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The transgender community was in the spotlight this past year in a way it never has been before. For the first time ever a transgendered woman, actress Laverne Cox from the critically acclaimed series “Orange is the New Black”, appeared on the cover of TIME magazine. At this year’s Golden Globes “Transparent”, a comedy series that portrays a family whose father comes out as transgendered, won Best Television Series and its star, Jeffrey Tambor, won Best Actor for his portrayal. Most recently pop culture news and social media has been all abuzz over former Olympian and current reality TV star, Bruce Jenner and his transition to a woman.

Unfortunately, even as pop culture comes around to acknowledging transgender people, society and businesses need to catch up. In terms of equality, or even protection, we have a long way to go. Transgender people have double the unemployment rate of their peers, and 97% report some type of harassment at their job, according to The National Transgender Discrimination Survey. What is even more disturbing, and heart breaking, is the fact that worldwide more than 200 transgender people a year are reported murdered.

If business owners rely on fear and stereotypes, more often than not they will miss out on talented employees who can give their business a competitive edge. So, what can businesses do? First, promote diversity within your company and include non-discrimination policies that contain protections for sexual orientation AND gender identity. If you have a transgender employee, it’s best to ask that employee privately how they would like their situation handled. Some will want to further the awareness of the community; others would prefer to keep their private lives private. You should also refer to the employee by the name and pronoun they’d prefer. It’s not only common courtesy, but it’s a large part of their personal identity and acceptance.

While getting the best talent and improving the bottom line are important, the real reason to practice non-discrimination is simply that it’s the right thing to do. Pop culture has begun to pave the way for general understanding of the struggles of the transgender community. Now it is time for businesses to act on that understanding and move forward into equality.