

BRG Intersectionality Fact Sheet

Background & Purpose

The Disability:IN ERG/BRG Leadership Committee has prepared this fact sheet to assist corporate disability Employee Resource Groups/Business Resource Groups to enable members to bring all aspects of themselves to the workplace and to serve as a bridge to other BRGs.

Definition

Intersectionality - The framework that attempts to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society. Intersectionality considers that various forms of social stratification, such as class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability and gender, do not exist separately from each other but are woven together.

Reflections to Consider

- Early career candidates and new hires (aka “ADA generation”) tend to more readily share their disabilities and accommodation requirements than more experienced/later career candidates and employees.
- Many individuals with disabilities consider having a disability a “Superpower,” providing knowledge and insight that helps them with their job.
- There are many lessons to be learned from the LGBTQ community and how they go about encouraging/enabling allies to support their efforts and members.
- Identifying as both a person with a disability and another dimension of diversity can affect how you think about disability and your access to and/or utilization of various resources and support. This needs to be understood and addressed when encouraging people to ask for what they need to be successful at work.
- We should all ask ourselves: Is our disability BRG pretty homogenous, or is there a good mix of ages, races, nationalities, parents, veterans, etc.? If diversity is not evident, there is a need to be intentional and reach out to individuals from other groups.
- Psychological safety is important for all and needs more focus across all communities to foster a sense of belongingness.

Examples of Corporate Intersectionality Initiatives

- All BRG in-person and virtual events are planned to be barrier free including Sign Language Interpreters and CART (captioning) without requiring pre-event access requests.
- Disability BRG collaborates with the Veteran's BRG to hold an event that features a professional speaker who is a Veteran with a disability, e.g. Melissa Stockwell.
- Disability BRG works with the Parents (of children with disabilities) to ensure that corporate Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day activities include accommodations and the accommodations are in place so all children are fully included.
- Disability BRG encourages all the BRGs to include a disability inclusion statement on all event invitations and meeting announcements, e.g. We want to be sure that all are included and comfortable, please let us know if you need a disability related accommodation to fully participate.
- Mentees paired with Mentors of other dimensions; this helps to reframe the thinking by building rapport across differences.
- Promoting allyship across BRG teams and within mentoring programs with a particular focus on non-apparent disabilities including cognitive and neurodiversity conditions.
- Focusing on mental health support and resources across all BRGs and sharing data that focuses on people who are under-served groups and need more focus.

Tips for Including Disability Inclusion with All BRGs

WOMEN, FAITH-BASED AND MULTICULTURAL BRG COLLABORATION

- Educate about available tools and resources that are cross-culturally competent.
- Identify the Executive champions who have a personal connection in their family circle.
- Conduct a strategy session with cross-BRG advocates and provide confidence and capability building resources to become more disability inclusive.
- Explore cross-collaboration with Interfaith BRGs and faith-based community leaders to engage members on the topic of disability inclusion and the role spirituality can play in how disability is perceived and managed.
- Host an Extended Family Day that includes a forum on allies in disability inclusion.

VETERANS/MILITARY/SPOUSES BRG COLLABORATION

- Focus on commonality and become educated about the military culture.
- Appreciate the skills learned in the military: honor, duty, respect, and international experience.
- Understand that the definition of a disability in the military is not the same as the ADA and self-identification in military culture is discouraged.
- Do not assume that every veteran has Post Traumatic Stress.

LGBTQ+ BRG COLLABORATION:

- Understand that there may be sensitivity to self-identify as a person with a disability or be a disability ally since homosexuality was identified as a disability in the psychiatric Diagnostic and Statistical Manual until 1973.
- Many LGBTQ community members are actively engaged as caregivers and parents of individuals with disabilities and this connection can be communicated in outreach to the community.
- Invest time to understand the LGBTQ community's history and challenges; Disability:IN has greatly benefited from its partnerships with LGBTQ organizations in developing the certification program for disability owned businesses and the Disability Equality Index.

Additional Actions to Consider (From The 7/15/19 In-Person ERG/BRG Leadership Committee Meeting)

- Important to bring all groups together to the same starting line.
- There is value in understanding what we all bring to the table instead of being siloed as individual BRGs.
- Recruiting speakers with multiple identities (e.g. veterans with disabilities, racial minorities with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals with disabilities) is an effective tool for promoting awareness of intersectionality.
- Encouraging people to join more than one BRG is a great tool.
- Developing ally relationships across the BRGs is a great tool; Allyships are driven through intersectionality.
- Set up councils of all BRG leaders with the mandate to collaborate and cooperate and coordinate.

- There are certain groups and activities that have natural built-in intersectionality such as wheelchair collegiate basketball teams, take your child to work days, charity fundraisers, women – leverage them.
- Social media helps with connections, sharing stories and amplifying the message and awareness.
- Story telling is important, make it important and personal for maximum impact.
- Bring all BRGs together for a summit.
- Utilize shared calendars and hold joint events.
- Hold educational sessions on cross-etiquette for multiple groups, e.g. language and actions for women, racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities.
- Thoughts on exploring in depth Intersectionality issues within your BRG:
 - Exploring intersectionality offers a different experience; less silos and builds inclusivity
 - It allows the different communities to understand common topics and issues
 - Increases sense of belonging
 - Allows communities to partner on programs/initiatives for increased participation
- Initiatives or activities that advance an understanding of the impact of Intersectionality:
 - Renamed disability BRG to “Disabilities & Differences” to promote inclusion and participation from others who may not relate/connect with a disability title.
 - Identifying topics for events that everyone can relate to:
 - Mental Health
 - Safe Space with onsite resources
 - Supplier Diversity
 - Collaboration with other business units, functions, departments
 - Building Whole Self for Career – covers full employment cycle- Talent Acquisition, Career Counselors, Training and Development, Talent Management, and Benefits (Health & Wellness)
 - Disability Awareness (Self ID campaign- sponsored video featuring employees with visible and non-visible disabilities)
 - Quarterly Listen Sessions – open forum