

# The Society for Diversity Explores the Evolution of Employee Resource Groups in a Hybrid Summit

*This year's theme, "More than an Acronym", is designed to explore the challenges, solutions, and strategies for the next generation of Resource Group leadership*

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, September 22, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Employers who have affinity or functional groups for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) may call them different names such as Employee Resource Groups (ERG's), Business Resource Partners (BRP's), Associate Resource Networks (ARN's), and other acronyms. While some focus on what the groups are called, the Society for Diversity is hosting a summit to address what the groups are doing. [The Diversity 5.0 Hybrid Summit](#) themed, "ERG: More than an Acronym", will be held virtually and in-person at the Commerce Club in Atlanta on Thurs., Oct. 6, 2022.



The concept of Resource Groups dates back to the late 1960's / early 1970's. For more than 50 years, these groups have been instrumental in advancing DEI through representation, engagement, and cross-functional teamwork. In 2007, Eric Hall, Employment Attorney for Rothgerber, Johnson & Lyons LLP wrote "Know the Risks Before Developing an Affinity for Affinity Groups". Hall asserted, "Ninety percent of Fortune 500 companies have "affinity groups." They are seen as a logical outgrowth of corporate diversity training and are typically found in companies with more than 100 employees. Companies value affinity groups for various reasons, such as boosting employee morale, increasing productivity, attracting and retaining minority employees, and as a marketing tool for business development." Hall's blog identified legal and other risks associated with forming and managing resource groups, but employers face a different set of challenges today.

Leah Smiley, President of [the Society for Diversity Inc.](#) says, "A lot has changed since the 1970's or even 2007. As employers form and/or support resource groups post-COVID and post-George Floyd, they are finding that employees have unique expectations regarding engagement, implementation, and evaluation." Besides the economy, employers are grappling with challenges associated with Returning to Work, safety, mental health, and multi-generational inclusion. Further, many organizations have transitioned toward 'team-based' environments, where collaboration, inclusion, critical thinking, and communication are required skills. Smiley adds, "Today's Resource Groups are evolving because the business landscape has shifted. Certainly, talent is a non-owned corporate asset that can easily walk out the door without warning. Therefore, it's important to maintain an organizational culture that supports fresh perspectives and neurodiversity, while simultaneously anticipating and meeting the diverse needs of your customers/students/patients/users. ERG's can play a key role in helping organizations adapt to their new reality with contemporary skills in order to increase representation, facilitate inclusive excellence, demonstrate fairness, and pivot towards other forward-thinking practices. However, many employers are struggling with modernizing their approach to resource group engagement, and aligning their ERG's with the organization's overall goals."

The topics in the Summit schedule reflect these evolving needs and more. The event is designed for DEI leaders, Resource Group members, Human Resource Business Partners, Executive Sponsors, Consultants, allies, and other stakeholders who are interested in refining and redesigning the Resource Group experience. The partial conference schedule features discussions with:

- Susan Gordon, CDE®, Group Vice President of DEI at Ross Stores Inc., presenting: "Managing and Aligning Your Resource Groups"



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Dr. Linda Wiley Bing, CDE®, Author & CEO of Turning Point Leadership Group LLC

- Audrietta Izlar, CDP®, and Cora Okine, Managers of DEI Workforce and Workplace Initiatives at Verizon, presenting: "Top 5 Challenges facing Modern-Day Resource Groups"
- Dr. Linda Wiley-Bing, CDE®, Author & CEO of Turning Point Leadership Group LLC, presenting: "Allyship, Intersectionality and Belonging"
- Dr. Ayanna Cummings, CDE®, Founder & CEO of Tapestry Consulting LLC, presenting: "The New Era of Engagement-- How to engage different people"
- Kristie Andrews, CDP®, Vice President of Human Resources at Emory St. Joseph's Hospital, presenting: "Inclusive Leadership"

Smiley notes, "I've personally seen most of our speakers present in other venues, and I can definitely say that they are the best! For example, Malia Turner, Sr. Global DEI Program Manager at Epiq, recently presented "The Dark Side of ERG's" for another organization, and I immediately reached out to her for the Summit. The participant feedback from her session was terrific. Most importantly, I've been doing DEI work for about two decades and it was refreshing to learn new strategies and information from Malia." Smiley will moderate a panel discussion on "The Future of ERG's: Strategies for Success" with speakers Yolanda Johnson, CDE®, Jina Etienne, CDE®, and Sam Santiago, CDE®. Also, Julia Mendez-Achee, CDP®, and Jennifer Tardy, CDE®, provided short "how-to" video presentations on "Launching a New ERG" and "Partnering with Recruitment", respectively. The action-packed summit will also include presentations from: Stacye McCall, CDP®, The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; Dr. DeRetta Cole Rhodes, The Atlanta Braves; Dr. Stacy Roberts, SMR Leadership Solutions; and Antoinetta Mosley, CDP®, I Follow The Leader LLC. DJ Cash Money will close out the event with an Old-School Happy Hour.

The online portion of the Summit will be powered by vFairs, an easy-to-use, state-of-the art, virtual platform that enables engagement and accessibility for participants from around the world. Several hundred individuals are already registered for the event, representing every type of employer and role in resource group management.

The Society for Diversity's work equips the next generation of leaders to effectively operate in, or pivot towards, an increasingly diverse and complex workplace and marketplace. Since 2009, the Society for Diversity has combined education and technology to provide resources, best practices, and strategies to support effective workforce DEI interventions. The organization's industry-recognized credentialing program, the [Institute for Diversity Certification \(IDC\)](#), is the #1 DEI certification program in the world with Certified Diversity Professional (CDP)® and Certified Diversity Executive (CDE)® Candidates and Designees in all 50 U.S. states and 30+ other countries. For more information about the Summit on Oct. 6th, visit:

<https://diversity5.vfairs.com/>

Leah Smiley

The Society for Diversity Inc.

+1 317-777-7632

[email us here](#)

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