

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP GUIDEBOOK



Arizona Corporate Council



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Foreword

Dear Business Leader,

BLUF (BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT): This guidebook is designed to provide companies of all sizes a roadmap for creating Veteran Employee Resource Groups (“ERG’S”) within their workplaces. Veteran-focused ERGs connect military and veterans to their respective businesses, and have the potential to create company to company interaction, shared learning and opportunity. The Council’s goal with this guidebook is increase the number of veteran-focused ERG’S in Arizona’s business community.

In 2016, the Arizona Corporate Council was formed as a collaboration of private businesses with the intent of empowering Arizona companies to harness the talents of our nation’s veteran workforce (veterans, military members and spouses). The Council’s mission is to engage, educate and empower Arizona companies with the tools and resources to help them create career veteran opportunities. We partner with the Arizona Department of Veterans’ Services and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, supporting the Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment.

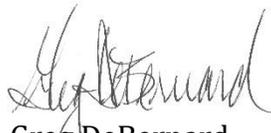
Our focus is on creating workplace environments that foster inclusion of the veteran workforce. The role of military-oriented employee and business resource groups, which we collectively refer to here as ERGs, is to help bridge the gap between the veteran workforce and those who have not been in the service. ERGs help promote affinity between employees and their workplace, facilitating retention; welcoming non-military employees into military-themed ERGs creates limitless connections that enrich the entire workforce.

We want this guidebook to become a valuable resource for you. It is intended to be a living document; as lessons are learned and shared through the Council, we will update the guidebook accordingly. Your comments and feedback are welcome, and can be shared through the website (azveterancareers.org). Good luck with the formation of your ERG, and don’t hesitate to call upon the members of the Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers to assist when needed.

Sincerely,



Hal Pittman
RDML, USN Ret.



Greg DeBernard
COL, USAR Ret.

What is an Employee Resource Group (ERG)?

Employee resource groups (ERGs) are welcoming environments within companies where members share common interests with the aim of driving business impact. ERGs create a diverse and inclusive community where members can connect and develop personally and professionally through networking, mentoring, volunteerism and community involvement.

ERGs are employee-led, voluntary groups that serve as a resource for its members as well as the company by fostering an environment focused on corroborating ideas that align with the organizational mission, values, goals and business objectives.

Veteran ERGs are critical in a company's effort to attract new talent, promote, develop and retain talent and to recruit more veterans. ERGs help to formalize veteran initiatives into policy.

The benefits of an ERG are symbiotic in that for the company the group develops future leaders, encourages increased engagement and promotes expanded reach within the marketplace. In terms of the individual members, veteran employees, ERGs create a platform to assist in the transition space and act as a 'one-stop-shop' for disseminating information to veteran employees within the company about the organization and its policies. The group also improves the individual's overall experience and long-term retention and development.

Why a company should create Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and why they are important?

Employees desire an environment in which they can fully contribute to and participate in. ERGs assist in fostering an environment that serves as a common voice that removes barriers that negatively impact the success of its members.

Members of the military/veteran community have advanced training in working with diverse cultures, are adaptive in a changing landscape and provide a resilient workforce.

Veterans perform well with minimal instruction/guidance, but can sometimes feel lost during transition or in their first civilian job experience. Within companies, some managers have never managed veterans before, and ERGs offer context and sometimes training that allows leadership to be better prepared, and which allows veterans to better navigate a new work environment.

Employee Resource Group Structure and Roles

The ERG meeting schedule and general structure should be decided as a group with support of the Executive Sponsor. Below are possible roles and responsibilities for those roles:

Executive Sponsor (Director level or higher) serves as a guide to ensure that the ERG stays aligned to the overall company goals. The Executive Sponsor also ensures the ERG remains true to their mission and in alignment with the strategy. Finally, when needed, Executive Sponsors act as a point of escalation.

Employee Resource Group Leader is committed to the growth and development of their ERG. The Leader must receive the endorsement of their immediate leader and be in good performance standing. The ERG Leader must maintain and lead consistent membership meetings (at least 1 per quarter). The Leader will work closely with the ERG Committee Leads and members to plan activities that align with the decided goals. The ERG Leader educates and drives the message regarding strategy. The Lead needs to identify and encourage members to become committee leads as well as assist in encouraging and recruiting other members to volunteer and become active. Lastly, Leaders must demonstrate a willingness to learn and develop as well as positively represent promote the ERG.

Employee Resource Group Co-Leader works closely with the ERG Lead and shares the role of leading the employee resource group. The ERG co-leader must be able to fill in as Leader in their absence.

Committee Chairs lead and guide the planning, scheduling and implementation of activities and events that support the ERG's vision, mission and goals. Committee Chairs assist in encouraging and recruiting other members to volunteer and become active. Chairs must attend the majority of ERG meetings and events as well as work closely with other committee members and ERG Leader to determine and record the return on investment (ROI) of specific events. Committee Chairs must positively represent and promote the ERG.

Members of the ERG should contribute ideas and opinions to the direction of the ERG, participate in activities and join at least one committee and attend the majority of ERG meetings. Membership in

Subcommittees allow individuals to contribute their unique abilities and experiences and for the distribution of work. Subcommittees also provide opportunities for members to participate at variable degrees.

Steps to Creating Employee Resource Groups

When creating an Employee Resource Group, it's important to keep in mind that it's a marathon, not a sprint. Developing and sustaining the growth and effectiveness of an ERG will take time and support from the employees and the corporation.

Things to consider as you organize your Employee Resource Group:

GETTING STARTED

Start at the Top – Gain Support of Corporate Executives

- a. Create a business case for the ERG
- b. Articulate a mission statement which is tied to a business objective
- c. Develop a draft plan to accomplish goals
- d. Prepare a preliminary budget
- e. Secure executive sponsorship
- f. Share the group's objectives with employees & management
- g. Establish a Leadership Team
- h. Communicate to staff that member enrollment is voluntary

Create Partnerships with Existing ERGs

- a. New ERG should network & partner with existing ERGs
- b. Request permission to attend the meetings of other ERGs or meet with Executive Sponsors & group representatives to share ideas, obtain feedback, build relationships
- c. Things to find out:
 - i. How the group was started?
 - ii. Who they reached out to and how?
 - iii. What steps were taken to seek approval?
 - iv. What obstacles may have been encountered along the way?
 1. How were those obstacles managed?
 - v. When and how often are meetings held?
 - vi. What are the typical meeting agendas?

Get Employees Involved

- a. Develop materials to introduce the Veteran ERG
- b. Advertise the ERG via:
 - i. Company Newsletter
 - ii. E-Mail blast
 - iii. Company intranet site or Slack
 - iv. Flyer inserts with paychecks
 - v. Events (i.e. welcoming breakfast)
 - vi. Ads on interoffice note-boards
 - vii. Networking with staff

Develop Budget & Secure Funding

- a. Once the goals are defined, prepare a budget that will support implementation, and submit that budget to the Executive Sponsor. Since this person represents management, they may best advocate for the ERG to secure funding.
- b. If corporate funds are not possible, consider alternatives:

- i. Employee membership fees
- ii. Funding from the national budget
- iii. Funding from representative departments
- iv. Funding from annual grants provided by the Department of Defense/veterans groups

IMPLEMENTATION

Name the Group

- a. Name of ERG should reflect the mission & values and should be a collaborative decision
- b. Process may include:
 - i. Soliciting name recommendations from members
 - ii. Hold a meeting to discuss ideas or an alternative method for making suggestions
 - iii. Choose a name that reflects the purpose of the ERG
 - iv. Ensure that the name clearly communicates the ERG's mission and is interesting enough that others inquire or join
 - v. Once the name is finalized, work with communications staff on processes to announce the new ERG company-wide

Set Mission & Goal

- a. Mission & goals should be established collaboratively by all members and tied to a business goal.
- b. The Mission statement should articulate the ERG's core values
 - i. Mission = overarching purpose for which the ERG was established
 - ii. Goals = clearly articulated activities and timelines
- c. Questions to consider when setting mission and goals:
 - i. What are the core values of the ERG?
 - ii. How is this group different from existing ERGs?
 - iii. What steps need to be taken to achieve the ERG's mission?
 - iv. What are the short- and long-term goals?
 - v. What resources are needed for each goal?
 - vi. Who will take the lead in implementation of each goal?
 - vii. What are reasonable and achievable timelines?

Design a Structure

- a. Meeting schedule & structure should be decided as a group with support of the Executive Sponsor
- b. Possible considerations:
 - i. Determine the day, time, length and frequency of meetings
 - ii. Create an alternative plan for those unable to attend in person (teleconferencing)
 - iii. Location
 - iv. Consider specific roles for members (see above)

- v. List the roles & discuss with group
- vi. Pair each new member with an existing member for coffee chat
- vii. Designate members to positions

Create an Innovative Business Solution

- a. Being veteran focused will generate interest within the company
- b. Explaining how veterans and spouses training/skills best serves the company
- c. Steps for consideration:
 - i. Send an invitation for brainstorming session
 - ii. State purpose of the session so members are prepped with ideas
 - iii. Set up an alternative for members who cannot attend to share ideas
 - iv. Assure members that all ideas will be considered and respected
 - v. Record all concepts/ideas
 - vi. Group similar concepts
 - vii. Eliminate, through consensus, ideas that don't fit
 - viii. Have all members vote
 - ix. Adopt the consensus idea and disseminate

Overcome Challenges

- a. If faced with challenges during development, implementation or maintenance, identify the root causes then take steps to reduce or eliminate them.
- b. As a group, members should:
 - i. Define the challenge
 - ii. Analyze the cause
 - iii. Explore solutions
 - iv. Decide whether the challenge is worth solving
 - v. Take action to overcome challenge
 - vi. Consider the necessary steps to avoid similar challenges
- c. Examples of challenges may include:
 - i. Obtaining senior level support
 - ii. Recruiting members
 - iii. Maintaining member participation
 - iv. Managing work schedules
 - v. Addressing meeting conflicts
 - vi. Securing funds
 - vii. Lack of resources
 - viii. Increasing membership

Maintain Momentum

- a. Ongoing company and member support is VITAL to success. Ownership for this resides with the entire group including the Executive Sponsor.
- b. Tips
 - i. Establish credibility by adhering to mission, objectives and timelines

- ii. Communicate ERG's efforts utilizing all internal resources
- iii. Continue building a network to increase enrollment
- iv. Create visibility by conducting or participating in special events
- v. Respond to challenges and remove obstacles
- c. Suggested Activities
 - i. In-house networking events
 - ii. Workshops on topics related to the program (e.g. lunch & learn seminars, National Awareness campaigns, etc.)
 - iii. Monthly updates on program status
- d. Suggested In-house resources
 - i. Company newsletters
 - ii. Related articles, tips
 - iii. Intranet website
 - iv. Notice boards
 - v. E-Mail blasts & blogs
 - vi. In-house TV streaming on ERG's upcoming events & event highlights

Leverage Relationships with Other ERGs

- a. ERGs are internal networks that represent a community of team members who share a common interest.
- b. ERGs may form relationships with one another to gain additional visibility and increase impact
- c. Ways to leverage other ERGs:
 - i. Maintaining an ongoing partnership with the leadership of other ERGs
 - ii. Keeping open communication with members from other ERGs
 - iii. Exchanging or sharing information and resources
 - iv. Collaborating on community and professional events and activities
 - v. Disseminating ERG announcements of news and upcoming events
 - vi. Sharing financial resources
 - vii. Reporting progress
 - viii. Sharing best practices
 - ix. Establishing partnerships with other business leaders that have a vested interest in ERG

Measure Success

- a. Measuring success is dependent on the establishment of goals and success criteria (benchmarking).
- b. Suggested criteria for consideration:
 - i. Recruiting 10 new members per year
 - ii. Publishing a quarterly newsletter
 - iii. Conducting one annual event (at HQ; at each Area office?)
 - iv. Designing two group activities (inter- and intra-ERG)
 - v. Increasing participant attendance at meetings and events

Pre-Execution Checklist – Quick Guide

| ITEM | NOTES: |
|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gain Support of Corporate Executives | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with Existing ERGs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engage Employees | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budget & Funding | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name the Group | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mission & Goal | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structure Group | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identify Business Solutions | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain Momentum | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leverage Other ERGs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Measure | |

About the Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers

The Arizona Corporate Council on Veteran Careers works to engage, educate and empower Arizona companies with the tools and resources to offer career opportunities for all Service Members, Veterans and their family members. The Council is implemented in partnership with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, in support of the AZ Roadmap to Veteran Employment.

For more information, visit www.azvetcareers.org