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INCLUSION AT WORK



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Breakout #5

Moving ERG's from Nice to Have to Business Critical

11:15 - 12:30 | Verwey Kamer

Breakout 5 Report



1. Executive Summary

The panel explored how Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can move beyond visibility and become strategically valuable partners to HR and the wider organisation. A central theme was the importance of directly connecting ERG objectives with corporate strategy and DEI priorities to establish credibility, secure investment, and demonstrate business value.

Participants highlighted the role ERGs can play in identifying local inclusion blindspots, influencing policy and culture, strengthening recruitment and representation, and bringing authentic lived experiences into organisational decision-making and product design.

The discussion also focused on the importance of measuring and communicating ERG impact. Strong partnerships with HR, People Analytics, executive leaders, and middle management can help ERGs demonstrate measurable value while building the leadership support needed for sustained impact.

2. Key Findings

Finding 1 — Strategic alignment is the catalyst for impact

ERGs are more likely to gain credibility and influence when their objectives are explicitly connected to the organisation's broader business strategy and DEI priorities.

Positioning an ERG as a strategic partner rather than simply a community or networking group can accelerate its impact and create a clearer case for organisational support and investment.

Finding 2 — ERGs provide valuable insight to HR

ERGs can act as an important source of employee insight for HR teams. Their connection to lived experience can help identify local inclusion blindspots and highlight issues that may not emerge through traditional HR processes.

ERGs can also contribute to cultural change and support more inclusive approaches to products, services, and workplace practices.



Finding 3 — Visibility needs to translate into organisational value

Visibility alone does not demonstrate impact. The strongest ERGs work closely with HR to influence policy, contribute to organisational initiatives, and create tangible outcomes.

Mentoring, education, awareness-building, and policy engagement were identified as practical ways for ERGs to move from being visible communities to active contributors to organisational change.

Finding 4 — ERG impact needs to be measured and communicated

Participants stressed the importance of measuring ERG reach and impact through targeted reviews and employee surveys.

Working with HR and People Analytics can help ensure that measurement is meaningful and captures the actual contribution of ERGs. Equally important is communicating successes effectively. Positive outcomes and personal stories should be shared beyond internal channels and given visibility through town halls, departmental meetings, and other high-profile organisational events.

Finding 5 — Leadership support requires both personal connection and accountability

Leadership buy-in is strongest when ERGs combine compelling personal stories with a clear connection to organisational priorities, KPIs, and measurable outcomes.

However, effective leadership sponsorship requires more than occasional visibility. ERGs should actively build relationships with both executive and middle management by regularly inviting leaders to events, sharing data-driven evidence of impact, and establishing a routine of accountability.

This creates a stronger relationship between ERGs and leadership and helps position the ERG as a credible strategic partner rather than a group seeking support on an ad hoc basis.



Finding 6 — ERGs can influence recruitment and representation

Representation matters both internally and externally. Potential candidates increasingly consider an organisation's DEI commitments when deciding whether to apply.

ERGs can therefore contribute to employer reputation and recruitment by providing authentic perspectives on the employee experience and helping demonstrate whether the organisation's inclusion commitments are reflected in practice.

3. Key Takeaways

- **Connect ERGs to strategy:** Clearly link ERG objectives to business priorities and DEI commitments.
- **Partner with HR:** Strong HR relationships help ERGs influence policy, identify inclusion gaps, and accelerate cultural change.
- **Move from visibility to value:** An effective ERG should demonstrate how its work contributes to organisational outcomes.
- **Measure impact:** Use surveys, targeted reviews, and People Analytics to understand reach and effectiveness.
- **Lead with evidence and stories:** Combine authentic employee experiences with data that demonstrates organisational impact.
- **Build visible leadership relationships:** Engage both executive and middle management regularly through events, presentations, and ongoing dialogue.
- **Create accountability:** Establish a regular rhythm for ERGs to report progress, share results, and discuss priorities with leadership.
- **Use lived experience as an asset:** ERGs provide valuable insight that can inform policies, culture, recruitment, products, and services.
- **Strengthen recruitment and representation:** Visible and credible DEI commitments can influence how potential employees perceive the organisation.



4. Implications for the Organisation

The discussion suggests that ERGs should increasingly be viewed as **strategic partners to HR and the business**, rather than standalone employee-led initiatives.

To achieve this, organisations need to create stronger connections between ERG priorities and business strategy. This includes giving ERGs opportunities to contribute to policy development, employee experience initiatives, recruitment, culture change, and product or service design.

There is also an opportunity to improve how ERG impact is understood and communicated. Consistent measurement, supported by HR and People Analytics, can provide evidence of reach and effectiveness while helping ERG leaders identify where their efforts can have the greatest impact.

Leadership engagement should become a **structured and ongoing relationship**. ERGs should regularly engage executive and middle management, invite leaders to participate in events and discussions, and present clear evidence of their impact. Establishing a regular accountability rhythm can help maintain momentum and ensure that leadership sponsorship translates into tangible organisational action.

5. Recommended Actions

Priority	Action	Owner / Level	Timing
High	Align each ERG's objectives with relevant business strategy and DEI priorities	ERG Leadership / HR / Business Leaders	Immediate
High	Establish clear partnership models between ERGs and HR	HR / ERG Leadership	Short term



High	Define a small set of meaningful measures to track ERG reach and impact	HR / People Analytics / ERGs	Short term
High	Establish a regular leadership engagement and accountability rhythm for each ERG	ERG Leadership / Executive Sponsors	Short term
High	Provide leaders with regular data-driven updates demonstrating ERG impact and progress	ERGs / People Analytics	Ongoing
Medium	Regularly invite executive and middle management to ERG events and activities	ERGs / Leadership	Ongoing
Medium	Create regular opportunities for ERGs to contribute to policy and organisational initiatives	HR / Leadership	Short term
Medium	Develop mentoring and educational programmes focused on LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusion	ERGs / HR	Medium term
Medium	Create a consistent approach for sharing ERG achievements and employee stories at high-visibility events	Communications / ERGs / Leadership	Ongoing
Medium	Use ERG insights to inform recruitment, employee experience, product design, and services	HR / Recruitment / Business Functions	Ongoing



6. Conclusion

The panel demonstrated that ERGs can deliver significantly greater value when they move beyond visibility and become integrated into organisational strategy and HR decision-making. Their unique access to lived experience gives them an important role in identifying inclusion gaps, influencing culture, strengthening representation, and informing organisational decisions.

The strongest ERGs combine **strategic alignment, measurable impact, authentic employee insight, and sustained leadership relationships**. Leadership support is most effective when it is visible, evidence-based, and supported by a regular rhythm of engagement and accountability.

Bottom line: ERGs create the greatest organisational value when they are treated not simply as employee communities, but as strategic partners with measurable impact, visible leadership support, and shared accountability for progress.