Ascend Employee / Business (ERG/BRG) Resource Group Initiative

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), also often referred to as Business Resource Groups (BRGs), are a critical part of the Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Strategy of many companies.

For more than 58% of corporations, nonprofit and government agencies with Diversity & Inclusion programs in place, B/ERGs in general are at the heart of their corporate culture transformation. These groups were originally created to help support diversity awareness and enable safe conversations to take place on race, gender, gender orientation and disability topics.

These groups are typically volunteer based and report into the company’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion. B/ERGs have in the past been crucial to identifying and growing the leadership skills of employees, recruiting talent, connecting and uncovering new market niches to position products/services and served as advocates for policy and process changes.

The B/ERGs are the backbone of the D&I Office initiatives because they provide opportunities for employees at every level to get involved in supporting diversity awareness and helping to advance discussions on policies, processes and systems that may impede the advancement or development of employees. As Asian B/ERGs mature within the D&I strategy of the organization and build credibility within the company, their focus begins to expand towards business results. B/ERGs in many companies have been attributed with increasing business operations and productivity performance, supporting recruiting efforts, and even uncovering new business market niches generating new revenue for the company.

The critical focus areas that Asian B/ERGs are often asked to develop business goals on by the D&I Office include:

- Awareness building during Asian Heritage Month
- Partnering with Recruiting/Talent Acquisition to support hiring
- Onboarding new employees and interns who are Asian
- Identifying ways to connect with customers or retain customers
- Drive employee engagement
- Serve as a community ambassador and support community relations activities
- Help to develop employee leadership skills
- Advocate and /or serve as a sounding board to drive internal policy changes
Annual Ascend ERG / BRG Leaders Forum

Ascend's vision for this interactive forum is to showcase the unique value that ERG/BRGs bring to businesses and their members, and demonstrate how Ascend can continue to play an integral role in facilitating this conversation. The Forum is hosted at the Annual Ascend National Convention.

Each year, nearly 150 ERG/BRG Leaders from cross section of industries participate in this engaging, national forum

Format: Panel discussion, breakout discussions, networking

1st Annual Ascend ERG/BRG Leaders Forum | August 30, 2015, New York, NY
1. ERG BRG internal firm strategies and critical factors for success
2. External resources for collaboration and partnerships to facilitate and further ERG BRG efforts

2nd Annual Ascend ERG/BRG Leaders Forum | August 1, 2016, Anaheim, CA
Presented in Partnership with EY
1. Establishing and advancing your ERG/BRG to align with your company’s business strategy and values
2. Understanding what an ERG/BRG owns vs what an ERG/BRG can influence
3. Engaging executive sponsors for an ERG/BRG to strengthen inclusive leadership
4. Developing members of ERG/BRG to promote leadership and advancement

3rd Annual Ascend ERG/BRG Leaders Forum | August 21, 2017, Houston, TX
Measuring Your Success In:
1. Aligning your ERG/BRG strategies to align with your company’s business strategy and values
2. Engaging executive sponsors and allies for an ERG/BRG to strengthen inclusive leadership
3. Providing access to leaders for members of ERG/BRG to develop leadership skills and relationships
4. Collaborating with other ERG/BRGs to amplify your impact

Stage-appropriate: Leaders Forum - Advance your ERG/BRG using leading practices shared by maturity level.
Each year, the forum gives employee/business resource group (ERG and BRG) leaders an opportunity to build connections with leaders from other organizations and to share ideas to strengthen the groups. Leaders focused on
identifying action items that you can implement to advance your network, based on its maturity level. The session began with a keynote introduction, launching directly into table discussions.

Maturity Levels:

1. Beginner (no Asian diversity plan, ad-hoc networking/funding, none to low management engagement, or socially focused, limited funding); 2. Intermediate (Workforce focused, supportive exec sponsor, mentoring programs); 3. Advanced (Marketplace focused, active exec sponsor, support in C-Suite)

Breakout Session | 10:00 am - 11:00 am, August 22, 2018, San Francisco, CA

Group wisdom: Hope to someday be a great leader? Find out why leveraging your internal network is a smart move

Today’s ladder to the top won’t necessarily take you “up.” As the nature of work itself changes, companies are trading the traditional vertical approach to career advancement for a collaborative, team-based model. While participating in workplace professional groups has always been a good idea, this evolution of our working world makes the experience even more worthwhile. An increasing reliance on collaboration and teamwork means that companies will be looking for employees who demonstrate strong group leadership skills, make meaningful contributions and show enthusiasm for, and dedication to, their profession. In this breakout session, presented by EY and Bristol-Myers Squibb, leaders shared insights on how being active in a network such as an employee/business resource group (ERGs and BRGs) helped to advance them in their careers.


Leveraging Affinity Groups to Accelerate Your Career

Affinity groups offer numerous learning, networking, volunteering and development opportunities, and knowing how and when to leverage these opportunities can help boost your career. Staying true to the convention day's theme of Endless Possibilities to Accelerate, this year's Forum showcased a panel discussion on how leaders and members of affinity groups can leverage these networks to accelerate career development, help others in the process while also contributing meaningfully to the group's overall vision and mission.