

Susan Gordon, Seasoned DEI Executive, Headlined Event for Strategic Employee Resource Group Management & Engagement

The Hybrid Summit, Themed "ERG: More Than an Acronym", was the Society for Diversity's Largest Event Ever

ATLANTA, GA, USA, October 12, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Susan Gordon, CDE®, Group Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at Ross Stores Inc. presented, "Managing and Aligning Your Resource Groups", before several hundred DEI champions, Human Resource (HR) Business Partners, Executives, and Consultants online and in-person at the Diversity 5.0 Summit on October 6, 2022. Ms. Gordon provided insight into the strategies that are foundational to building sustainable Employee Resource Groups (ERG's) and discussed actions that DEI and HR professionals need to consider when attempting to align resource groups with the organizational strategy. She also discussed how the future of ERG's entailed staying abreast of industry trends and measuring the impact of DEI work. As a seasoned DEI executive at Microsoft, Bank of America, the Pentagon, and Ross Stores Inc., Ms. Gordon shared rich experiences and personal stories with Summit attendees.



Susan Gordon, CDE®, Group Vice President of DEI at Ross Stores Inc.



Leah Smiley, CDE®, President of The Society for Diversity Inc.

Ms. Gordon's presentation style was down-to-earth, yet strategic. This style served Summit attendees well for the opening keynote session. Leah Smiley, CDE®, President of [the Society for](#)

[Diversity Inc.](#), first connected with Ms. Gordon when she was the former Chief Diversity Officer at the U.S. Army. Smiley said, "Susan and I had an instant connection! Not only were we both passionate about making DEI progress, but we enjoyed having real-life conversations about the importance of strategy." Smiley adds, "Everywhere Susan speaks, people absolutely love her! Over the years, we have had many adventures co-facilitating DEI training sessions. Susan also contributed to the Certified Diversity Executive (CDE)[®] exam study guide, and spoke at the Diversity 4.0 conference in 2018. I am personally familiar with her work, and her impact on people."



The vFairs Diversity 5.0 Virtual Auditorium

Ms. Gordon started her presentation with a discussion about Strategic Planning, and identified 8 factors that were necessary to effectively manage and align Resource Groups with DEI and the Organization's objectives. She emphasized that there is no one-size-fits-all approach so each Resource Group strategy must be specifically tailored to the organization. Ms. Gordon reminded attendees to be proactive in "thinking like a CEO" regarding bottom-line impact.

Midway through her presentation, Ms. Gordon cautioned attendees to prepare for obstacles. She shared, "Don't start out by rolling out a huge network that is unmanageable. Start small and then scale up as appropriate for your organization." Gordon added, "Make sure you develop guidelines and tools so you can cut down on some of the everyday oversight. The guidelines should include roles and responsibilities, as well as expectations for training sponsors and leaders. Don't assume that they know what to do." These parameters help to support the organization in a way that will be meaningful and measurable.

During the Questions and Answers portion of the Summit, one participant asked for specific strategies for inclusion after Ms. Gordon advised that Resource Groups should seek to include versus exclude. Ms. Gordon used several examples such as creating a group for working parents instead of stating that the group is designed to support motherhood. In Ms. Gordon's experience, perceptions can become reality pertaining to issues of workplace inclusion. Gordon stated, "As a best practice, take the time to think through how your practices could unintentionally be perceived to exclude."

Over a dozen other speakers shared best practices, research, and strategies that worked including: Audrietta Izlar, CDP[®] and Cora Okine, Managers of DEI Workforce and Workplace Initiatives, Verizon; Stacye McCall, CDP[®], Assistant Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta; Art Evans, Senior Director of Talent Management People

Capital, The Atlanta Braves; Dr. Stacy Roberts, Author & CEO, SMR Leadership Solutions; Kristie Andrews, CDP®, Vice President of Human Resources, Emory St. Joseph's Hospital; Malia Turner, Sr. Global DEI Program Manager, Epiq; Dr. Ayanna Cummings, CDE®, Founding Director & CEO, Tapestry Consulting LLC; Antoinetta Mosley, CDP®, CEO & Principal Leader, I Follow the Leader LLC; and Dr. Linda Wiley Bing, CDE®, Author & CEO, Turning Point Leadership Group LLC.

Both Julia Mendez Achee, CDP®, Senior Consultant, Biddle Consulting Group, and Jennifer Tardy CDE®, Founder + CEO, Jennifer Tardy Consulting LLC, provided short-video presentations during lunch on "Launching a New ERG" and "Partnering with Recruitment" respectively. Leah Smiley also moderated a panel discussion on "The Future of ERGs: Strategies for Success", featuring panelists Sam Santiago, CDE®; Yolanda Johnson, CDE®; and Jina Etienne, CDE®. The panel addressed issues such as psychological safety, 21st century leadership skills, mental health, and multi-generational inclusion.

While the Society for Diversity's previous conferences were held in Orlando, FL; Chicago, IL; and National Harbor, MD; this year's event was held onsite at the Commerce Club in Atlanta, GA, as well as online. The 2022 Summit utilized the vFairs virtual event platform. vFairs offers a variety of simple features such as immersive and life-like venues, diverse avatars, chat tools, and other custom tools for a positive event management experience. The Society for Diversity used the vFairs virtual platform for its 2021 online conference and 100% of attendees stated that the platform was easy, or somewhat easy, to use.

The Society for Diversity's CEO, Derwin Smiley, closed out the event by thanking staff, volunteers, and speakers, while DJ Cash Money ended the Summit with a virtual "old-school" Happy Hour. The 2022 day-long event was the Society for Diversity's largest conference yet. Dozens of employers sent their entire DEI team or several resource group leaders to learn how to create a better resource group experience for all employees, as well as ensure that the organization is prepared for the future workplace and marketplace. For more information about the Society for Diversity, visit: www.societyfordiversity.org.

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