

Dr. Mary Ann Horton

Transgender Activist
Internet Pioneer
Keynote Speaker
Award-Winning Author

KEY CREDENTIALS

PhD Computer Science
UC Berkeley, 1981
Bell Labs
Lucent Technologies
JPMorgan Chase, VP
Inventor, Email Attachment
Creator, Babel (1981)
Led Usenet Growth
user@domain.com Standard
Out & Equal Trailblazer
Award, 2001
2025 Clarence E. Anderson
Peace and Justice Award
SoCal Lutherans
Oxford Univ CS Recognition
Alongside Alan Turing,
Edie Windsor, Audrey Tang
Assisting Minister
First Lutheran Church
San Diego

FEATURED IN

VICE
The Daily Beast
The New York Times
Google Arts and Culture
Salon
Diversity Factor
SHRM



Can One Person Change the World?

A keynote for corporate ERG events, HR conferences, university programs, and faith communities

THE SPEAKER

In 1997, Dr. Mary Ann Horton persuaded Lucent Technologies to become the first Fortune 500 company in history to add transgender-inclusive language to its nondiscrimination policy. The five words she proposed, "gender identity, characteristics, or expression," became the template that Apple, Avaya, IBM, and eventually 95% of Fortune 500 companies followed. Her landmark research study proved that gender affirming care coverage costs companies less than 40 cents per insured per year, data that directly shaped the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.

She is also one of the foundational architects of the modern internet: inventor of the email attachment, creator of Babel (1981 real-time code error detection, forerunner of Visual Studio and Eclipse), leader of Usenet's growth from 10 to 5,000+ sites, and a driving force behind the user@domain.com email standard.

THREE KEYNOTE TALKS

Can One Person Change the World?

FOR: Corporate ERG Events, HR Conferences, DEI Practitioners, Pride Month Programming

The inside story of how one person changed what was possible for transgender workers across the entire Fortune 500. From 1997 Lucent to 95% of companies, Dr. Horton traces how institutional change is made from within and connects it to what HR and ERG leaders face in 2026. Opens with a question. Ends with a challenge.

From Bytes to Rights: One Pioneer's Journey

FOR: Technology History, Engineering Leadership, History of Computing, Innovation Audiences

She invented the email attachment. She led Usenet from 10 sites to over 5,000. Her PhD dissertation created Babel, the forerunner of modern coding tools. She helped standardize user@domain.com. Through all of it, she was quietly, carefully figuring out who she really was. A technology history talk with no direct competition.

Trailblazer: Faith, Identity, and the Courage to Be Whole

FOR: LGBTQ+ Affirming Faith Communities, Lutheran Networks, Seminary Programs, ReconcilingWorks Events

As an assisting minister at First Lutheran Church of San Diego and the first transgender member of Lutherans Concerned (1998), Dr. Horton bridges understanding and acceptance in communities where the conversation is both urgent and personal.

WHAT AUDIENCES SAY

"I'm resonating a lot with this talk. This is one of the best presentations I've ever seen. Amazing on both the professional level and the personal level fighting for so much."

— ERG Member, Hudson River Trading LLC, August 2023

"We are proud of the work she has done for setting the foundation of today's Nokia's LGBTQ+ inclusion and being a trailblazer of transgender rights at the workplace."

— Anneli Karlstedt, Head of Inclusion and Diversity, Nokia

"Mary Ann Horton is indeed a trailblazer: in her professional life as in her life of faith, she has provided us with a model for courageous, thoughtful, principled engagement."

— The Rev. Guy Erwin, First Openly Gay Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

AVAILABLE FORMATS

Keynote (45 to 60 minutes)
Panel Participant (30 to 45 minutes)
Workshop (60 to 90 minutes)
Faith Community Talk (30 to 45 minutes)
In person or virtual

THE BOOK

Trailblazer: Lighting the Path for Transgender Equality in Corporate America (2022). Recommended by Monica Helms, creator of the transgender flag, and Brian McNaught, 40-year corporate diversity consultant. Signed copies available at in-person events.