



## Affinity Groups: An Organizational Resource for Diversity and Inclusion

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*Building Relationships/Improving Outcomes*

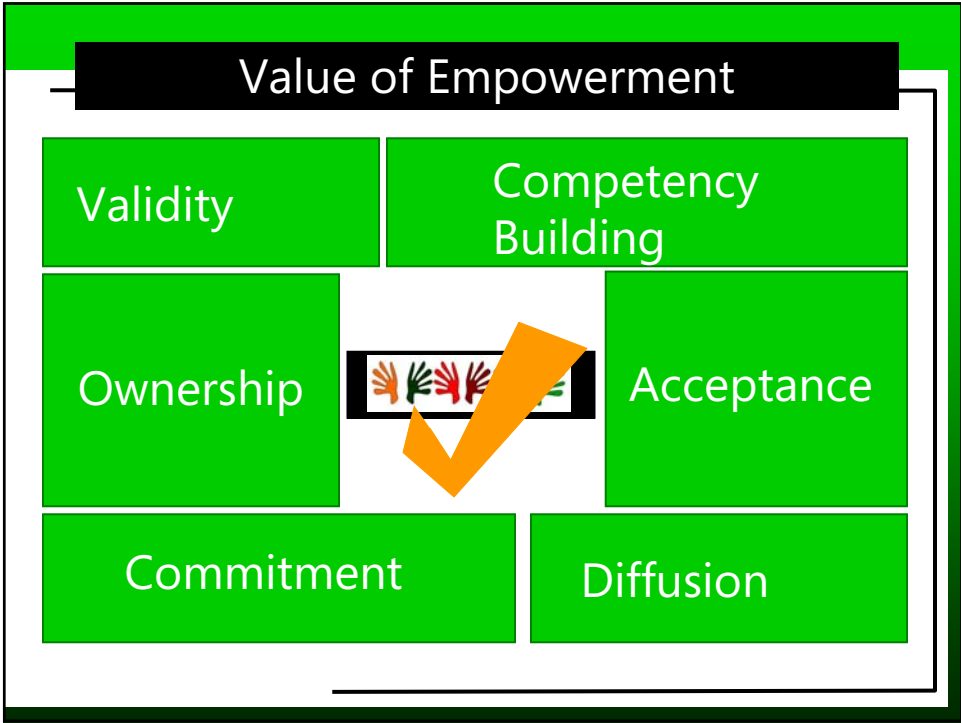


### Some Opening Questions . . .



*Is diversity  
in place,  
but not  
in play?*

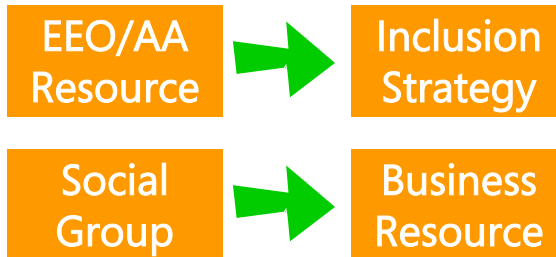
- What's in place that promotes employees bringing their "total selves" to work?
- If diversity is knowledge, how does the organization learn from its diversity?
- How does the organization empower its diversity to contribute?



### Discussion Framing

Potential Benefits	Reservations
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

## Affinity Groups → An Evolving Strategy



Employee Resource Groups

## Affinity Groups → Many Approaches

Typically

- Company sanctioned groups of employees
- Formed around one identity group/concern, but open to all
- Self-initiated, voluntary, employee driven
- Cross-functional & multi-level
- Function with senior manager sponsors/champions & HR/Diversity professional support
- Purpose related to business relevant activity— professional development, business partnerships & communications

## Examples of Activities

### Participation in professional conferences and job fairs

Organize career/professional development workshops

### Groups partnered to deliver mentoring programs

Speak at new employee orientations and host welcoming socials

### Host lunch-n-learn sessions

Sponsor cultural events

Help Executives prepare for meeting with foreign dignitaries & translate

### Partner with business unit on product development & marketing to targeted communities

Partner with HR on benefit policy development

### Raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief

Mentor students in school

## Business Value ↔ Employee Benefit

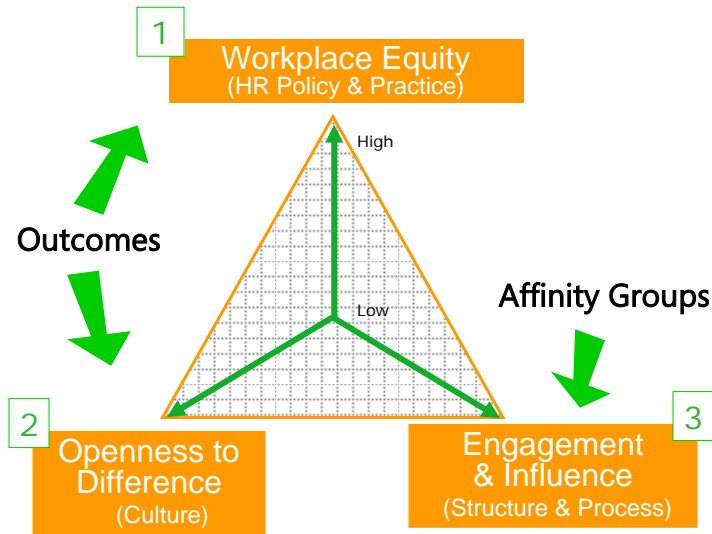
Business Value

Recruitment & Retention  
Leadership Development  
Marketing Outreach  
Product Development  
Community Involvement  
Information & Learning  
(2-way: Senior Mgt & EEs)

Employee Benefit

Personal & professional growth  
Community & support system  
Engagement & contribution  
Mentoring & networking  
Opportunity to show leadership  
Visibility with senior leaders

## When Affinity Groups/ERGs Work Well . . .



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## Affinity Groups → Pitfalls & Solutions

### Pitfalls

- Foster polarization & divisiveness
- Marginalized as social organizations
- Become grievance forums
- Lack of transparency
- Loose link to executive leadership
- Too independent/no accountability

### Solutions ↓

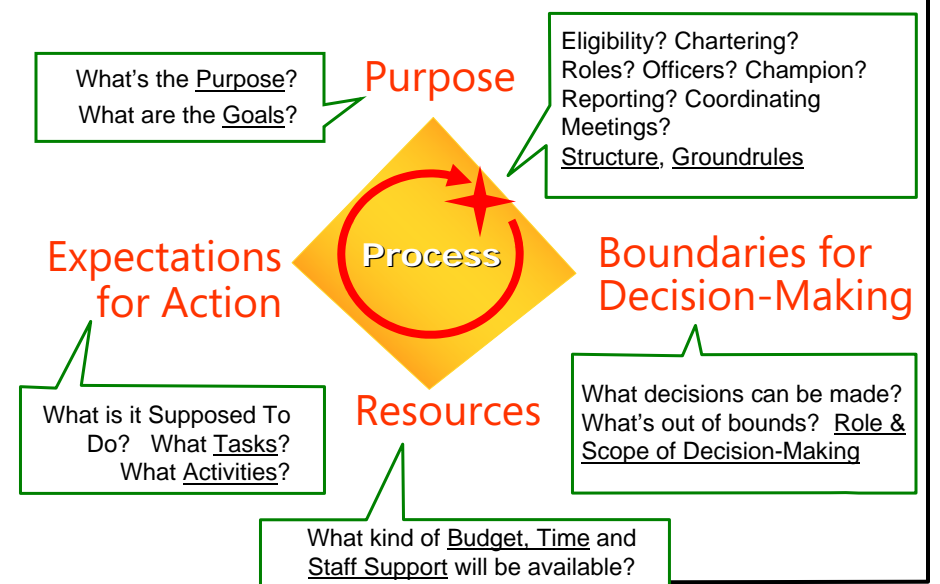
- Open to all
- Communicate
- Focus on the Business Value
- Managed & Supported
- Connections & Relationships
- Partnering

## Managing the Process

### Typical Considerations

- Develop guidelines for establishing groups
- Proposal review & approval, ensuring there is a business reason
- Reporting & accountability
- Funding & resource support-meeting rooms, e-mail use, web sites, co. logo, etc.
- Leadership training for group chairs
- Professional advisement, coaching and support
- Advocacy, connection building and relationship facilitation

## Authorization . . .



## Legal Concerns. . .

Consult with Legal

Compliance with anti-discrimination laws

Workers' Compensation

Compensable Time Under FLSA

National Labor Relations Act

## Affinity Groups → Advantages

### Advantages

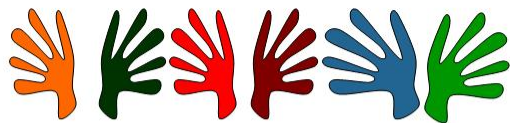
- Open dialogue & learning
- Avenue for constructive contribution
- Build employee commitment and skills
- Develop talent and leadership
- Keep senior management "in touch" with employees
- Support diversity and inclusion culture change
- Strengthen community outreach & reputation

## Some Closing Questions . . .



Affinity  
Groups  
at Your  
Organization?

- How would affinity groups align with your overall diversity strategy?
- What's in place right now to support them? What would be needed?
- What would you like to learn from other's experience?



# Thank You

Henderson Woods, LLC  
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