Designing Forms for Gender and Inclusion

In 2017, the J. Walter Thompson Innovation Group discovered that:

- 70% of Gen Z felt that public spaces and businesses need to be more gender inclusive, to gender-neutral bathrooms, compared to 50% of Gen X and Boomers.
- 56% of Gen Z said they know someone who went to gender-neutral pronouns such as "they" or "ze" compared to only 39% of Gen X and Boomers.

The world is evolving towards inclusivity, and so should your forms. Here are six recommendations for you to design forms inclusively:

1. Make it private, safe, and anonymous.
   - Always be clear about where the information is going and how it will be used. Ensure user data can be edited, correct, or removed on user request. Be mindful of who will use the information. Try to anonymize the information as much as possible, so there will be no accidental link back, for example, if you show a result from a small survey to someone in another department only has one woman, she has been outsaid.

2. Always make it optional.
   - Forcibly, make the gender-field optional. This brings us back to the first point about having good forms to ask the question in the first place. The user may know better than you whether it’s safe to disclose their information based on the context.

3. Ask for pronouns instead.
   - Consider asking people about their pronouns instead of gender. Or including the gender-neutral form "they/them/themselves" as an optional option. When asked the third of the users who are female will use "they/them/themselves" as their gender.

4. Be ready for a complex answer.
   - Depending on the context, having more or fewer labels is often the solution. But generally, you wont want to make it simple enough so you dont leave out everyone else. Having too many options may cause users to feel unsure and easily identify if they are ignored.

5. Just don’t ask.
   - If there is no reason and you don’t know why you are asking, you probably don’t need to know the answer. Make your form more streamlined and easy to fill, and excise the question. Consider again if you need gender data for marketing purposes, will you use it absolutely different based on gender. Also consider if you must use it rezult to the option on the form for more than just the most frequent labeling.

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