

# Employee Resource Groups

►► For resource-group leaders, D&I, HR, Marketing and Communications staff

## II Leadership and Executive Sponsors

**a. Developing Leaders/Succession Planning.** How do you identify high-potential talent to develop as leaders of these groups? How do you find people who might not otherwise be on leadership tracks but who could benefit from the experience of running a group? For tips from Hilton Worldwide, see [this article](#).

**b. Role of Executive Sponsors.** Having the [right executive sponsor](#) is critical to the group's success. An [involved sponsor](#) can keep the group's mission focused on business goals and make sure the group has the right visibility within the organization. The sponsor should not run the group, however, but rather serve in an advisory capacity.

**c. Interaction With Senior Executives.** Having employee-resource-group leaders serve in [rotational spots](#) on the executive diversity council gives them needed exposure to senior leaders as well as giving a fresh perspective. It's also important to regularly have the CEO and top leaders meet with employee-resource-group leaders (all of the DiversityInc Top 50 do this).

### Best practices for group leadership include:

- \* Have a cross-cultural executive sponsor who is a senior executive of the company.
- \* Select group leaders (D&I staff should do this in consultation with HR) who are talented people from various functions.
- \* Give sponsors and group leaders training (cultural-competence training for both, leadership training for group leaders).
- \* Create one- to two-year terms with succession planning.
- \* Give leaders cross-functional roles.
- \* Have group leaders meet regularly with the CEO and senior executives in informal sessions.
- \* Link both executive-sponsor and group-leader compensation to group's contribution to business goals.

### ?? Guided Questions for Your D&I Staff

#### »» How can you get your CEO and senior leadership more involved with employee resource groups?

If your leaders are only appearing one or two times a year at cultural-heritage events, that isn't going to give them the needed personal interaction with employee-resource-group leaders. Consider smaller group meetings (more than 90 percent of the DiversityInc Top 50 do this) as well as an employee-resource-group leadership summit attended by top leaders.

#### »» How can we convince the supervisors of the people we select as group leaders to give them time to work on this?

This is a common issue. Our recent [story on middle managers](#) showcased the importance of using executive sponsors to "sell" the middle managers on the value of allowing people to participate, as well as how crucial advance planning can be for people in line jobs.

#### »» How do we link group leadership to performance reviews?

Increasing numbers of company are including serving as employee-resource-group leader in performance reviews and giving both the employee (and sometimes his or her supervisor) credit for ways the group helps the business.