dare you play that stuff? That stuff is just, you know, it's making fun of transgenders. My response was basically get a life.



Elizabeth Richards 04:25

It was the lumberjack song. I mean, come on. It's hilarious.



Sarah DePalma 04:28

Yes. And I heard about that for two months. Yeah, I was like, I'll cut it out some it's funny.  
Laughing



Elizabeth Richards 04:33

Where is it? We'll do it tonight.



Cheryl Kosta 04:36

I love the lumberjack song. I really do. It's a terrific song. But you know, you know what's funny is is that like on our show, I had I broke when I came back in October. I was out at a company sponsored bowling party. Okay, this is like one of those pat on the backs data boys for our department. We did some real good one this contract right now and I slipped and I fell down, I broke one of my implants. Now understand my breadnut. Now that would sound very tragic under normal situations, okay. And what ended up happening with this whole thing was my breast implants had gotten hard as a rock. And on the show, Francis had named those huge M cup breasts of hers, Shar and Men don't squeeze the Charmin. So they decided they needed the name nee- needed to name my breasts. So they named mine slate and granite, I broke grantite.



Sarah DePalma 05:34

Slate and granite.



Cheryl Kosta 05:37

Okay, so what ended up happening was for about five or six weeks after they did the MRIs and all this sort of thing, we, we, we talked about it openly. Okay, that, you know, I broke this breast implant, I was probably going to have to have it out. And we were debating on the air as part of our common fare, but also part of talk radio, so to speak. You know, what were the issues here? Well, kept down to the week before my surgery. And Linda Schaffer, our our comedian, producer is like playing the sounds of buzz saws. Talking about Sunday more as well, I'm having

surgery on Monday morning, and she's going into her Boris Karloff routine. Come on, Igor we're at risk the recipe so we're going to need it, you know, it was very funny stuff. And there were people in the audience that were just absolutely appalled. Course, on the other hand, you know, again, being the beauty the beauty of this thing is being if you're politically correct, if you can't poke fun at yourself, you got to be able to poke fun at yourself and we poke fun at ourselves on a regular basis. There's there have been times we've walked away from the show, and I've cried all the way home because I felt that I really was invasively put on on the show during the show. And it took me a long time to realize where I personally left off and where Cassandra the On Air character picked up. Yeah. And sometimes my character has things done to her that we probably wouldn't have done to Cheryl caster, and nobody would ever expect them to be done the shell costume but on the other thing, things happen to Lucille Ball and her program that would never ever happened to Lucille Ball on the camera.

 Sarah DePalma 07:27

She will never work another candy assembly line.

 Jackie Thorne 07:31

Cheryl, do you find that the vast majority of the mainstream people that listen to your show, really don't care about the fact that you're transsexual?

 Cheryl Kosta 07:41

They don't care.

 Jackie Thorne 07:42

That's that's the thing that I have found without being out here in Houston. You know, I go to the stores and so forth. Okay. And the vast majority of people really just don't care.

 Cheryl Kosta 07:52

No, they don't care. We have found that it has been in fact what's been interesting. It's like since I've done some of the cable shows and things. Just before my just before my surgery I did. You'll love this. When I did this. I was invited back to do this interview on this cable station. I went in there wearing my transsexual menace t shirt.

 Elizabeth Richards 08:12

Awesome. Okay, gotta get one of those.



CHILLING 00:15



Cheryl Kosta 08:15

And I said they're wearing I got this one directly from Ricki and I sat there doing this interview with her and I allowed them to show pictures of my boy self back when I was 18 years old, right up to the military and right up to my current glamour shots, you know, that kind of thing. And what was interesting about the whole thing was I the radio station had me go reveal play. And I walked into the lobby for the theater to play and I have like three or four people come up. I saw you on television the other night. That was the most interesting piece of television I've seen in a long time. And you know, a couple of years ago if someone is because I saw you on television night I would have ducked but I'm finding out most people do not care and if nothing else. A lot of people feel that. They I think they have a tendency to think that those of us who are doing it are brave individuals.



Sarah DePalma 09:11

Well, in a way we are Hang on just a second here. This is KPFT Houston. 90.1 FM, and you're listening to KE- B- KE. What? Thank you KEOS College Station, Brian. I never get those call letters right.



Elizabeth Richards 09:27

At 89.1.



Sarah DePalma 09:29

89.1 Hello, college station. Okay. We're now now we're legal. Cheryl, we have to break in and go on to some other things. But I'm glad we were finally able to get you on the air. It's about time.



Cheryl Kosta 09:40

Well, thank you so much for having me.



Elizabeth Richards 09:42

I'll send you some email. You can send some back what the hell.



Cheryl Kosta 09:45

Drop me some email and I hope I get a copy of this show.



Sarah DePalma 09:50

That's a deal.

C

Cheryl Kosta 09:50

And what I'll do is I'll pack up one of our current Air Checks and I'll ship it down to you.

S

Sarah DePalma 09:55

We you know, it's funny Cheryl and I have both been turning down TV talk shows.

E

Elizabeth Richards 10:00

I don't blame you.

S

Sarah DePalma 10:02

I hadn't had a chance to Cheryl this, but we I got contacted by the Jerry Springer show, I guess it was about a month ago, right. And I said to her, what what is the show going to be about? And she said, "Well, we haven't decided yet". I said, "Well, who's going to be on it? "They said, "Well, we're still discussing that". I said, "Well, when when you have a firm commitment to let me know". So she did, she called me back a couple weeks later, and she said, "Well, we're going to do the show about this". I said, "Now, that's what you're telling me?"

C

Cheryl Kosta 10:27

What was it? What was this? I'm curious.

S

Sarah DePalma 10:28

She said it was going to be about political activists and in general, and I said, "Okay, fine, who is going to be on the show?" She didn't want to tell me. And I said, "Ah, ha." I said, "Well, are you willing to give me the return ticket before I leave? So in case I'm set up, I can go home?" "Well no." "Well it was good talking to you. Goodbye." Yeah. Unbelievable.

C

Cheryl Kosta 10:50

I pitched their senior producers Springer about four months ago, having a two things I pitched to them. I pitched the fact that there were three pioneers in radio right now. Why don't you do a real serious show, in bounce out the fact that they're misrepresenting the number of transsexuals that are out there by having one on every other week? Okay. And by also having the real fruit show, why not have some very articulate people on for a change and do something thing, and we were too normal? That's what I was told from their executive producer, we were too normal.

S

Sarah DePalma 11:26

Yeah, the producer for Donahue turned me down for the same reason they were going to have me on the show until they found out that they actually ran an honest to god political organization. They said, Oh, well, but no one would care about that. In other words, I wasn't enough of a freak to bat to get there. And I thought you want to know what's wrong with talk radio, talk television. We just explained it. Yeah.

C

Cheryl Kosta 11:46

That's exactly what's wrong with it. We still have a possibility. Right now I'm negotiating account. Let me let me bring you up to date with who people are talking to me about talking to you, me and Nancy. Right now. I have a conversation going on with Newsweek magazine. A very, very, very substantive conversation going on with radio and records are very substantive this conversation going on with the Burkowitz people, we've had that going on for some time that's been going on forever. And I do have a connection into Donahue, and I'm pitching it from the standpoint of pioneers in broadcasting. And we're getting away from the getting away from the political activism, because, again, that makes us too normal.

S

Sarah DePalma 12:30

Yeah, yeah. It was really interesting. When we were in Washington, DC for the Lobby Day. The media was terribly disappointed with us when they came to interview us because we were all in business suits, and we were not freaky at all. And we were talking about substantive issues. So it never aired

C

Cheryl Kosta 12:44

There was no there was no [INAUDIBLE] anyways.

S

Sarah DePalma 12:46

Yeah, yeah.

C

Cheryl Kosta 12:47

Wear a teased blonde wig there to meet demand.

S

Sarah DePalma 12:49

Yeah, it was pretty interesting.

J Jackie Thorne 12:51

So that's why Phyllis made me stay home.

S Sarah DePalma 12:54

I wasn't gonna say that. Yeah. Cheryl, thank you very much. And I promise you, I really, we really will send you a copy of the show.

C Cheryl Kosta 13:03

Thanks very much. And y'all have a good time down here in Texas.

S Sarah DePalma 13:05

We're sure gonna try. Enjoy your snow up there.

E Elizabeth Richards 13:08

Yup. Have a good time shoveling.

C Cheryl Kosta 13:09

But thank you very much. Bye bye now.

S Sarah DePalma 13:11

Bye Cheryl, uh- what do we have? What do we have queued?

E Elizabeth Richards 13:16

Well, I think we got some Tracy Chapman coming up there. Right.

S Sarah DePalma 13:18

Okay. Hey, Tracy Chapman it is and we're gonna go to it right now.

E Elizabeth Richards 13:22

Off the New Beginning album.

S

Sarah DePalma 13:23

The man's name is Jeff Crasner. And the song is called How Long Do I Have to be Strong? That is from a compact, compact disc that I received in the mail. It is a basically a CD with audition songs edition songs on it. And several songs are absolutely fabulous. I mean, they're good enough to be playing on any commercial station. And they are all done by gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered artists. Jeff Crasner, who just did that song is the producer of the CD. Really, it's to find a really good piece of music. I don't think the CD is available for sale. But some of the individual songs are-.

E

Elizabeth Richards 14:14

Way too cool.

S

Sarah DePalma 14:15

Yeah, now-.

E

Elizabeth Richards 14:17

Before that one we heard, Tracy Chapman, with Give Me One Reason Off Her New Beginning album. And boy, it's been a long time since we've had a new one from Tracy Chapman. We've been waiting for it. This is great stuff.

S

Sarah DePalma 14:28

Actually, she's done a couple of stuff in between. They just just wasn't they weren't very good. Sarah G is threatening to kill me now.

E

Elizabeth Richards 14:37

Sarah is a little disappointed in that response from the other room there.

S

Sarah DePalma 14:43

Now on the show. In the past we have talked about transition. And we have talked about what's involved with transition. And I guess I'd better let's start at the beginning by telling the audience what transition is. Transition is the process of going from one gender to another, essentially,

E

Elizabeth Richards 15:02

I had a close friend remind me that transition is life, every little bit of life is change. I mean, change is what this whole world is all about. So in talking to her about my transition, because she's not transgendered, it was just a matter of well, okay, I've understood how the changes in my life have affected me. So she was able to bring that point of view into it and get an understanding for what we were talking about. And so anybody can understand this.

S

Sarah DePalma 15:31

Well, I hope so they should be able to see. One of the things that we've done in the show in the past, as we've talked with, people have heard horror stories. And I have told stories on the show in the past about how transition can go wrong.

E

Elizabeth Richards 15:45

Scared me to death. I'll tell you.

S

Sarah DePalma 15:48

But it doesn't always go that way.

E

Elizabeth Richards 15:50

I have had almost no negatives about this thing. Just nothing to be negative about it. I cannot believe how, how smoothly it's all gone. And I think a lot of it has to do with the preparation. If you just walk in cold things gonna be tough, but when you set it up, right, it works. It really does.

S

Sarah DePalma 16:08

Well, why don't you talk about that? Maybe? This is a rare opportunity to have to open transsexuals on the air at the same time. And your transition has gone very smoothly once you talk about that.

E

Elizabeth Richards 16:18

Okay. Well, there's there's two camps on how you're going to do this. One camp is the well, I'm going to disappear into the woodwork and pop up somewhere else.

S

Sarah DePalma 16:28

We have woodworking we know about that. We know about that. Yeah.

E

Elizabeth Richards 16:31

And so I've, I've, I've known a friend for at least one who has quit their job left, the city changed, their name popped up somewhere else. And it took me months to find her. But finally I did. It was really interesting, because we were best friends in college, and neither of us knew about the other until she got it until I received this letter from her. It's like, well, I've got to go full time. Now I'll see you later. Hey, we have a lot more in common than we ever thought. But in any case, that worked for her, but it was hard. Because she suddenly in a new city. She's got a new job and the people they're supportive and the people who hired her in knew but but I mean, she had no friends in the area and no support structure to it. None of her friends from before were able to find her literally for months. This happened at Labor Day. And it wasn't till after Thanksgiving before I tracked her down again. So that's a tough way to go. In my situation, I ended up doing it on the job in possession I didn't didn't leave anywhere really haven't lost very many friends at all. Most people have taken it very well. And surprisingly well very few of them thought it was a surprise I guess I wasn't quite as secretive as I thought and just, you know, my my general outlook on life and who I was kind of showed through no matter what silly act, I was trying to play or character.

S

Sarah DePalma 18:00

One of the things one of the things that's always that I've I had friends who have done the same thing, they've, they were here one day, and they simply left town. Now for any of the folks that were out there, you know, if you've had to move from one town to another, you know how difficult it is to start over. So now. Yeah, imagine that you're not only starting over, but you're starting over in a new gender as a different person in a new place.

E

Elizabeth Richards 18:29

Oh, that's hectic, too. You combine them and it's murder. Yeah.

S

Sarah DePalma 18:33

I that's got to be one of the toughest things the world I can't imagine much worse all.

E

Elizabeth Richards 18:38

Neither could I. So I didn't well. And so I did sort of because just as I was approaching the time, when I was planning to transition, the company that I was working for went bankrupt, which may they rest in peace, it was a wonderful company with the most screwed up management that ever could possibly have been believed in they they drove the company right into the dirt and left us all looking for new jobs roughly three months before I was ready to transition. So unfortunately not having any of my legal paperwork done I had to do my do my interviewing as my former self and did manage to find a job and that's what relocated me here to Houston and it's only been 18 months now and so I spent my first year here in Houston on that job I got to know some people and I was I was doing pretty reasonably well in my work and and show them

that I was an employee that was worth keeping around. And you know, all the while I'd been been trying to figure out exactly when would be a good time to actually finish this up. The people in my neighborhood. When I moved in, we would more or less introduced me as the end [INAUDIBLE] said to him or her well, yes, yes. What's your name? Well B. What's that? If that's my first initial, what's your name? B.

 Sarah DePalma 20:04

Next question, right.

 Elizabeth Richards 20:05

So so I mean, I left, I left the decision up to others as to how they wanted to perceive me. And surprisingly enough, nearly universally, they accepted me as female.

 Sarah DePalma 20:19

But not be fair to the audience, you've got very long here, you have very androgynous appearance. So it would have been it was, I think it would have been in the natural conclusion, I would have assumed that

 Elizabeth Richards 20:29

Well, it's funny, because before moving to Houston, I was in Philadelphia, and you know, back back in Philadelphia, I was just like, the hippie in the lab is-.

 Sarah DePalma 20:39

Difference between North and South.

 Elizabeth Richards 20:41

And even as early on as my interview trip down here. I was I was probably in Philadelphia getting ma'am roughly 80% of the time, but that like I said, I was already nearing transition. I was I was roughly three months from my intentions of, of transitioning there, when this all happened. And and come to Houston, and instantly, you know, 0%, sir, is 90, you know, 99.9% of the time it was ma'am. And those those point 1%, the person looked up and said, oh, excuse me, ma'am. That's right. So that kind of surprised me. But there is a difference in the way people are perceived based on the culture and around the country. Its cultures are different from city to city.

 Sarah DePalma 21:23

This is Texas where hippies never existed [INAUDIBLE].

 Elizabeth Richards 21:27

I suppose not. I suppose not. I didn't spend much time in Texas in the 60s, so I wouldn't know. In any case, so you know, the people in the neighborhood were pretty cool with things and we're going around fairly quick because as I was saying, I was not presenting myself strictly as female at that time. I was I was, you know, letting others decide. And there were a few that had decided that I was male. And this became quite the conversation at the bus stop where I dropped my kids off for school every morning. And you know, the word got around and, and, you know, that was the end of it. Okay, so she's transgendered. Okay, great. Okay, she's a woman maybe got there a little interesting path, but she's a woman, what the heck, which is making things really interesting being a woman at home and, and perceived as a male at work, when not really anything different was happening from one place to another with the exception of at work, I had this name tag hanging around my neck that you know, everybody would see. And with that name, you're not alone. So eventually, it came time it was it, I had had it, I was no longer going to do this. I'd spent my year I'd gotten my review, I'd showed that I could, I could do the work. I wasn't a person who who deserved to firing based on my work. And so I took that chance, and and decided it was time to transition on the job. Now I'd heard the horror stories. You've heard this horror, we've all heard the horror stories about about the kind of hassles that people have had coming out on the job. And, and I didn't get any of those. I was really pleased for that. But I had prepared just in case I had my resume updated. I'd even send it around to a couple of companies back home Philly because I still own a house there kind of nice to live in the house. I own I figured but it turned out I never needed to. And that was just fine with me.

 Sarah DePalma 23:31

Okay, now there we we ran through a bunch of issues. So I'm gonna I'm gonna back up, I want to back up a second. First thing that I wanted to talk- I wanted to address is the idea that you were being perceived partly as male by some people, partly as female by some people. Now, the reason that I finally decided I had to go full time, one gender or the other is because I couldn't handle that. It was making me nuts. Yeah, I got to where I was Derringer, schizophrenic.

 Elizabeth Richards 24:06

It was definitely hard. It was it was really bizarre to be in a meeting meeting vendors from you know, another city and they didn't know me, they come in to meet me and they, and they say, Oh, hi, how are you? And we shake hands? And I'm sorry, what's your name? And I'd repeat it and suddenly the handshake would change. Yeah, ha, ha ha. Yeah. It's like, and I'm just getting sick of this. And it was annoying. It was it was driving me nuts. And I just could no longer continue to do that. That's really a large portion of what I knew it was time to do it.

 Sarah DePalma 24:39

Now some people might be surprised to find out the transgender people or transsexuals are

NOW SOME PEOPLE MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT THE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OR TRANSEXUALS ARE ALSO PARENTS.

 Elizabeth Richards 24:45

That's true.

 Sarah DePalma 24:45

But that is not at all uncommon. Only on Geraldo, do you get the idea that transsexuals are not parents?

 Elizabeth Richards 24:53

Well, I've got a seven year old boy and a five year old girl who I'm very, very proud of and in fact, I spent last night in a tent in Huntsville State Park with the Cub Scouts camping it was cold.

 Sarah DePalma 25:06

And there was no place to plug in hairdryer either.

 Elizabeth Richards 25:08

None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

 Sarah DePalma 25:11

Okay, so now you're, you have a physical appearance of the female but your nametag it works still says a male name. Okay, so now at that point, I can understand where it's like you gotta do something,

 Elizabeth Richards 25:22

Well you say physical appearance at work, what I was doing is, I work in a place, it's that allows for a pretty wide variety of dress, I was probably the most casual end of the spectrum, coming in with like, polo shirts and nice jeans and that sort of thing, which is androgynous. I mean, and that's part of the reason, I kind of think of it is as this sort of a V shaped curve, where if you got men on one side and women on the other, the higher up you go in formality, the farther apart they get.

 Sarah DePalma 25:54

Right, good explanation.

**E** Elizabeth Richards 25:55

And as you come towards casual, well, they do kind of merge, I mean, okay, so the buttons on my shirt were on one side or the other, depending on which shirt it was. And, and so, I didn't look that different. I didn't, I didn't present anything that would allow anybody to make a distinction one way or another. Other than, you know, just looking at my, my, my face, my my body structure, the way I moved and that sort of thing to make their determination, as I was minimizing the clues.

**S** Sarah DePalma 26:25

Okay, so now you've made your decision. It's time to tell people, now what?

**E** Elizabeth Richards 26:29

So it's time to tell people. And that's, that's always hard, right?

**S** Sarah DePalma 26:33

I hear transsexuals out there, right now quaking in their boots, you mean, I'm going to have to tell my employer? Well, you know, if you're going to transition on the job, and let's face it, most stages of therapy, telling your employer is one of the requirements, you have to be able to do it. And yeah.

**E** Elizabeth Richards 26:50

If you're going to do it on job, that's the only way to go. If you're going to if you're going to try to do the woodworking, which is really hard, you avoid that problem. But still, you're asking for lots of others. So it's a balance. Now, it's trade offs.

**S** Sarah DePalma 27:04

You did a lot of preparation leading up to this, though, why don't you tell people about some of that, because when I hear a lot of transsexuals talk about transition, it's like they want to be able to go in and do it tomorrow, without any preparation, no, anything. And that's just not reality.

**E** Elizabeth Richards 27:20

Well I'll tell you, it's certainly would be a wonderful reality if it worked. But it doesn't mean I would have you know, really have to just one day said, That's it, I'm done. I didn't change this

would have, you know, really love to just one day say, that's it, I'm done. Let's just change this whole thing and get on with my life. You know, get on with living or get on with die and pick one, right? So I decided to get on with living was the thing to do, because I'd been, it wasn't a matter of getting on with dying in an immediate way. But the lethargy was creeping up on me, I just didn't care anymore about who I was, I wasn't proud of who I was, I couldn't do that anymore. So I got out of living. And my first contact at work was to contact my boss and his boss and say, hey, you know, there's something personal, it's coming up, it's gonna affect the workplace. And I need to talk to you guys, when we get together and get together on a Monday morning. I'd actually sent this in in email. So it was waiting for them when I popped in Monday morning and got together right away. And I came out to them I explained, you know, that, that I'd been in this path for quite some time, and it was time to transition that I was going to start coming to work as a female, which is who I am. And they're, after they pick their jaws up off the table and stared at each other blankly for a few minutes, they both kind of agreed, well, we've never done this before and have no idea what to do. Thanks for telling us. Why don't you talk to human resources people.

 Sarah DePalma 28:47

Shoveled it off? It's their problem.

 Elizabeth Richards 28:49

Yeah. You know. So at that point, I kind of had a feeling of more or less how this was going to go because it could have come in and they could have just freaked. But they didn't.

 Sarah DePalma 29:01

They didn't fire you on the spot. That's a healthy side.

 Elizabeth Richards 29:03

No, no, they weren't at all hostile. They didn't. They didn't, you know, snap at me. They weren't, you know, ugly. They didn't have bear claws. And you know, none of this stuff. They just, they just weren't really sure exactly how to go about this because they've never done it before. But-.

 Sarah DePalma 29:18

But they were willing.

 Elizabeth Richards 29:19

They were, they were willing to take that step.

S

Sarah DePalma 29:21

That's the key. I have seen transition go either way. I tell the story about two people that I knew who worked for two separate oil companies in downtown Houston, one of the ones of their employer and explained what was going on, was willing to bring the therapist in to explain everything. And the transition went very smoothly across the street, different oil company, almost an identical set of circumstances, would not even be willing to see that therapist. She was gone just like that. The difference was the attitude of the employer. One was willing one wasn't.

E

Elizabeth Richards 29:56

And yeah. Well the other thing is that I came in being very clear that I was willing to work with them on getting this to work out smoothly. Because what, you know, they're sitting there being a manager of a group of people when they're trying to get a job done. And suddenly, we've got this big disruption thrown in there. And you know, that's gonna make any manager nervous, regardless of what the disruption is. And so what they want to hear is not, I need to do this, I need to do it now. You guys got to put up with it, that's just too bad. This is where my life is. Now, they don't want to hear that what they want to hear is, is a way that they can get this disruption minimized. So keep on doing what they're, they're there to do.

S

Sarah DePalma 30:37

That's another point of a, I think, a successful transition. So many people who go into the employer, it's all about me, me, me, me, me. And the employer doesn't it's not so interested in them, what they want to know is, how much trouble are we in? Yeah, you know, and if you can go in and explain to the employer, it is not a problem, it is not going to be a problem. And I will work with you on it. That makes a difference.

E

Elizabeth Richards 31:00

Okay, so this was June 12. This was like, you know, only what, six, seven months ago now. Right? And I told them, You know, I'd really like to get this done by like, oh, obviously, I'm gonna go on vacation Fourth of July for a week, how about the week after that? 10th. July, we will do this since July. And that's, you know, or before. Much to my surprise, the new vice president who is going to be reporting first of July, decided that she was going to report considerably sooner that the 19th of June. And so they said, well, well, that was part of my reasoning for wanting to do it. At that beginning of July, because I would really prefer to be known to somebody in a consistent way. You know, she'd know me as a woman, okay, maybe got there by a rather unusual route. But she'd know me as a woman, these other people there know me as a transsexual, they know me as somebody who has changed, okay. And it's a little different emphasis. And it's a little different dynamic in the way that people work with you that and, you know, it's okay, I'm known as a transsexual, it's reality. It's a truth. But if that's the first thing that comes to somebody's mind, they're going to be a little less comfortable with me.

S

Sarah DePalma 32:11

Right? I've had that experience also.

E

Elizabeth Richards 32:13

Yeah, you know, so I prefer to have people meet me as a woman. And then if they find out, that's wonderful. And if they don't find out it, that's also wonderful. But that should be a secondary issue, not the fact that the way the person they're dealing with is a woman.

S

Sarah DePalma 32:27

And first and first, transsexual further down the list.

E

Elizabeth Richards 32:30

You got it. Okay, got it. So. So this, this rather changed my schedule, because they wanted to know how I wanted to be introduced to her on, you know, 19 gym. And it's like, well, I can be ready for 19 June, but I don't know if you guys can. So let me go research that and I'll get back to you. So I went back to my desk and called the HR rep first thing. Unfortunately, our phone system at work allows people with the right kind of phone with a little display on it to get the name of the caller right up front. So she answered the phone. Oh, hello, name. It's like, Oh, great. I don't get to introduce myself. So this will be interesting. And I told her that well, I need to come talk to you when's the first time we come talk? She says How about tomorrow morning. It's like, okay, great. So I scheduled time with her tomorrow, the next morning. And I decided that Well, the next step after this is going to be that I have to tell the people that I work with, and that's like 15 people. I could tell person one and then I could move down the office to person two, and then I could well, this is going to take a lot of time this is going to eat up my day completely. And pieces of their day all the way. Oh, and by the way, by the time I get to person to person wants to run down the hall and talk to person three and played the telephone game. Distorted some things along the way. This is bad.

S

Sarah DePalma 33:45

By the time you get there. You're a three headed monster that looks like a toad. Yeah.

E

Elizabeth Richards 33:49

Yeah. So my solution to this being in a technical company was to send out an email to the 15 or so people that that would, would work with me and on a daily basis. And I figured that the rumor mill was certainly sufficient to take care of the the folks that were beyond that. But since they didn't have to work with me on that much of a regular basis, they could afford a little bit of erroneous transmission, that's a poor. So I drafted an email letter. And I wandered into my HR reps office the next morning, she turned around and looked at me and said, Hello. And it just wasn't working for her that name on the calendar that she'd written down just wasn't the

person standing in her doorway, didn't see the mail here at all. She was very uncomfortable with this. So I pull out this piece of paper, I hand it to her and I said, Oh, this will explain why I'm here. Just take a look at this. I'm intending to send this out to the people in my work group sometime in the next couple of days. And I'd put the date down for the 19th just you know, instead well now the only thing that's not really firming, here is the date. We'll work that out. And so she starts reading down and down and suddenly she gets to that line. It's There's something about coming to work as a woman for a change. And she gets this big smile on her face as it suddenly dawns on her what's going on. And she said that now she now she understood, and she was willing to help me in any way she could. And, and the thing is that I gave her a chance. I didn't go in there saying, you know, all this is going to be bad. I gave her that chance to let her tell me whether or not it was going to be bad. And I was ready for if it was bad, but I was sure hoping it wouldn't be right. And it was. So.

S

Sarah DePalma 35:34

See that's one of the things that I get phone calls from people. And they say to me, Well, I told my employer, and my employer fired me on the spot. And I say, Well, what kind of preparation work? Did you do? Preparation? You know, like, like, what's that? Well, how did you present it? Well, I told the employer what had to happen. I said, You told the employer, you didn't ask, well, to have to agree with me, don't they? No, they don't. Where did you get that idea?

E

Elizabeth Richards 36:03

Well, I certainly told my employer what would happen, there's no doubt about that. But I let them tell me how it was going to happen, how we were going to work this out to make it work. Because there was no way that I was going to continue on in this charade any longer than I had to.

S

Sarah DePalma 36:19

There you go.

E

Elizabeth Richards 36:19

And it was just time there was nothing I was going to do to stop that transition. But I could work with people on it and make it work out smoothly. Or I could be you know bullheaded and come in like bull in china shop and make a mess of everything.

S

Sarah DePalma 36:33

So you want to do you feel you feel comfortable reading that letter?

E

Elizabeth Richards 36:37

Yeah, I was gonna say Sarah asked me to bring this in. So I dragged in that letter that I was just talking about that I drafted up. I might add that this was Tuesday morning, I had that conversation. And she said, wow, okay, well, the only thing I can say is that I don't know enough to say whether or not you can, you know, send this real soon. I'm going to talk to my superiors once you hang on it letter, and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. And I really don't see the 19th of June being problem. So exactly one week, after I contacted my management for the first time, the company was ready to go.

S

Sarah DePalma 37:11

That's incredible, that really is incredible. That's that's a very socially advanced company, because I guarantee in most- yours is one of the real exceptions to the stories that I've ever heard.

E

Elizabeth Richards 37:21

Yeah, you know, I'm glad of it. And I hope more people have as easy a time as I did, or even easier, because there was some hiccups along the way, but we'll get to those pretty soon. So Wednesday morning, the next day, and you know, now two days have passed only two, I get a call back from her. And and, and she says, Well, there's one paragraph we wanted you to add up front. And I'll get to that in a second basically, that basically said that, you know, I've talked to the management about it. They know they're cool with it, and it's time similar out to everybody else. And then she brought up, guess what? The bathroom issue?

S

Sarah DePalma 37:57

Why are we not surprised? When that comes up? Every time in it? I just don't get it. There was nothing so fascinating in the bathrooms. anyone cares?

E

Elizabeth Richards 38:08

You know, the only thing I was surprised about is it took them from Monday to Wednesday to bring it up.

S

Sarah DePalma 38:12

Yeah. It didn't come up in the first 13 seconds.

E

Elizabeth Richards 38:15

Yeah, really. Because the way actually the way she said it was you know, as far as gender specific spaces here at work. The only thing that we can think of is the bathroom and what are you going to do about that? She asked me, you know, that was kind of surprising, because, you know, I'd often heard of people who were told well, this is what you will do.

S

Sarah DePalma 38:35

Yeah this happened to Phyllis Frye. She ended up- when she was at the courthouse. This shit- they she actually ended up with a bladder infection had some bladder accidents, because she was only allowed to use one restroom the entire facility. Yeah, so yeah.

E

Elizabeth Richards 38:50

I know a friend who had a little magnet-