

# Adapting to Ever-Evolving Language



Q MIA MOORE, TECHNICAL COMMUNITY BUILDER, CAMUNDA





# Mia Moore

Technical Community Builder,  
Camunda



@xoMiaMoore

xomia.com

Q ADAPTING TO EVER-EVOLVING LANGUAGE, YOU GOT THIS 2023



# CAMUNDA







# Mia Moore

Technical Community Builder,  
Camunda



@xoMiaMoore

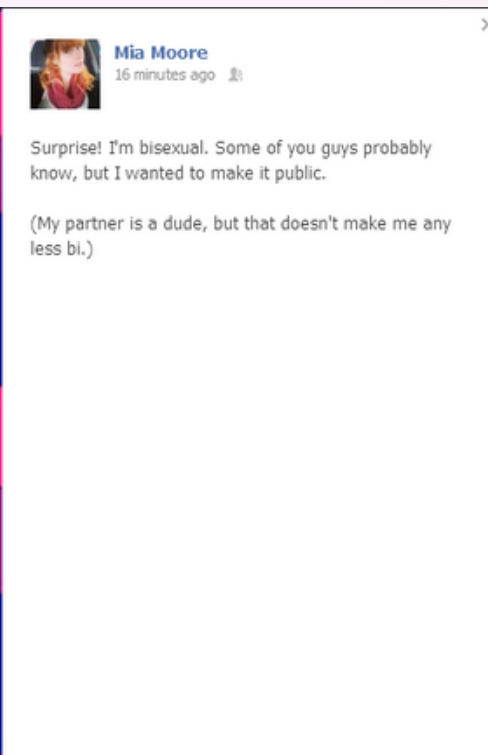
xomia.com

ADAPTING TO EVER-EVOLVING LANGUAGE, YOU GOT THIS 2023



MY PRONOUNS ARE

**she/her**





# Mia Moore

Technical Community Builder,  
Camunda



@xoMiaMoore

xomia.com

Q ADAPTING TO EVER-EVOLVING LANGUAGE, YOU GOT THIS 2023



MY PRONOUNS ARE

**she/they**  
**they/she**





# Mia Moore

Technical Community Builder,  
Camunda



@xoMiaMoore

xomia.com

Q ADAPTING TO EVER-EVOLVING LANGUAGE, YOU GOT THIS 2023



MY PRONOUNS ARE

**they/them**



Mia Moore  
@xoMiaMoore



I have decided that she/her does not spark joy and will only be using they/them, thank you for understanding



12:13 PM · Dec 17, 2020



# Goals of this talk

1

Learn why inclusive language matters

2

Examples of more gender-inclusive language

3

Guidance for practicing and when you make a mistake

4

Confidence in navigating changing language



# Goals of talk

## Disclaimer:

I am speaking primarily from a gender and LGBTQ+ perspective, and I live in the United States and only speak English.

of inclusive language matters

examples of more inclusive language

for practicing and make a mistake

in navigating language





# Inclusive language:

language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude particular groups of people

Dictionary.com





# Language matters





**Connect your  
message with  
more people**





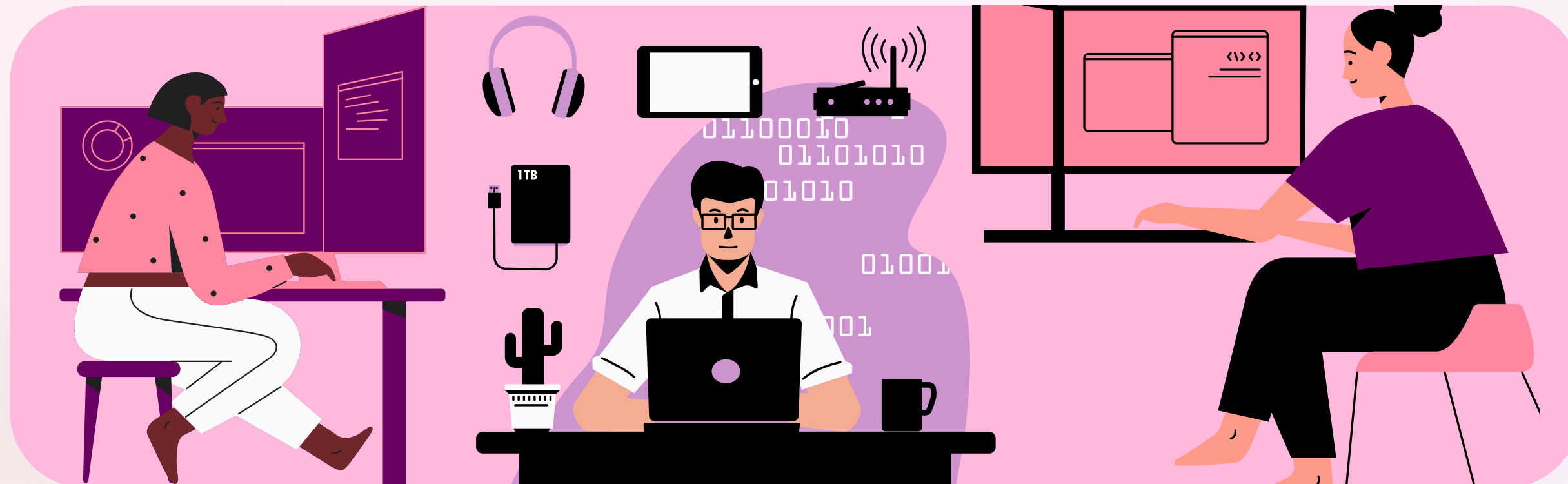


**"Why do I keep  
having to learn  
new things?"**



# Better communication

- More specific/accurate (e.g. -- "Hi everyone" vs. "Hi guys")
- More understandable (whitelist/blacklist vs. allowlist/blocklist)
- More relevant to your audience
- More respectful
- All of this leads to better communication





# The cost of exclusion





# By the numbers

46%

of LGBTQ+ workers are closeted at work.

31%

of LGBTQ+ workers felt unhappy or depressed at work.

25%

of LGBTQ+ workers feel distracted from work.

Human Rights Campaign's [A Workplace Divided: Understanding the Climate for LGBTQ+ Workers Nationwide](#), 2018.



# The cost of exclusion

## LGBTQ+ Employees

- Cannot bring "full self" to work
- Feel unseen or not valued for who they are
- Distraction from doing work or being more involved
- Social isolation
- Leave the company



# The cost of exclusion

## Employers

- Loss of important, diverse perspective
- Reduced productivity and job satisfaction
- Cannot retain or attract LGBTQ+ talent







# **Inclusive language guidelines and examples**





# Gender-inclusive language cheat sheet

Avoid unnecessarily gendered language

Avoid assumptions

Remember pronoun etiquette

Reconsider titles and honorifics

Mirror your coworkers

Continue learning

# Avoid unnecessarily gendered language

- Masculine terms are often seen as neutral or the default, but they are not
- Ask: Is it **necessary** in this context?
  - If no – can you remove the reference to gender all together?
  - If yes – do you know how that person or group identifies?
- Be **specific** about your audience
  - "Colleagues" is both gender-neutral and more specific than "ladies and gentlemen" or "guys"





**AVOID**

**TRY INSTEAD**

Ladies and gentlemen

Distinguished guests  
Esteemed guests  
Everyone  
Colleagues

Guys  
Guys and gals  
Ladies

Friends (and enemies)  
Team  
People  
Folks  
Y'all  
All  
Fam  
Guys, gals, and non-binary pals

Dude  
Man  
Bro

(Omit entirely)  
Friend  
Buddy  
Pal

# Avoid assumptions

## Individuals

- Take care to avoid assumptions with family structure
- Avoid assuming pronouns/gender identity
- Use more inclusive language around terms like parental leave

## Customer personas

- Take care with customer personas to avoid stereotypes
- When possible, use real customer feedback and data to build a persona
- Create more than one persona to target sub-groups rather than having a single "generic" persona



## **AVOID**

Maternity/paternity leave  
Mother/father

Husband/wife  
Girlfriend/boyfriend

Mom/dad  
Daughter/son  
Sister/brother  
Niece/nephew

Sexual preference

## **TRY INSTEAD**

Parental leave, family leave  
Birthing/non-birthing parent

Spouse  
Partner  
Significant other  
Many other examples!

Parent  
Child  
Sibling  
Nibling  
Family member  
Loved ones

Sexual orientation  
Romantic orientation



## **AVOID**

### **Gendered occupational titles**

Salesman/saleswoman

### **Specifying gender when it is not relevant**

Female doctor, male nurse

## **TRY INSTEAD**

Sales representative, salesperson

### **Not specifying gender**

Doctor, nurse

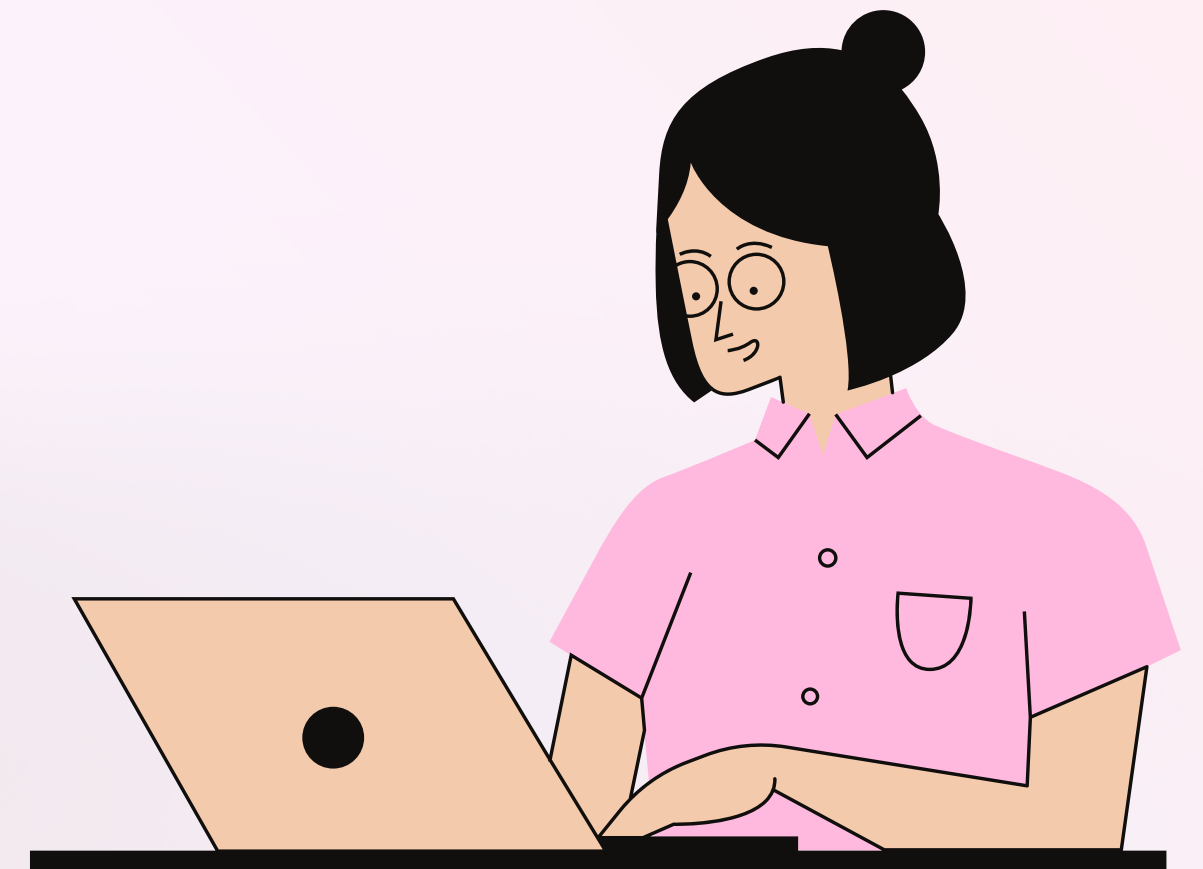
# Remember pronoun etiquette

- Include **voluntary** opportunities for sharing pronouns
  - During introductions
  - Digital: Email signature, employee database, Slack/Teams, Zoom, etc.
  - Physical: Name tags or badges at events
- When you don't know someone's pronouns:
  - Look it up
  - Use they/them
  - Ask them what pronouns to use
- Use they/them for theoretical examples or when someone's pronouns are unknown



# Reconsider titles and honorifics

- Titles are complicated, numerous, and mostly not neutral -- they can tell us a lot about someone!
  - Mrs./Ms./Miss can reveal marital status
  - Very few forms include Mx. (pronounced "Mix")
  - Military, doctor, and other titles
- Is this data **necessary**?
  - If yes, allow open answers and/or include Mx.
  - If no, omit altogether or make it optional





## AVOID

Preferred pronouns

Identifies as

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Miss

**He/him (generic/hypothetical)**  
**His/her (generic/hypothetical)**  
**(s)he**

A software developer should always check **his** work for bugs.

A software developer should always check **his or her** work for bugs.

## TRY INSTEAD

Pronouns

Is

Mx.

(Omit entirely)

On forms: Allow open answers, or make optional

**They/them**  
**Theirs**

Software developers should always check **their** work for bugs.

# Mirror your coworkers

- Be an active listener
  - What words do they use to describe themselves?
  - Ask appropriate questions in appropriate situations
- Person-first vs. identity-first language
  - "Person with autism" vs. "autistic person"
- Avoid using generic language for individuals
  - "She is bisexual" or "she is a member of the LGBTQ+ community" vs. "she is LGBTQ+"



# Continue learning

- Language and its meaning evolves constantly and over time
- Listen and research when you hear something new
- Participate in Employee Resource Group activities that are open to all
- Join Employee Resource Groups or other organizations that are relevant to you
- Seek out professionals for copywriting, building inclusive company culture, etc.







# Practicing and making mistakes





# When you make a mistake

Understand humans make mistakes

Correct yourself in the moment,  
if possible

Apologize to anyone you harmed

Avoid over-apologizing

Practice makes improvement

Don't be defensive



# How to practice new-to-you language

Look up examples & resources

Practice in your head and out loud

Slow down when speaking

Recruit an accountability buddy

"Guys" jar

Give compliments

Rethink gender



# Thank you!



@xoMiaMoore

xomia.com

Q MIA MOORE, TECHNICAL COMMUNITY BUILDER, CAMUNDA



# Resources

Practice and learn more

when your nonbinary friend is sad because they keep getting misgendered



- [APA's Bias-Free Language Guide](#)
- [Out & Equal's Best Practices for Non-Binary Inclusion in the Workplace](#)
- [HotJar's "Guys" jar experiment](#)
- [Pronoun.is](#) - how to use pronouns in a sentence
- [Buffer's Inclusive Language and Vocabulary in Tech Guide](#)

# References

- Human Rights Campaign's [A Workplace Divided: Understanding the Climate for LGBTQ+ Workers Nationwide](#), 2018.
- Pride flags from @superq