



**RESOURCE GUIDE  
FOR DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING  
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS**

## Cisco Global Inclusion and Diversity

### 2010 CISCO GLOBAL INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

#### VISION STATEMENT

*Cisco leads the way in demonstrating the transformational impact that inclusion and diversity have on innovation, collaboration, and global business results.*

## An Overview of Employee Resource Groups

At Cisco, employee resource groups (ERGs) support the inclusion and diversity goals and objectives that are determined by the Global Inclusion and Diversity (GID) team and the Executive Diversity Board. Cisco ERGs exist to benefit and advance their own group members by working strategically, both internally and externally. They also help contribute to Cisco market success.

### **CISCO EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP GUIDELINES**

#### **I. PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE**

ERGs are an excellent support system within Cisco to foster awareness, respect, and inclusion within the workplace. GID endorses and approves each ERG. This endorsement gives employees the opportunity to identify common interests, and decide how they can be shared with others.

#### **ERGs can also:**

- Play a critical role in supporting Cisco business initiatives.
- Act as a sounding board around strategic diversity objectives within the organization, to help create a more inclusive work environment
- Be a collective voice around shared issues or concerns that help to promote an inclusive, respectful workplace, by uncovering issues that are specific to the needs of a diversity community within the organization.
- Provide opportunities for employee development, education, and training, recruitment, retention, and business outreach and development.
- Support innovation by providing insights on new markets, product development, and multicultural marketing, while enhancing the Company reputation in the marketplace

Officially formed and recognized ERGs are sponsored and supported by Cisco Systems, Inc. (“Cisco” or the “Company”).

#### **Cisco supports these groups for a number of reasons, including commitments to:**

- A diverse workplace
- Maintaining a culture of inclusion where employees can thrive
- Valuing and encouraging different perspectives, styles, thoughts, and ideas

### **Benefits of ERGs:**

1. Support Cisco values and business goals, including the Company's commitment to foster an inclusive work environment.
2. Support Cisco diversity initiatives, aspirations and goals.
3. Foster communications between Cisco and its employees.
4. Create an open forum for the exchange of ideas.
5. Provide mentoring and educational and professional development opportunities for Cisco employees.

### **ERG Benefits to Employees:**

ERGs offer employees community, camaraderie, and connections to the organization, giving them a sense of belonging. Moreover, ERGs introduce new and current employees to the organizational culture, and help build and maintain employee engagement and satisfaction.

### **In addition, ERGs provide employees with opportunities for:**

- Development
- Showcasing their skills and becoming known within the organization
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Positively impacting the business through business development, often channeling their voices to advocate for change

***The following guidelines establish standards for employees participating in Employee Resource Groups.***

## **II. POLICY**

**Objectives:** As mentioned above, Cisco encourages the formation of ERGs to foster diversity, and encourage employees to share information, recognize achievements, and interact with fellow employees on an informal basis.

Company-approved ERGs are responsible for supporting improvements in focus areas in their area of diversity, and must have the ability to impact all three areas through their actions and initiatives. Currently, there are three focus areas (also referred to as "the three pillars"):

- Professional development
- Business development and outreach
- Recruitment

We recommend that all ERGs participate in initiatives that focus on employee business outreach, development, recruitment, and professional development. These initiatives will focus on the betterment of Cisco. All other events can focus on the needs of their specific group.

### **Professional Development Objectives:**

#### **Support professional development by:**

- Developing and delivering one major developmental program on annual basis to all of Cisco, or in partnership with other ERGs
- Sponsoring career development events and activities
- Identifying effective mentors within Cisco
- Developing effective mentors within the membership
- Building a network of development resources that are easily accessible by members

### **Business Development and Outreach Objectives:**

#### **Support business development and outreach by:**

- Establishing internal and external business partnerships
- Representing Cisco at industry events
- Working with Cisco councils and boards
- Working with external communities to help Cisco achieve market presence and leadership

### **Recruitment Objectives:**

#### **Support recruitment by:**

- Establishing a partnership with Cisco university relations
- Speaking on behalf of Cisco and its offerings at industry events
- Measuring Cisco hires brought in by ERG through the Talent Ambassador Program

### **Getting Started: Recognition and Endorsement**

An ERG's infrastructure approved yearly strategic plan, by-laws, and approved budgets allow each group to implement initiatives that promote an inclusive work environment. All groups are accountable to the GID Program Leader and their Executive Sponsors.

**Group Charter:** Define and include in the Employee Resource Group Charter the principal activities, and expected benefits of the organization, identifying specific, measurable goals and initiatives that will make a significant impact in the areas of professional development, employee recruitment, and business outreach/development.

**Formal Structure:** Develop a formal group structure, including the creation of a written Employee Resource Group Charter and mission statement, membership recruitment plan, and budget, to be approved by appropriate GID managers.

## **Getting Started: Recognition and Endorsement - continued**

### **A Group Charter should include:**

- a. A mission statement
- b. A membership recruitment plan
- c. Roles and responsibilities for members
- d. A clearly defined operating model.

### **The following roles may be included in the Charter:**

- Two ERG Co-Leads (similar to Cisco's Board/Council structure)
- ERG Executive Sponsor (Required)
- Board of Directors (Highly Recommended; Roles are determined based on the needs of the ERG)
- Members (Minimum of 10 people)

**Executive Sponsor:** The ERG Co-Lead will obtain the assistance of an Executive Sponsor, who is a Vice President or higher at Cisco. The Executive Sponsor will:

- Participate as an active member of the Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Executive Board
- Act as an advocate for all ERGs
- Share information about the group's activities with Cisco management
- Guide the group's development

### **The I&D Executive Board or a GID team member may assist in identifying an Executive Sponsor.**

Obtain Approval from GID, the I&D Executive Board, and the Legal Department: Provide the documentation outlined above to the GID team for official approval and recognition of ERG status, prior to soliciting recruitment of members or holding regular employee resource group meetings.

The GID team and I&D Executive Board will review the application and approve or reject it. If the application is rejected, the rationale for that rejection will be provided. Once approved, the GID team will register the group and post it on a list of Cisco supported and sponsored Employee Resource Groups on the Company's internal Inclusion & Diversity web site.

**Funding:** At the discretion of Cisco, and with the approval of the GID Team, approved ERGs will obtain limited funding. Upon submission of a budget identifying the specific uses for any requested funds, the GID Team may approve funding for initiatives supporting the focus areas for the ERGs.

The amount provided to each group is based on the justification of the business impact. The group must track the funds spent and report at least annually to the Global Inclusion and Diversity Team on the amounts spent and what was accomplished.

## **Getting Started: Recognition and Endorsement - continued**

**Open Membership Required:** Each recognized ERG must be open to any and all members of the Company, including full-time and part-time employees, regardless of all attributes that make each person unique, and cannot exclude non-members from its activities.

**Group Activities Supported by Cisco:** Professional networking is strongly encouraged, as is providing information and support for the recruitment, retention, advancement, and development of diverse employees. Groups are encouraged to partner with marketing, business operations, and corporate groups to support their efforts to understand and better serve specific markets, and may provide information to new and existing employees about the group, its activities and opportunities.

Groups also may organize development, networking, and community outreach events, collaborate and partner with other ERGs, and sponsor awareness events. External speakers are welcome so long as they adhere to applicable Cisco policies and provide credentials and references of their work in advance.

The Cisco logo may be used for group activities or events only when the Company (through the GID team) formally agrees to sponsor the activity or event. The logo and other formal Company artwork (illustrations and photographs) are created for use in business-to-business interactions with customers. Any other use or alteration of this artwork is not permitted without the direct consent of the Corporate Identity department.

**Group Activities Not Supported by Cisco:** ERG activities are prohibited when they conflict with Cisco business objectives, standards of business conduct (including the Cisco Code of Business Conduct), personnel policies and procedures, state or federal law, Company policies and non alignment to the ERG focus areas.

Philanthropy and giving back are part of the Cisco culture, and ERGs do participate in these activities. However, philanthropy and giving back are not directly part of the focus areas for ERGs. It is appropriate for ERGs to participate in philanthropy activities; however, they are not funded by GID.

**Cross-Reference with Other Cisco Policies:** ERGs must comply with all established Cisco policies and procedures. Conduct or activities by any group contrary to the foregoing may result in revocation of the group's charter and Company support.

An ERG's purpose and actions must be consistent with the Cisco Affirmative Action Policy and Policy against Harassment and Discrimination. ERGs will follow the Inclusion and Diversity guidelines provided by the I&D Executive Board. The I&D Executive Board and GID Team reserves the right to revise and update any and all criterion or guidelines as deemed necessary.

In order to support employees in facilitating getting started, the following checklist should be used as a guide to getting started with the formation of a new ERG:

Interested parties should contact the GID ERG Program Leader to discuss the formation of an ERG that is currently not represented

- Follow the specific guidelines noted in this handbook
- Structure the group to include a vision statement, strategy, and potential working groups
- Share their structure with the GID Program Leader
- Gain support from Senior Management within their organization
- Plan a kick-off event to introduce the resource group to the larger Cisco organization (once approved by the GID)

### **Employee Resource Groups Charter**

**Rationale:** As an employer of choice, Cisco seeks to attract, retain, and develop the best talent available. The Company chooses to create and sustain a workplace environment where all employees are fully engaged and can contribute to their full potential.

**Purpose:** Employee resource groups support the overall commitment and vision of Inclusion and Diversity for Cisco.

#### **Objectives:**

- Help create a more inclusive work environment
- Provide a collective voice around shared issues or concerns
- Promote a respectful workplace
- Promote internal and external diversity initiatives

**Three Focus Areas:** Employee resource group activities are concentrated in the following areas.

- Professional development
- Business outreach and development
- Recruitment

#### **Scope of Employee Resource Groups:**

##### **Exist within functions and geographies**

- Accountable to GID
- Exist across the Cisco global enterprise

**The GID team will provide the following support to ERGs:**

- Setting a positive tone throughout the Cisco community
- Operational guidelines through the ERG Progression Model
- Policy and process
- Tools and resources
- Fiscal planning including financial support, contingent upon business justification

## **Employee Resource Group**

### **Bylaws and Articles**

**Name of ERG:**

**Name of the organization:**

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this organization shall be " \_\_\_\_\_."

**ARTICLE II: Vision/Strategy/Execution**

The VSE of this organization shall be " \_\_\_\_\_."

**ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in \_\_\_\_\_ is open to all employees in Cisco, including regular full-time, part-time, hourly, and salaried employees, who are committed to accomplishing the objectives of \_\_\_\_\_.

**ARTICLE IV: STRUCTURE**

The ERG will organize their governance and structure based on one of the five phases within the ERG Progression Model. The sample structure below shows job descriptions that ERGs are highly encouraged to adopt to achieve a phase five within governance/structure.

NOTE: This section will need to be outlined per ERG: There shall be two leads per ERG. There shall be project or program committees established in accordance with annual program goals with the addition of special committees, as determined by the ERG leadership team (Board of Directors). Each ERG shall have an Executive Sponsor or Sponsors to support, guide, and advocate the objectives of the organization.

**The Board of Directors team shall:**

- Attend all regular meetings
- Rotate responsibility for meeting minutes and distribute prior to next meeting
- Adhere to current policies
- Set direction and establish agenda for the organization
- Conduct all business activities necessary to achieve the objectives of the organization
- Provide communication to members at large
- Actively recruit member participation

**A. Elected Officers**

The elected officers of \_\_\_\_\_ and their duties shall be as follows:

**Co-Leads**

Functions as the corporate wide representative of their respective ERG. Is a direct liaison to the Executive Sponsors, GID, the I&D Executive Board, and other important business partners, both within

Cisco and externally. Responsible for working with the Board of Directors to set the global strategic direction of the organization and removing obstacles to help ensure the organization meets its goals.

Helps ensure that the organization's goals are aligned to the focus areas established by GID (Business Development, Recruitment, Professional Development). Encourages and establishes policies (as needed) and activities in agreement with the objectives of the respective ERG.

**Expectations:**

- Function as the main representative of the organization in business-relevant situations
- Communicate group achievement and help ensure individual accountability
- Maintain the team spirit and help ensure that all voices are heard
- Remove obstacles that may limit the success of the organization or its leaders

**Track Lead:**

**Professional Development:**

Responsible for setting the global strategic direction of the organization in aligning to the focus area of professional development, as dictated by GID. Shall propose global strategic initiatives to support alignment across all Chapters, as well as support Chapter leads in meeting the professional development needs of their local constituents.

Shall gain consensus from Board members, as well as Chapter leads on proposed initiatives. Functions as the primary contact for Chapter leads implementing global, strategic professional development activities or localized activities. Shall update Board members and of all professional development issues and activities that are of interest and common to the goals of the organization.

**Expectations:**

- Develop global strategic initiatives that address the professional development needs of the membership
- Remove obstacles for Chapter leads to help ensure their personal success, as well as the success of the Chapter and as an organization
- Measure the success of the organization in aligning to the focus area of professional development as established by GID

**Track Lead - Operations:**

Responsible for establishing and supporting the strategy for tracking and measuring the overall success of the organization in meeting its agreed-upon goals and objectives as per the strategic plan. Shall coordinate with Board members and Chapter leads to communicate the strategy, obtain buy-in, and help ensure follow through in obtaining the information necessary to measure the success of the

organization in aligning to the three focus areas (Professional Development, Recruiting, and Business Development) as established by GID.

Shall be the financial advisor for all event committees, and must know at all times the financial position of the organization. Will provide the Co-Leads with regular budget updates and partner with Board members and Chapter leads to monitor the financial health of the organization. Shall prepare meeting agendas and summaries for board and membership meetings. Will communicate meeting dates and other pertinent information. Shall maintain historical records for the organization. Will share in the coordination aspects of the election. Shall maintain the constitution and implement amendments.

**Expectations:**

- Work closely with the Co-Leads to help ensure that the organization is on track to meet the goals of its strategic plan
- Support open, continuous communication with Board members and Chapter leads to provide status on meeting the organizations overall goals, as well as relevant topics regarding the financial situation of the organization
- Serve as the liaison with GID on all topics related to the financial budget
- Encourage the solicitation of funds, and track expenditures to comply with the budget guidelines

**Track Lead -Technology Officer**

Responsible for evangelizing and using the Cisco “Platform as a Network” vision to facilitate effective operation of a global, virtual Board of Directors. Shall use existing and future technologies to help ensure that all Board members have a platform for collaborating efficiently across borders regardless of physical location.

Shall influence the use of technology to make sure that interaction between Board members is conducted in a manner that stimulates an inclusive work environment, and facilitates participation from members not co-located. Shall partner with Board members to provide expertise on using technology to multiply the impact of their initiatives. Shall develop a technology roadmap to compliment and support the strategic plan.

**Expectations:**

- Collaborate with Board members, Chapter leads and other ERGs to shape the ERG technology roadmap

- Maintain leading edge knowledge of technology trends and adjust the technology roadmap accordingly
- Use technology to propel the success of the organization, including, but not limited to its Board members, Chapter leads, members and external constituents within the community.
- Distill current and future technologies to the board as well as their applicability

### **Track Lead - Business Development**

Responsible for setting the global strategic direction of the organization in aligning to the focus area of business partnerships, as dictated by GID. Shall identify and pursue strategic opportunities in which Cisco business leaders proactively include the organization in their business development processes, planning and discussions. Shall use the talent of the membership to identify opportunities for adding value to the business. Responsible for fostering relationships with reseller partners, important business leaders in the community, and Cisco business leaders to drive a strategy for penetrating the business market and improving shareholder value.

Shall propose global, strategic initiatives to support alignment across all Chapters, as well as support Chapter leads in pursuing business development opportunities within their local communities. Shall gain consensus from Board members, as well as Chapter leads, on proposed initiatives. Functions as the primary contact for Chapter leads implementing global, strategic business development, and localized activities. Shall update Board members of all business development issues and activities that are of interest and common to the goals of the organization.

### **Expectations:**

- Develop global, strategic initiatives that improve value and add business partnerships for the organization and Cisco
- Position the organization as a valuable business partner to support Cisco strategy, based on leveraging the “affinity” of the organization
- Assume a leadership position in improving the ROI for having the organization present during business discussions
- Remove obstacles for Chapter leads, to help ensure successful implementation of a global strategy
- Provide the information necessary to measure the success of the organization in aligning to the focus area of business partnerships, as established by GID

### **Track Lead – Recruiting:**

Responsible for setting the global strategic direction of the organization in aligning to the focus area of recruiting as dictated by GID. Shall establish and support the strategy for creating a pipeline of talent,

which includes executives, professionals, University new hires, as well as high school. Will propose global, strategic initiatives to drive alignment across all Chapters as well as support Chapter leads in meeting the recruiting needs of their local constituents. Shall gain consensus from Board members as well as Chapter leads on proposed initiatives.

Functions as the primary contact for Chapter leads implementing global, strategic recruiting and/or localized activities. Will update Board members of all recruiting issues and activities that are of interest and common to the goals of the organization. Shall establish a working relationship with business partners across Cisco to ensure the organization is represented at key events such as, but not limited to, on campus recruiting and national events hosted by professional organizations sponsored by Cisco.

**Expectations:**

- Develop global, strategic initiatives that use the relevant internal and external professional and personal networks, affiliations, and memberships of members to identify, foster and recruit talent for Cisco
- Remove obstacles for Chapter leads to ensure talent is recognized globally
- Provide the information necessary to measure the success of the organization in aligning to the focus area of recruiting as established by GID

**Track Lead - Marketing and Communications:**

Responsible for developing a strategic communications and marketing plan to improve awareness of current and future activities globally, as well as highlight important achievements. Shall propose global, strategic initiatives to drive cohesive, stream-lined communications to all Chapters as well as support Chapter leads in meeting the communications and marketing needs of their local constituents. Will partner with other ERGs to identify and take advantage of opportunities for inspiring, fostering, and educating Cisco employees about ERGs and inclusion and diversity at Cisco.

Shall partner with the Track Lead: Technology Officer to use existing and future technologies to facilitate a platform for communicating efficiently across borders, regardless of physical location. Will partner with the Technology Officer to provide expertise to Chapter leads on using technology to multiply the impact of their communications activities. Shall gain consensus from Board members as well as Chapter leads on proposed initiatives. Functions as the primary contact for Chapter leads for communications or marketing related activities. Will update Board members of all communications and marketing issues and activities that are of interest and common to the goals of the organization.

**Expectations:**

- Develop global, strategic initiatives that expand and evolve the communications reach of the organization across the enterprise

- Provide engagement opportunities across the various ERGs, and partner with Chapter leads to increase membership
- Partner with Chapter leads to provide consistent, comprehensive, and appropriate communications at the global and regional levels
- Extend best practices to Chapter leads and promote the use of technology to facilitate an effective communications cadence to members

## **ARTICLE V: ELECTIONS**

Elections shall occur annually during April of each calendar year. New officers will assume their positions the following May 1

### **A. Timeframe**

Announcement of the annual election will be emailed to all general body members at least four weeks prior to the election. The announcement shall indicate the offices that are available and the rules to be followed during the election. This will include eligibility, offices, and responsibilities. Each employee interested in running for an office is required to submit a nomination form. In the event of a vacancy, elections shall be held within two to eight weeks.

### **B. Terms**

Board Members will serve for a term of two years. The outgoing Board Member shall serve in an advisory role for six months. It is highly recommended that elected officers have at least two years tenure at Cisco (excluding early in career). The term of the Executive Sponsor shall be no more than two years.

### **C. Order of Election Process**

1. Announcement of election (position available)
2. Nominations submitted to Nomination Committee (Board of Directors, GID representative, Executive Sponsor, and others)
3. Nomination committee's response to nominees
4. Formal response from candidates to confirm acceptance of nomination with manager approval
5. Nomination Committee conducts interviews
6. Ballots submitted and tallied by Nomination Committee
7. Announcement of new offices

There will need to be at least two names of the ballot for each elected position in order for an election to occur. If there is only one name, the person who the person or persons nominated shall assume these roles.

#### D. Office Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in the Co-Leads positions, the existing Co-Lead will fulfill both roles until the Board of Directors request nominations from the membership to be voted on the \_\_\_\_\_ membership no less than two weeks and no more than six weeks from the notification of the vacancies.

#### **ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS**

Regular general body meetings will be held quarterly, unless otherwise scheduled by the Co-Leads. A schedule of the meeting dates and locations for the entire year will be provided at first general meeting. Attendance shall be taken at meetings for the purpose of establishing active membership. A quorum shall be required for the conduct of business. A quorum is defined as one-half of officers for steering committee meetings and one-half of active membership for general meetings. Active membership shall be established from previous general meeting attendance.

The procedure for voting at regular or steering committee meetings shall follow general parliamentary procedure. A simple majority of votes of those present is required for all decisions except amendments to the charter, which require a two-thirds vote of those present at the meeting. Timely communication (one week before the meeting) of agenda items will allow for each individual that cannot attend the meeting to submit input on agenda items before the voting procedures.

#### **ARTICLE VII: BY-LAWS AMENDMENTS**

Any member of \_\_\_\_\_ may propose an amendment to the By-Laws. The decision to consider a proposed amendment requires a simple majority vote of those present at the meeting. All proposed Charter amendments must be submitted in writing to the President. Proposed Charter amendments must be publicized to the membership in advance of the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be discussed. By-Laws amendments require a favorable vote from two-thirds of the membership to be adopted.

Final review of Amended By-Laws must be submitted to the GID Program Leader

#### **ARTICLE VIII: SUSPENSION OF RULES**

The rules outlined in this Charter may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the membership present at any meeting, so long as a quorum has been called and its requirements met.

#### **ARTICLE IX: IMPEACHMENT PROCEDURES**

Any member may call for any officer to be removed from office. Impeachment from office requires a two-thirds vote from the Board of Directors.

## Template for Three-Year Strategic Plan for ERGs

*Cisco Inclusion and Diversity Vision: Cisco leads the way in demonstrating the transformational impact inclusion and diversity have on innovation, collaboration, and global business results.*

**ERG Goals:**

1. Help create a more inclusive work environment
2. Provide a collective voice around shared issues or concerns
3. Promote a respectful workplace
4. Promote internal and external diversity initiatives
5. Strengthen internal stakeholder relationships through connection and value creation

**Strategic Planning Review - ERG Purpose Statement**

Review your ERG Vision Statement by asking the following: Does the existing Vision Statement need to change in the next three- years to better support the Inclusion and Diversity Vision Statement and to create maximum value for Cisco?

**ERG Focus Areas**

Review each Focus area by discussing your ERG’s objectives, strategies, and results or metrics for that area.

**1. Professional Development**

Three-Year Strategic Plan

**OBJECTIVES:** What are you trying to achieve in this area within the next three-years? [For example, “enhance career opportunities for members.”]

**STRATEGIES:** How will you achieve these goals? [For example, “Mentoring and leadership initiatives, or networking events.”] Note: These are types of activities, and not specific events or programs.

**RESULTS/METRICS:** How will you know that you have progressed in achieving these objectives? What measure or measures will you use? [For example, “The percentage of ERG members who participate in career development events increases annually as measured by tracking metrics.”]

**2. Business Development/Outreach**

### Three-year Strategic Plan

**OBJECTIVES:** What are you trying to achieve in this area within the next three years? [For example, “To increase Cisco brand name recognition in targeted external communities, and to increase awareness in targeted communities regarding Cisco products and services.”]

**STRATEGIES:** How will you achieve these goals? [For example, “Sponsoring community and cultural events.”] Note: These are types of activities, and not specific events or programs.

**RESULTS/METRICS:** How will you know that you have progressed in achieving these objectives? What measure or measures will you use? [For example, “Increased num

### **3. Recruitment**

#### Three-Year Strategic Plan

**OBJECTIVES:** What are you trying to achieve in this area within the next three-years? [For example, “To recruit new members into the ERG, to recruit people to work at Cisco, and to encourage existing members to actively participate in the ERG.”]

**STRATEGIES:** How will you achieve these goals? [For example, “Onboarding programs, welcome activities, or ongoing social activities for members.”] Note: These are types of activities, and not specific events or programs.

**RESULTS/METRICS:** How will you know that you have progressed in achieving these objectives? What measure or measures will you use? [For example, “The percentage of employee participation involved in the ERG has increased as measured by the membership roster and other tracking metrics.”]

## RECOMMENDED TIPS AND RESOURCES

## ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

**Encouraging:** Supports the speaker in sharing their feelings, perceptions, and attitudes (“Please tell me more about \_\_\_\_”).

**Clarifying:** Ask questions that clarify points made by the speaker (“When did this happen?” “What did this mean to you?”).

**Acknowledging:** Encourage greater openness by acknowledging and naming the feelings the speaker is expressing. (“I can see that you feel angry about that.”).

**Empathizing:** Put yourself in the other person’s shoes to better understand their perceptions and feelings. (“I can appreciate why you might feel that way.”).

**Soliciting:** Ask questions to solicit advice and identify possible solutions. (“What do you think should be done?”).

**Summarizing:** Summarize what the speaker has said in your own words. (“Let me see if I understand what you just said\_\_\_\_.”).

**Validating:** Recognize the speaker’s contribution and thank them for communicating with you. (“I appreciate your willingness to raise these issues.”).

*Adapted from Cloke, K. and Goldsmith, J. Resolving Conflicts at Work. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 2000.*

## Communication Guidelines

CONFLICT=REQUEST FOR COMMUNICATION

### 1) Choose the Setting

- Immediate or Later
- Direct or Indirect
- Public or Private

### 2) Identify the Issue

- Discuss the issue and impact
- Discuss the impact (“When this happened I felt . . .” “When you said \_\_\_\_, I interpreted it as \_\_.” “May I tell you what the impact was on me?”)
- If necessary, explore the reasons underlying the issue being discussed
- Listen to all perspectives
- Acknowledge all points of view (“Yes, I understand.” “I can understand how you might feel that way or could think that way . . .”)
- State expectations
- Ask questions to clarify (“This is how I perceive it.” “Is that what you mean?”)
- Summarize the conversation (“So, it appears that . . .”)
- Suggest other ways to look at the issue (“Are there other ways to look at this?”)

### 3) Agree on a resolution

- Clearly articulate a resolution (“Can we agree to \_\_\_\_?” “What can we agree to?”)
- Determine if additional action is needed.
- Assist in rebuilding the relationship (“I’ve always valued having you as part of the team, and would like
- Thank the other person for participating in this discussion

## Giving Constructive Feedback\*

Feedback is an honest, nonjudgmental, personal response to another person's communications or behaviors. It is most effective when it is:

- Opened with a self-assessment by the person giving it
- Done with permission
- Delivered as an "I" statement
- Reciprocally exchanged
- Offered constructively
- Specific and detailed
- Balanced and fair
- Communicated in real time
- Delivered without anger or judgment
- Supportive of learning, growth and change
- Accepted with sincere thanks from the person receiving it

*\* Adapted from Cloke, K. and Goldsmith, J. Resolving Conflicts at Work. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 2000.*

### **Guidelines for Brainstorming**

- Call out anything that pops into your mind
- Put everything that is said onto a flip chart
- No discussion
- No judgment
- Silence is okay
- Adding ideas onto other people's ideas should be encouraged
- Be creative and have fun

### **Meeting Management Tips**

#### **Begin on Time**

Especially because the members of your ERG are volunteering their time or may have only a limited time (for example, their lunch hour) to participate, it's important to get the most out of everyone's time, and respect beginning and ending times for meetings, whenever possible.

#### **Establish Ground Rules**

The ERG can decide on its own ground rules for how ERG members want to interact with each other during meetings. Ground rules help the group articulate the norms it is trying to build in terms of respect, timeliness, discussion and decision-making. A sample list of ground rules is below.

I agree to:

- Arrive on time, whenever possible.

- Be prepared for our ERG meeting.
- Welcome newcomers with warmth and enthusiasm.
- Share responsibility for following and enforcing these ground rules.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Listen respectfully and thoughtfully.
- Value my colleagues and openly express my appreciation of their contributions.
- Limit my comments to the issues at hand, and avoid personal attacks.
- Avoid interrupting others, conducting side conversations, or taking phone calls.
- Not prematurely judge, criticize, or put down others' ideas.
- Use consensus to make major decisions.
- Be open to surfacing differences in perspectives in a constructive manner.
- Be 100 percent supportive when a decision is made within the ERG
- Be realistic and accountable when accepting responsibility for follow-up tasks

### **Create and Follow an Agenda**

An agenda helps the ERG from getting off track. Although it should be flexible enough to accommodate emerging issues, it provides guidance in allocating time and meeting priorities. Establish approximate time allocations for each item and strive to stay on track, as much as possible.

### **Use Bin Lists for Unrelated Topics That Can Derail the Discussion**

When topics come up that, although important, may derail the current ERG discussion, place them on a flipchart for inclusion in a later part of the agenda, or for another meeting. This assures others that their ideas have been heard, but keeps the discussion on track.

### **List Group Decisions Visibly During the Meeting**

Use a flipchart or white board to list decisions that the group has made during the meeting. This keeps those decisions clear in everyone's minds, and keeps everyone on the same page.

### **Facilitate the Discussion Without Dominating It**

Refer back to your individual conflict management style and reflect on your dominant style (or styles) of dealing with disagreements. Spend more time listening and less time talking, to help ensure that other ERG members feel that their perspective is being heard. As an ERG leader, it will be important to suspend judgment on others' ideas prematurely to allow open discussion of those ideas. Encourage all ERG members to keep an open mind. Use active listening skills to facilitate the flow of ideas and perspectives instead of stifling them.

### **Monitor Nonverbal Cues from ERG Members**

Pay attention to the nonverbal cues you see and hear from ERG members. This will help you know when to speed up or slow down the agenda. You can also detect when underlying issues and concerns are not being expressed through the sighs, looks, or sideways talking occurring throughout the group. In

addition, paying attention to nonverbal cues alerts you to individuals who may be too shy or quiet to bring up a different viewpoint. Such awareness also allows you to monitor energy and interest levels among ERG members in the group.

### **Surface Important Differences**

When there are important differences in perspective between group members, employ your conflict management skills to help uncover and resolve those differences. When important differences go underground, they can corrode ERG morale and effectiveness.

### **Control Individuals Who Tend to Dominate Group Discussion**

Ensure that everyone in the group has an opportunity to participate by setting limits with participants who tend to be long-winded, interrupt others, or put down others and their ideas in a disrespectful manner. Setting meeting ground rules can help set these limits. In some cases, however, you may need to directly confront individuals, either in the group or in a private setting.

### **Evaluate the Meeting to Improve Future Meetings**

At the end of each meeting, ask the group to provide feedback on the meeting, either verbally or through a written evaluation sheet, or discuss the meeting with a few ERG members. This evaluation, whether formal or informal, helps you reflect on what went well or did not go well at the meeting, and how to improve group functioning for future meetings.

## **Nominal Group Technique\***

This technique can be used when the ERG group members need time to sort through their ideas, or when ERG members may be uneasy about expressing their ideas openly in the large group.

1. Clearly state the issue for which the group is being asked to express their ideas.
2. Provide team members with index cards for their responses, and ask them to write their ideas on the cards.
3. Once you have collected the cards, give the group a ten-minute break while you summarize the ideas on a flipchart.
4. When the ERG group members return, take everyone through a systematic review of all posted ideas.
5. No single idea should be evaluated until all have been summarized and are clearly understood by all group members.
6. Utilize the multivoting technique or other methods of evaluating the ideas.

*\*Adapted from Barner, Robert W. Team Troubleshooter: How to Find and Fix Team Problems. Davies-Black Publishing, Palo Alto, CA. 2000.*

## Sample Ground Rules for ERG Meetings

### I agree to:

- Arrive on time, whenever possible.
- Be prepared for our ERG meeting.
- Welcome newcomers with warmth and enthusiasm.
- Share responsibility for following and enforcing these ground rules.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Listen respectfully and thoughtfully.
- Value my colleagues and openly express my appreciation of their contributions.
- Limit my comments to the issues at hand and avoid personal attacks.
- Avoid interrupting others, conducting side conversations, or taking phone calls.
- Not prematurely judge, criticize, or put down others' ideas.
- Use consensus to make major decisions.
- Be open to surfacing differences in perspectives in a constructive manner.
- Be 100 percent supportive when a decision is made within the ERG.
- Be realistic and accountable when accepting responsibility for follow-up tasks.

## Characteristics of Progression Model Phases\*

**Phase 1: Foundational**

The group is not a true group yet, but a collection of individuals sharing tasks. Relationships are polite, impersonal, and guarded. Members at this stage tend to be motivated by their own self-interest, and have not yet learned to think as a group or team. Members are watchful of one another. Some call this the “ritual-sniffing” stage.

**Phase 2: Formalize**

The group members are beginning to come together. Members are sorting out their relationships with one another. During this stage, members may be argumentative and may not listen well. Cliques and alliances may emerge. The infighting stage produces psychological involvement but little real commitment. Much energy is inner directed.

**Phase 3: Operational**

The group is willing to learn and to adopt a structured approach to problem-solving and decision-making. Group members become committed to one another as each person decides to really be part of the whole. The team becomes focused on the tasks ahead.

**Phase 4: Integrated**

The group strikes a balance between strategy and tactics. Group members are able to function as a unit as they find ways to get the job done smoothly and effectively without inappropriate conflict and external supervision. Team members are competent, autonomous, and able to handle the decision-making process.

**Phase 5: Dynamic**

Group members are future looking verses opportunistic and understand how activities are aligned to the Cisco vision/ execution/strategy and members begin to exhibit disruptive behavior (according to C-LEAD). The organization is leveraged as a core functional organization. Group members are considered as experts for boards and councils to engage new markets

*Adapted from Tuckman’s Stages of Group Development; Wikipedia*