Employee Business Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups are groups of employees that have characteristics in common such as: religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status.

Definitions of Disability/Veteran's Status from carnegie Mellon University

Individual with a Disability

(i) A person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities;

(ii) A person who has a record of such an impairment; or

(iii) A person who is regarded as having such an impairment.

Vietnam Era Veteran

(i) A person who served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days and was discharged or released therefrom with other than a dishonorable discharge, if any part of such active duty occurred in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, or between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975, in all other cases, or

(ii) A person who was discharged or released from active duty for a service-connected disability of any part of such active duty was performed in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975; or between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975, in all other cases.

Disabled Veteran

(i) A veteran of the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, or

(ii) A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

Special Disabled Veteran

(i) A veteran entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs for disability who is rated at 30 percent or more or who is rated at 10 or 20 percent in the case of a veteran who has been determined under Section 3106 of Title 38, U.S.C. to have a serious employment handicap or

(ii) A person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

One-Year Recently Separated Veteran

Any veteran during the one-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service.

Three-Year Recently Separated Veteran

Any veteran during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service.

Armed Forces Service Medal Veteran

Any veteran who, while serving on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service, participated in a United States military operation for which an Armed Forces service medal was awarded pursuant to Executive Order 12985 (61 FR 1209).

Other Protected Veteran

A veteran who served on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval or air service during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, under the laws administered by the Department of Defense.

EBRG's are also called Affinity Groups, Employee Resource Groups, Business Network Groups.

Reason and purpose

A well formed and vibrant group of ERGs can provide the organization with:

• Activities with direct impact on business development (product development, marketing, branding)

• Activities aligned with talent acquisition and retention

• Activities that support workplace diversity and inclusion

People who join and participate in an ERG are more engaged and better connected to organizational strategy

The Business Case for ERGs

To provide the organization with employee support, knowledge and engagement around:

– Business Development and Brand – Employee Recruitment

– Employee Retention

– Professional Development

And remember to think about what is in the business case for the employees

– Visibility

– Avoicetomanagement – Support and recognition

7 Ways to Enable Your Employee Resource Groups into a Powerful Advancement Platform

Here are 7 ways to enable your employee resource groups into a powerful advancement platform: from Forbes

1. Your ERG members must trust themselves and each other to most effectively lead and work together. This will increase engagement and collaboration, expand cross collaboration with other ERGs inside and outside of the organization, and elevate best practices.

2. Your ERG must define the value proposition for its existence and how performance will be measured and monitored. This will help further define the business case for diversity and how your organization’s talent pipeline and business development efforts will be heavily influenced by the rapidly changing face of your workforce, clients and consumers.

3. Your ERG must serve as a cultural competency engine to fuel better intelligence for the executive team who may not always be as informed as they should be. Members must become “thought leaders” and their voices must be given the opportunity to be heard to help cultivate business innovation and growth opportunities.

4. Your ERG must expand its Executive Sponsorship and accountability roles. Executive sponsors must become more active, informed and engaged to help your ERG become an advancement platform. Equally, mentoring opportunities and protocols within the ERG must be more clearly defined. Sponsors and mentors are critical to define the impact and influence of the ERG as a group and for its members to get discovered and their voices heard.

5. Your ERG must commit itself to educating those members whose affinity may be different – whether it be cultural, gender, sexual-orientation or societal identity – than the rest of its members in the ERG and from those within other ERGs and throughout the organization. When all employees feel comfortable it enables them to perform at their highest levels outside their ERG as well as outside the organization, including strategic relationships and CSR initiatives.

6. Your ERG must be able to define and cultivate strategic relationships internally and externally with key groups and individuals whose expertise and voices help accelerate ERG goals and support business growth outcomes.

7. Your ERG must become a part of corporate governance to assure the utmost levels of accountability and compliance from its members and executive sponsors. This assures that your ERG assumes greater responsibility to corporate growth and talent development.

EBRG Myths from Catalyst

Myth #1: ERGs give some employees special privileges over others.

This notion is so pervasive that some employees worry about the optics of joining a group for fear they will be seen as exclusionary—or, worse, as benefitting from tokenism. I’ve heard young women say they shy away from women’s groups for fear that joining will harm their relationships with male colleagues. They don’t want to be perceived as having advanced “because they are a woman.” The truth is that most ERGs arise from a lack of networks and developmental opportunities for employees from backgrounds that differ from those of the majority of an organization’s senior leaders. Employees from minority groups are more vulnerable to being excluded from the powerful informal networks that enable “insiders” to gain important knowledge about a company’s unwritten rules, advancement opportunities, and access to influential sponsors. Research has repeatedly shown that women tend to have fewer high-level sponsors than men. Women of color, including black women, have networks containing the fewest white men—and it’s very hard to advance in most corporate environments in North America without white male allies. ERGs are formal ways of distributing professional opportunities more broadly and fairly throughout an organization.

Myth #2: Having “special groups” for certain employees furthers exclusion.

A common myth is that by separating employees into groups or clubs, ERGs run contrary to inclusion. ERGs often grow out of some employees’ desire to connect with others who have similar backgrounds and experiences, but they also advise organizations on how to connect with employees who are often marginalized, ultimately promoting career development and culture change that expands inclusion for all. ERGs have helped organizations counteract exclusionary policies, for example by helping to shape domestic partner benefits for LGBT employees at Ford. Internally, they educate colleagues on cultural differences and raise awareness to improve the overall work culture for everyone. Without strategic planning, some ERGs are so focused on social networking that they are perceived as unwelcoming to those who do not share the identity around which the group was formed. But well-managed ERGs are (1) visibly supported by key business leaders and (2) hold events that are open to all employees. Such groups foster connections like never before; for example, one-third of Chevron’s employees belong to an ERG. In short, unlike more informal networks, ERGs can actually increase cross-company connections and lead to greater inclusion.

Myth #3: Employee networks are social clubs with little impact on the business.

Since ERGs first appeared at companies in the 1980s, their potential (and realized) impact on companies has evolved significantly! The first area of impact has typically been employee engagement; an ongoing Catalyst survey shows that participation in ERGs was linked to higher employee loyalty and satisfaction. Companies like Sodexo and Dell have seen employee engagement improve exponentially as a result of ERGs (click here to listen to a recent discussion on ERG impact). Many studies link higher employee engagement to enhanced productivity and performance. Second, nearly all formal ERGs expand professional development through trainings, information sharing, workshops, mentoring, and visible events. This development extends externally, as many ERGs form important community partnerships that bring in new hires and enhance organizational reputation. Finally, roughly half of ERGs are now known as Business Resource Groups, given their increasing focus on client, product, or service-related innovation and development. From Campbell Soup Company, which leveraged its women’s groups to increase sales of certain product lines, to Chevron, which was given valuable advice on Hispanic marketing opportunities by its Latino ERG, Somos, ERG impact on the bottom line continues to multiply!

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