

# Ability Round Table

A Resource for Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Associate Resource Groups (ARGs)

## Moving from an Affinity Group to an Employee Resource Group

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

- **Affinity Group:** A group of people with a common attribute, situation, passion, concern or hobby who gather for social networking and/or emotional support.
- **Employee (or Associate) Resource Group (ERG/ARG):** A group of employees with a common attribute, situation, passion or concern focused on improving equality and the quality of life for themselves and others within the company. Foundational to their efforts, they are also striving to help the company achieve its business objectives, particularly those related to Diversity & Inclusion.

### WHAT'S NEEDED TO START AN ERG/ARG?

- **Commonality:** This can be something as simple as ethnicity or shared life choices to something as encompassing as having lives touched by disabilities, either their own or as caregivers or family members. Additionally, it could also be a shared desire to bring about change.
- **Purpose:** An affinity group is content to just have something in common. However, an ERG/ARG must go beyond this simple relationship. It must have objectives to improve the lives of its members or others in some way as well as seek to impact the company in a positive way by striving to help the company reach one or more of its goals or objectives and improve the company overall.
- **Champion:** This must be someone at the executive level who is willing to champion the cause of the group, ensure that its efforts are noted and aid in keeping the group's efforts aligned with the company. The champion also ensures the company's executive committee stays committed to the funding and development of the group(s).
- **Leader(s):** This will be an employee(s) who has a passion for the goals of the group and both the drive and vision for how to leverage the group to improve the lives of its membership as well as enhancing the company, its internal functioning and its appeal to new and potential employees.
- **A Plan to Expand Membership:** A group cannot survive if there is no plan for how it will reach out to others currently unaware of the group or unengaged in its goals. As members retire and/or leave the group or company, efforts must be in place to ensure it survives turnover and grows to ensure its survival and provide those who will help it achieve success.
- **A Method for Evaluating Success:** There must be a way to evaluate the value of the group and its efforts as well as justify the time and financial commitment to its existence. Know what the purpose of your group will be to the company and employees, and determine how you will decide if the group is having impact on its objectives. This will provide not only justification, but a standard with which to help the group refine its efforts and effectiveness.
- **Commitment to Fund and Use the Group:** It's all well and good to give permission for a group to exist, even to allow the employees time to interact in it. However, if you are not prepared to "put the money where the mouth is," you set the group up for failure. Give them the means to accomplish their goals — and yours. If all steps are followed and committed to, the return on your investment will be profound, both in the improved work-life of your employees and in the productivity and improved profitability of the company as a whole.

### Meeting and Topic Schedule

Supported by Eli Lilly and Company, Anthem, Inc., and Easterseals Crossroads

November 2, 2018  
December 7, 2018

7:30-9 a.m.  
Easterseals Crossroads  
4740 Kingsway Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46205

**NOVEMBER:**  
Finding your disability resource group champion (top-down buy in)

**DECEMBER:**  
How to work with employees who don't wish to self-identify as having a disability

If you have a disability ERG/ARG, we want to help you make it better. If you don't have one, we want to help you get started!