

BRG Executive Sponsor Role Fact Sheet

Background and Purpose

The Disability:IN ERG/BRG Leadership Committee has prepared this fact sheet to assist corporate disability Employee Resource Groups/Business Resource Groups understand how to best leverage the skills and connections that their Executive Sponsor possesses.

Definition

An **Executive Sponsor** for a Business Resource Group (BRG) is typically a top-level manager or a corporate senior leader who works cross functionally at the enterprise level in their organization to champion the BRG. The Executive Sponsor can be either a person with a disability or an ally of people with disabilities, and typically has a specific interest in the BRG's mission.

Executive Sponsors commit to meet with their respective BRG Leaders regularly but no less than at least 3 times a year and are responsible for assisting in the process of establishing and championing their BRG's priorities aligned to the business. These may include objectives in the areas of:

- Talent & Inclusion/Education
- Business Insight/Marketplace
- Company Reputation
- Community Service/Corporate Responsibility

How an Executive Sponsor Partners with their BRG Leaders

- Sets the tone at the top and actively supports and engages in all discussions and BRG sponsored events
- Facilitates the BRG's strategic and directional alignment with the company's business goals and strategies and ensures goals set are reasonable and achievable
- Drives accountability for the execution of strategy and plans

- Promotes actions that drive business value and educates executive-level peers
- Advocates accessibility and inclusion for events held by all BRGs
- Demonstrates passion and pride in BRG's mission, members and achievements
- Assists with problem solving, guiding decision discussions and working through challenges and conflicts without taking control
- Identifies additional funding when needed
- Communicates the business value of BRG leadership and membership to direct line managers
- Advocates on behalf of the BRG with their staff, Executive Leadership Team, peers and other leaders across the enterprise
- Connects the BRG leader to colleagues and resources to advance professional growth
- Utilizes the BRG as an opportunity to identify, grow, and retain great talent
- Leverages social media and other messaging tools to promote the BRG's mission and activities
- Helps grow active membership
- Keeps current on disability issues and trends through immersion in Disability:IN conferences and attendance at other disability education and training, e.g. etiquette training, webinars on innovative programs, serving on boards of local disability organizations
- Engages in a reciprocal mentoring relationship with their BRG leaders to help the leaders grow in their careers while learning more about people with disabilities and disability issues

Collaborative Opportunities with the Diversity and Inclusion Team

- Developing annual priorities and objectives
- Exploring sources for critical funding challenges
- Identifying BRG leader successors and task force or committee chairs
- Reviewing BRG presentations planned for internal and external large or influential audiences
- Addressing BRG leaders' performance or behavioral concerns in their BRG leadership role
- Deciding rewards and recognitions for BRG leaders

- Handling or referring employee relations issues
- Responding to external media or organization requests with potential PR impact
- Sharing resources to enhance knowledge, confidence and capability

Examples of an Effective Sponsor and Ally

- Ensuring that all meeting invitations include an opportunity to request an accommodation
- Including the company's Accommodations Program in the list of resources available (e.g. Tuition Reimbursement, Employee Assistance Program, etc.) at the end of all performance reviews
- Providing closed captioning or CART services for all large company meetings and having in place standard mechanisms for making these requests when meetings are announced
- Knowing how to direct colleagues to the company's reasonable accommodations process
- Being an empathetic listener when people with disabilities choose to confide in you and maintaining any requested confidences
- Making an open-ended offer of assistance that provides the individual with a disability the option and control to accept as needed (e.g. please let me know if you would like help with carrying those files)
- Reminding colleagues that 75% of disabilities are non-apparent and therefore we should not assume that we do not have people with disabilities in our work group or on our team
- Becoming informed and doing your best to regularly utilize disability etiquette and respectful language choices

Additional Actions to Consider (from the 7/15/19 ERG/BRG In-Person Committee Meeting)

- Company policy requires top managers to be actively engaged in a BRG; this facilitates securing an Executive Sponsor who is active
- A BRG that is aligned with the business objectives increases its chances to secure an engaged Executive Sponsor
- Develop a well-defined role for an Executive Sponsor
- Tie engagement with salaries, bonuses or awards for excellence
- An Executive Sponsor should have responsibilities for supporting the ERG/BRG internally and externally