

**BRG Executive Sponsor Role 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 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