

In The Chair

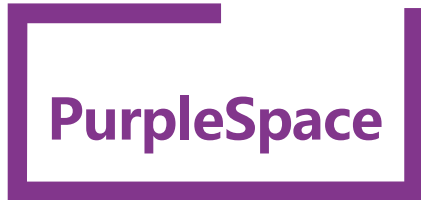
Be the change

PurpleSpace



In The Chair

Be the change




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PurpleSpace

PurpleSpace is the UK's professional development hub for disabled employee network / employee resource group (ERG) leaders in the employers community.

Created in 2015 by Kate Nash Associates, the hub includes an online platform hosting all the toolkits you need to deliver a successful network and an unrivalled programme of learning and networking events.

PurpleSpace is all about helping organisations to become disability confident from the inside out. We do that by supporting network leaders to share best practice in the development of networks / ERGs and support them to develop a culture that enables employees who experience disability, a health condition or who have had an accident or injury to bring their authentic selves to work and flourish.

In The Chair is an open resource available at www.purplespace.org

Find the space to think networks. PurpleSpace.



Foreword

Disability confidence from the inside out

When the term ‘Disability Confidence’ was created by Business Disability Forum over 20 years ago there were very few disabled employee networks / ERGs around.

Since then they have grown both in sheer numbers and scale. Employers who embrace and stimulate their development, acknowledge them as one of the most logical and cost-effective vehicles to deliver cultural change and engage with their employees who have a disability.

Barclays has a number of people networks spanning a wide range of diversity strands. Reach is the diversity network for the disability

agenda and we are proud to say that we exist to support everyone impacted by disability. We chose this phrase as it demonstrates that anyone can be part of the network – whether they have a disability themselves, have a caring or line management responsibility, or are just interested in the agenda. We have a great team and I am proud of the progress we have made in the last few years.

The real beauty of networks / ERGs is that they are, more often than not, led by employees with ‘real jobs’. They understand the opportunities and constraints to delivering change and have the passion required to keep

going when there is seemingly no time left from the day job. But they do find the time, and it is clear that they have an important role to play as the ‘vehicles’ for driving interest in purple talent and cultural change.

Of course, the best of these individuals will work seamlessly with the organisation’s diversity and inclusion experts, underpinning and enhancing the business strategy for inclusion.

Network / ERG leaders can be of any seniority. Some organisations require their network leaders to be at director level – others not. Some leaders will have a disability – others not. Either way, the best leaders are skilled

game-changers. They know where to spot a new opportunity to promote the business case for recruiting and retaining disabled talent. They know when to challenge the business. Crucially, they know why and how to do that.

Leading a disability network / ERG requires huge skill – the terrain is complex. *In The Chair* has something for anyone running a network whether new to the role or a seasoned Networkologist. The Top Tips from the UK’s finest network leaders and allies, sharing their know-how about what works, is a fascinating read.

I’m really proud that Barclays is part of PurpleSpace. As our network COO I support our network leadership team and ensure they’ve got the information, skills and resources they need to succeed and I believe that PurpleSpace will play a vital role in this in the future. I’m excited by the potential of PurpleSpace to help ‘professionalise’ the role of network leaders. *In The Chair* is a fantastic resource for and from this great new community.

David Caldwell

Reach Network COO, Barclays

The third phase of change

In The Chair is the first of many learning materials being created by PurpleSpace. The idea for the resource came from the hundreds of readers of the book *Secrets & Big News*¹ across the public and private sector.

In *Secrets & Big News* we threw out 15 Big Ideas for employers and employees to try and the response we got back was overwhelming. The book triggered a new wave of conversations between senior business leaders, D&I professionals and disabled employees. We heard again and again how the messages have helped employers to look afresh at how to encourage employees to bring their authentic selves to work — what we called the third phase of change for disabled employees¹.

We love networks and employee resource groups. They are the lifeblood for stimulating and sustaining cultural change within and across organisations up and down the UK. It wasn't that long after the book's launch party at BT Tower that network / ERG leaders began asking for their own professional development hub and hence the idea for PurpleSpace emerged.

In The Chair is a collection of top tips when creating and maintaining successful networks / ERGs. Of course no two networks are the same. Some will focus on the business and help the organisation to become disability confident through better policy, practice and procedure. Others will work primarily with individuals helping them navigate the lived experience of disability at work. Some

do both. And of course both of these things are important. The magic happens in the sweet-space where these things interact.

At PurpleSpace we have taken the eight years of Networkology experience created by Kate Nash Associates and used it to establish a new home for sharing best practice in the establishment and growth of networks.

Our aim is to support the growing community of network leaders to do what they do well – to build excitement about purple talent – to encourage folk to bring their authentic selves to work – to open up conversations about the best way to deliver workplace adjustments.

Simple really.

¹ <http://www.katenashassociates.com/book>

Our thanks go to everyone who has helped shape the top tips and offered quotes for *In The Chair*. And our thanks also go to Marcus Baron, EY and David Caldwell, Barclays who helped find the fairy dust to produce it. They are the most awesome of awesome people. We hope you enjoy this learning resource. And we hope you join PurpleSpace.

Kate Nash OBE
Creator, PurpleSpace

“As Gandhi said ... Be the change you want to see.”

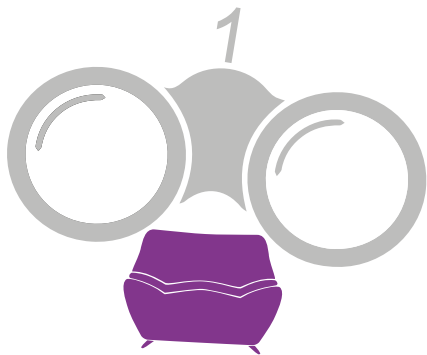
John Spiers, Thomson Reuters



1 Be clear about what you want to do

Being the chair of a network / ERG requires you to be clear about its purpose. If you want to do everything you may as well try and boil the ocean. If you work really hard you might get lucky and bring parts of the English Channel up to simmering point but you won't get much further.

Focus on being clear about what you do want the network / ERG to do.



“Understand the nuts and bolts of your organisation, talk the organisation’s language and map your network’s efforts to what the big issues are for your organisation. That way you are working in the same direction as the organisation and your nudges to try and improve things are not jarring or out of kilter.”

Paul Willgoss, Health & Safety Executive

“Defining clear purpose is critical to success. A few concise statements will help shape goals, plan routes, and give confidence in taking each step. You don’t have to start from scratch either, connect with other networks, they’ll be happy to share what works for them.”

Gary Denton, HSBC





Have a higher purpose

The majority of network / ERG leaders have ‘real jobs’ – in other words they are busy, clever people working in the mainstream of the organisation. They rarely come from human resources or diversity and inclusion teams (though some do and we love them too).

Being a network / ERG leader is therefore ‘in addition to’ the day job. So, when the going gets tough and you are drowning in work tap into your own ‘higher purpose’. It may be as simple as ‘wanting to make a difference’ to the lives of employees newly diagnosed with a health condition or wanting to share your own tips for being successful at work, or how easy it is as a line manager to resource someone’s workplace adjustment. Whatever it is, keep your higher purpose in mind when things are tough.

“‘Free’ time never materialises to do the extra things required, but because it’s something you are passionate about you just make it happen.”

**Beth Elsbury,
Environment Agency**

“Being a network leader can be a thankless task, however doing a good deed for a colleague not only helps them but helps you too.”

**John Sherlock,
Cumbria Police**

“Successfully leading networks takes drive, determination and tenacity. To sustain you on the journey you will need plentiful reserves of passion. If enabling people to be the best they can be is what matters, you’ll always have reserves in store.”

Gary Denton, HSBC



Think big

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Remember that you don't have functional responsibility for mainstreaming disability across the organisation or making sure that all parts of the business are disability confident. In fact we have yet to find a network / ERG leader who has the delegated responsibility for ensuring that all parts of the business are inclusive to all employees or meet all the Equality Act legal duties. Many networks will work in partnership with a cross-organisational team and/or key individuals that do have that responsibility but in the main network leaders have an amount of freedom to be creative in the pursuit of cultural change.

This means you should 'think big'. Find out what other network / ERG leaders are doing, swap notes, share challenges and ways you can change the narrative for purple talent.

"Take up opportunities to present to business leaders in order to enhance the disability confidence of your organisation and to build the profile of the agenda. Being clear about the potential business benefits will help to secure buy in."

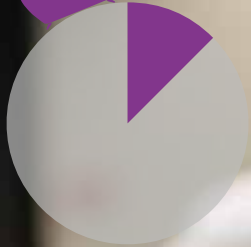
Andy Garrett, Disabled Police Association

"We were keen to enhance our organisation's ability to support employees who experience disability. We had a clear strategy and an idea of the areas that we wanted to focus on. It was imperative for us to engage senior leadership right from the start and to gain executive sponsorship."

Karen Coley, American Express

4!

Be realistic



Ok then, having encouraged you to think big you now have a list of several hundred potential goals. Time to prioritise. Be realistic about what the network / ERG can achieve with what resources. Think about how you will decide what's important to tackle first – consult with your network members and diversity and inclusion teams to work out what the wider agenda is looking to achieve.

“A corporation loves to hear an idealist. Implementation is different. Hope for half of what you want and be happy if you get a quarter of that.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters

“Our Ability network is a friendly and welcoming environment. Discussion and ideas flow and there is a real sense of positivity. The challenge for my co-chair and I is to turn this into something real, something tangible. We must also seek to engage the wider employee community for our issues to be taken forward. We need to avoid nice but fluffy activity and be realistic.”

Ben Canning, BNP Paribas Group UK

“You may have dreamed up some ambitious plans but to make them reality you will need to break them down a little; achievable steps that will take you from where you are now, to where you want to be. Then take each of them. One step at a time.”

Gary Denton, HSBC



Get organised


Network / ERG leaders need to be organised or have people around them who are organised. Make sure you have the right relationships with the right people and some committed volunteers around you. You need a plan and the plan needs to match/be aligned to the organisation's plan.

“Focus on where you can support and enhance existing processes rather than create lots of exceptions. This works well when you engage with the relevant parts of the business and help them to understand how refining their processes and approach might not just benefit persons with disabilities but actually many other people as well.”

David G Sawyer, Accenture

“Make sure you build rapport with the building facilities managers. And the PA network. The rest is plain sailing.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black top with a ruffled neckline, is smiling and looking towards a person whose back is to the camera. The person in the foreground is wearing a blue jacket. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some wooden structures.

“When determining objectives, plan for change in the needs of network members and the organisational context and priorities.”

Rachel Bowen, Canterbury Christ Church University

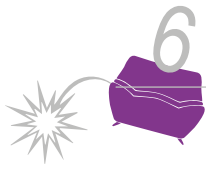


“Fail to plan.... plan to fail’, wise words Mr Churchill! Re-energising an established network requires passion, tenacity and clarity of thought with fresh innovative thinking and the ability to motivate and inspire being essential – the need to get practical however, is critical. Our collaborative energies become a force to be reckoned with only when they are organised around a goal.”

Sarah Simcoe, Fujitsu

“Change comes from, and is made by people. To effect change you need to identify, engage, and work with real change agents – allies, sponsors and stakeholders.”

Gary Denton, HSBC



6 Ignite the ~~blue~~ purple touch paper, then delegate

6

Asking others to help you develop a network / ERG is not the same as when you work in a structured project team or when working with direct reports. You will often be asking people to 'volunteer' their time and their day job will always come first. It would be odd if it didn't. Wouldn't it?

So get people excited before you get them to commit to tasks and timeline. Bombard them with information, give them data, send them stories. Turn their heads. But don't start with the delegation until they are tied in by the belly-button.

"It's necessary to identify people with the right talents and interests to take on well-defined tasks and / or responsibilities. One person can't focus on everything."

Dr Hamied A Haroon, University of Manchester

"Make them laugh, make them cry, make them feel guilty. Do whatever it takes but don't expect them to do anything just because you ask."

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters



Be creative

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Helping your organisation to become disability confident is part 'art' and part 'science'. Tap into your creative side if you can. Break the rules. Cause mischief with a purpose. Read about the global change agents that have made the world a better place. Doodle in your lunchbreak. Ask yourself what you will be known to have achieved as you close the network / ERG door for the last time.

“Feel free to experiment with events and push past boundaries without shying away from trying new ideas as this will have the effect of getting people engaged and talking about disability.”

Emeka Nnaemeka and Eros Adamides, Bank of America Merrill Lynch

“Music to someone’s ears could be a discord to another’s. Working on resolving disability issues is complex but never beyond reach for harmony. Sensitivity is key. Listen before acting.”

Katia Ramo, CMS Cameron McKenna



Be systematic

If being creative is not your bag, play to your other strengths, and especially if you are a systematic creature. Having a long-term plan is a good idea. Working with the diversity and inclusion teams encourage the conversations that help ‘map out’ the territory and work out where the network can make the most impact.

Being able to ask the difficult question ‘so how will disabled employees know they are working for a disability confident organisation?’ is part of your role. Being able to support a systematic plan to get there, will be a gift to the organisation.

“A long term plan is critical but don’t get bogged down in trying to solve all the problems you may meet on the way. Start and adjust as you go along.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters

“We try to provide a steer so that anything we do isn’t too resource intensive, or duplicates what the business is doing, and we use existing tools and resources. That way we get maximum benefits from the network. For example, not writing new guidance but using our experiences to collate case studies to help bring guidance alive.”

Beth Elsbury, Environment Agency

Be kind



From time to time, network / ERG leaders may hear of difficult experiences that individual employees have had. It is part of the role. You will need to distinguish between things you can do, and where you must signpost to others. And amongst all that, it is important to remember to be kind and especially to those driving cultural change. Take time to offer your gratitude to those pushing from the front, the back and those just taking a rest.

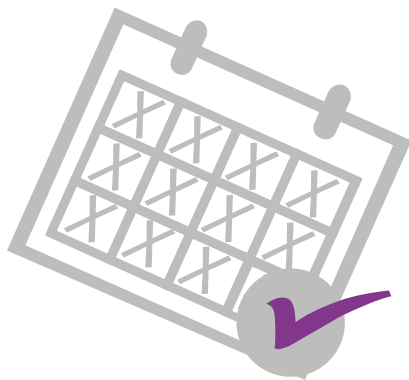
“It’s vital to be approachable and compassionate. Members come with their personal issues because they confide in me. This humbles me and teaches me how tough things can be. Sometimes there is something I can do to help but others times I can only listen.”

Dr Hamied A Haroon, University of Manchester

“The true meaning of sponsorship – recognise the potential of the individual that they may not be aware of themselves, and help them realise that potential.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters

It takes time to create and support cultural change – make the relationships, recruit the volunteers, create the plan and execute it well. But be patient. Rome wasn't built in a day.



“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one single step! Founding the network is the first, then focus on building a strong foundation that utilises all momentum gained whether from successes or flops. Yes, flops can be great teachers. Be patient!”

Katia Ramo, CMS Cameron McKenna

“Sometimes the best things in life are worth waiting for. When all your hard work and effort start to reap results then the patience you’ve shown will be rewarded.”

David Caldwell, Barclays



Be impatient



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Right then, you are patience personified. In fact, although you have flagged the need for the organisation to review the workplace adjustment process 67 times, it doesn't seem to be getting you anywhere. There are only so many options here. Either, you have been too patient. Or you haven't delivered the evidence required to trigger a review. Or you don't have the right circle of influence. Or, you just rub people up the wrong way. Or you are wrong and the process doesn't need reviewing. Or, the business is just not prepared to focus on the retention of purple talent.

If it's the first of these, you won't be the first network leader that has to consider the judicious use of displaying impatience

"Lobby strategic stakeholders who might be able to influence on your behalf. This can work well when you hit a ceiling and if you use a stakeholder sufficiently removed from the current situation who may be able to use a new point of view to your advantage."

Andy Garrett, Disabled Police Association

"Be confident enough to stand your ground and, where relevant, be prepared to directly challenge someone in higher authority. This way everyone will know you are serious about making change happen."

Giles Barker, Transport for London


12 Remember the journey



To keep people engaged on the journey of change you need to share the full picture of where you have come from... and to take people with you. Remember how far you have come and be prepared to share that from time to time.

“I love the work that I do around the topic of disability but I feel guilty every day that I can’t spend more time on it. I am lucky to have a day job that I love and an ‘on the side of my day job’ that I love even more. EY have been great at giving me time (a little) and permission to work with a great team driving this agenda forwards but the topic can seem so big and complex and the path to inclusivity an unclear one. But I stop and look back at where we have come from, the impact we have had on so many individuals and the whole of our organisation and then look forward and realise that every step is one in the right direction and there are other amazing people walking the path with me. And I realise that I need not be so hard on myself.”

Paul Scantlebury, EY



“It’s all about leverage and recognising that knowing how to influence others effectively means the people consulting you will come back to you time and again to seek your network’s views on other matters which are often more important than the first issues you were consulted about.”

Jeanette Rosenberg, Civil Service Disability Network

“We have produced an information document which describes how our network started and what we have done so far. This in itself allows members to see the value of the network and being part of it.”

**Dr Hamied A Haroon,
University of Manchester**

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Build individual confidence

“The word ‘disability’ in itself sounds negative because of the prefix ‘dis’. We wish to build a culture at Clydes so that everyone, those with a disability or not, are able to think differently about disability. What is your added value? Your disability is part of who you are and has probably given you added skills due to the very challenges and experiences you have had.”

Yasmin Sheikh, Clyde & Co

While the language of disability confidence has been a useful concept to galvanise employers it is also important to help individual disabled employees to build their own disability confidence.

At PurpleSpace we often use the hashtag #ourdisabilityconfidence and we get lots of good feedback. Perhaps it's part of this third phase of change?

Ensure the network / ERG plays a role in helping individuals to bring their authentic selves to work, build the confidence they need to do well and to ask for the adjustments they need. This confidence thing is a two-way street.

“Raising awareness and disability confidence can create a truly inclusive environment; where everyone can be themselves and where differences are embraced and respected. By offering support to all, a network can assist colleagues to fulfill their potential, line managers to manage requirements and the business to attract and retain the very best talent.”

Jodie Greer, Shell

“It is important to clearly set out your vision and goals each year and to listen to your members. No case is the same and each member will have had different experiences of disability and varying degrees of confidence.”

Jeremy Hooper, Gwent Constabulary



Be funny and playful

Laughter is a huge motivator to drive change. The subject of disability can be serious but you don't need to be too earnest. It can be off putting to those who want to do their bit, but don't know how... Having the confidence to be playful in your work is worth the risk. Do the unexpected, be good to yourself and others and make the topic real.

"Events need to be fun, engaging and with an element of team competitiveness, topped up with a sprinkle of disability orientated engagement."

**Emeka Nnaemeka and Eros Adamides,
Bank of America Merrill Lynch**

"Disability doesn't have to be doom and gloom. Watch comedy shows such as 'The Last Leg' to see how humour can be used. Humour can smash through barriers, reduce awkwardness and educate and inform. Use humour in your internal newsletter to talk about experiences and the light hearted side of disability."

Yasmin Sheikh, Clyde & Co

"I love making people laugh. Good humour is so important to liven up a meeting or a talk, and help people pay attention. Being serious all the time is just too tiring for everyone. Of course there are times when it's just not funny!"

Dr Hamied A Haroon, University of Manchester

“Many of the issues which we may seek to raise or address are quite real world and serious. Yet, at the same time if the network feels too heavy, it won’t retain its insiders or attract co-operation from external stakeholders. A sense of fun in the discussions we have and the activities we organise is helpful to making the proposition attractive.”

Ben Canning, BNP Paribas Group UK



Tell stories

Story telling can be very powerful. Stories can change the world. There is nothing quite like using your own internal story-tellers to paint pictures about the experience of disability at work and the value of an easy to use workplace adjustment process.

“Business case, business case, business case. ENOUGH! The business case is important and focusing on increased revenue, decreased cost and productivity will catch the COO’s eye but what will keep their attention is the impact it has on people. Be you the CFO of a global brand or recruitment advisory for a small business, we want human connection. Personal stories from mental health role models at all levels at EY have proved no-one is immune. One person’s story of stammering secured budget for support for all who need it. The impact of a training course on four people has meant that ten times that number have now benefited. It’s about story telling.”

Paul Scantlebury, EY

“Sharing experiences helps people realise that they are not alone.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters



“Everyone loves a good story, which is personalised. If you talk about ‘people with diabetes’ or ‘wheelchair users’ in general then we do not engage as well as we would if individuals come forward and say how their disability affects them. It is only when we are open that we can seek understanding from others.”

Yasmin Sheikh, Clyde & Co

“We found that the videos our network produced, telling the stories of some of our disabled employees, empowered and inspired all our colleagues to be more disability confident. They were also used to encourage open and honest conversations about how we can continuously improve our approach to accessing workplace adjustments.”

Jig Vaidya, Remploy





“For us, the thing that spurs us on and that we keep coming back to as a network is the power of hearing our members sharing their experiences of disability. The more we understand about each other, the better chance we have at developing an inclusive workplace and allowing people to bring the best of themselves to work. The best way to understand someone is to listen to their story.”

Simon Jack, RBS

“Stories are really important. Stories get people to understand the real impact and see things from a different perspective. Stories give people courage to seek help and speak up. Stories create an environment for change.”

Adam Spreadbury, Bank of England



Disability is a complex subject and offers a big agenda to get your teeth into. It touches people in different ways. This means there are many directions of travel.

It might be worth encouraging your organisation to use the 10 criteria of the Disability Standard as defined by Business Disability Forum (www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk) to create the 'route-map' for progress in this area, if they don't already. This means you can focus on other things but best to stay close to the business priorities and not go off at tangents.

"Clearly identifying the networks' value to its members and to the business is critical. This really influences your engagement and negotiations at all levels, from line managers wanting advice about workplace adjustments, to senior managers seeking advice on equality impact assessments. It supports your position to challenge effectively as a critical friend."

Tudor Trehearne, Cambridgeshire Police

"It is better to do a few things really well, than to end up with a large number of uncompleted actions or projects."

Ann Moghaddami, Houses of Parliament

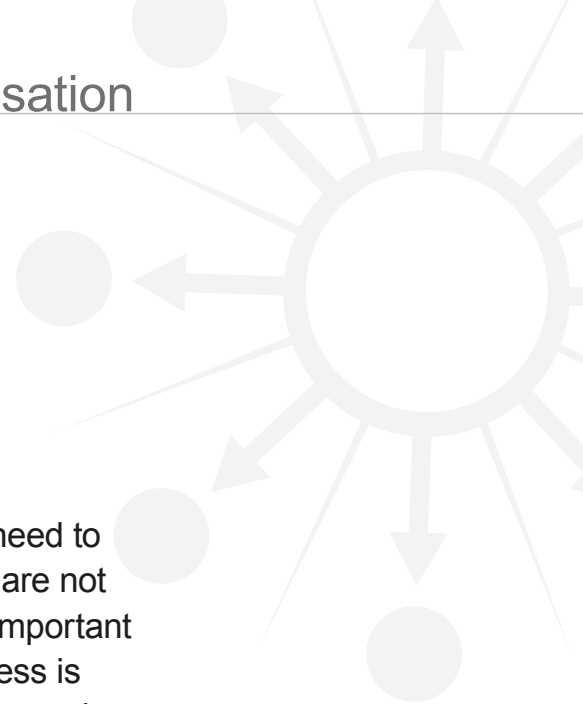
Win friends across the organisation



Running a network means drawing on the time and goodwill from volunteers that will have busy days jobs. Spend time explaining what you want to do with the network, what you want to achieve and how they can help. This relationship building is an important part of the role.

“Disability network events need to be inclusive to people who are not affected by disability. One important criterion of an event’s success is whether it has people talking and debating disability issues not only during the event but well after it’s conclusion.”

**Emeka Nnaemeka and Eros Adamides,
Bank of America Merrill Lynch**



“Invest in establishing trusted strategic relationships with key stakeholders and align your network commitments to supporting the organisation’s goals. Keep your network focused on the business case for your disability initiatives which promote a positive disability culture, which in turn encourages disabled colleagues to be more confident.”

Rob Gurney, Disabled Police Association

“There’s a multiplier effect. It doesn’t matter if you need to keep returning to explain disability issues to new contacts on behalf of your network, for example because your usual contact has moved on to a new job role. Look at the situation from another place. If you taught your contacts well, as they develop in their new roles you will start to see your positive messaging on disability confidence come back around again from the places your former contacts are now working.”

Jeanette Rosenberg, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

“Help those who can facilitate change to see the benefits of their engagement and how the network can contribute to stakeholder objectives. Work with all departments; let them see the network as a partner.”

Rachel Bowen, Canterbury Christ Church University

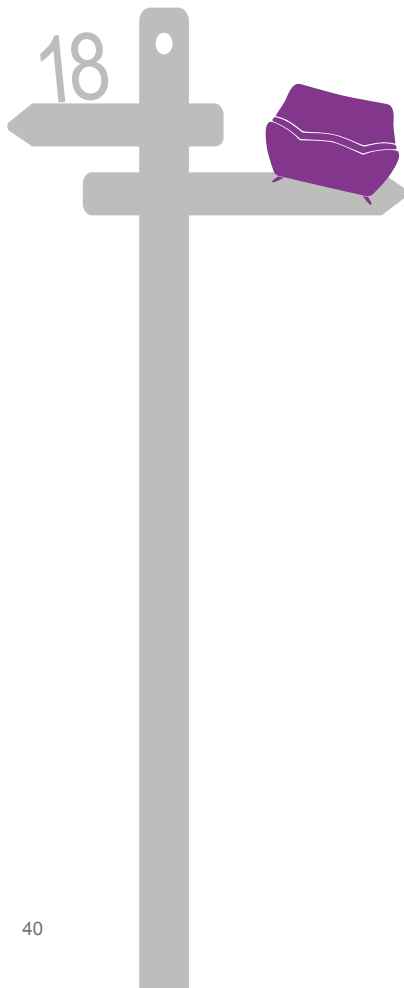


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Win friends across the organisation



Build impairment specific networks or build your signposting know-how



People with different health conditions and disabilities will often share many of the same experiences in terms of how people may view them. We often hear how the ‘soft bigotry of low expectation’ is the pervasive common denominator. And while not everyone will need a workplace adjustment some folk will. And for those that do, not all adjustments will be the same. That means networks are often in the game of helping to signpost individuals, especially those who have recently acquired a health condition or disability, to internal and external sources of support and advice.

“Impairment specific sub-networks need to challenge the myths, helping the organisation and colleagues to understand more about what the condition is, how it affects people, how individuals can actively manage it and what people can do to help you be your best at work.”

Simon Tovee, Metropolitan Police Service

“Remember there is nothing to be feared, just to be understood. Impairment specific networks can shine a light on issues we shy away from. This holds true especially for non-visible disabilities such as mental health for which we still need wider awareness.”

Katia Ramo, CMS Cameron McKenna



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If it's not working, change something

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If you aren't getting anywhere in terms of delivering a purposeful network / ERG, then you need to change something. Is your plan weak? Do you have senior executive support and access to resource? Are you confidently delegating to others? Or is your outlook on life a bit gloomy or tired? If you don't seem to be getting anywhere then change something.

"As W.C Field once said – if at first you don't succeed, try try again. Then give up. No sense in being a damn fool about it.... We all know that frustration and failure comes from doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Remember this and do something different."

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters

"As your ERG grows the infrastructure and the needs will change. Keeping something going that is unproductive just because it once worked will disengage people. Be a leader, be a change agent, don't be afraid."

Paul Scantlebury, EY

20 Don't outstay your welcome

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No-one is indispensable. There will be a time when it's right to stand aside. Network / ERG leaders who stay for years and years may benefit from spotting new talent, supporting the new volunteers and creating a succession plan. No-one wants a 'has-been' clinging to the mast.

"Keep it fresh and vibrant – step down and let others take over."

**John Spiers,
Thomson Reuters**

"At the beginning of the year, I made it clear to the committee that if anyone was interested in the role of chair, I was there to help and support their development."

Ann Moghaddami, Houses of Parliament

"Enjoy it. If you're no longer enjoying running a network then maybe its time to change, or move on."

David Caldwell, Barclays



21 Remember, it's not about you

“You want to introduce a new culture, not a new cult with you at the top. Your ultimate hope should be to benefit the whole organisation.”

John Spiers, Thomson Reuters



For those network / ERG leaders who may have personal experience of disability you will encounter moments when sharing your story may be helpful and at other times, less so. While personal stories can help drive change network / ERG leaders have to create some balance in how and when they might share their personal stories.

“You should be sparing about the times you tell your personal story. In general, you are there to listen to others, and to support them through their story.”

Ann Moghaddami, Houses of Parliament

“It’s really important to accept that it’s not about you. As chair and then co-chair of our network, I felt like an ambassador for all disabled colleagues in our organisation, colleagues with disabilities and experiences very different to my own – a very steep learning curve.”

Dr Hamied A Haroon, University of Manchester



Do you know the story of the boy throwing starfish back into the sea? Take a look on the internet for the full story.

In a nutshell an old man sees a small boy throwing objects into the sea. As he gets closer he notices the boy is throwing starfish back in to the sea where they had been washed up on the beach by the tide. The old man is aghast and suggests that there are thousands of starfish on the beach and that the young boy is unlikely to make a difference. The boy continues on his mission and bends down, picks up another and throws it as far as he can into the sea. Then he turns, smiles and says ‘ it made a difference to that one.’

Being able to help one person is hugely valuable. You may never know the impact you have supporting just one individual through the adjustment process. Or the life long benefit of signposting someone to valuable information as they make sense of a newly acquired disability at work. Or helping an inexperienced line manager to support one of their people. Remember the starfish thrower.

“Many months later, someone told me how they had gained confidence from advice I had given them on the adjustment process, and how it led to better things. It is this kind of feedback which makes the effort so worthwhile.”

Ann Moghaddami, Houses of Parliament

“During a group meeting, I publicly thanked a staff member who had written an article about her Fibromyalgia. As the meeting ended, three others approached her to tell her they all shared her disability. One positive action; one huge impact.”

Giles Barker, Transport for London



Learn and share what you know about the science of cultural-change

“Share what you know. The agenda needs more best practice sharing so be an open book and make time to share what you’re doing with others.”

David Caldwell, Barclays

“You may feel constrained or have run out of ideas for events or initiatives where you are, but you can pick so much from linking with different organisations. Be proud to tell others of your achievements.”

Andy Garrett, Disabled Police Association



When you are up close and personal in supporting disabled employees to be their best brilliant selves at work you don't always have time to sharpen your own saw. And you don't always get time to learn new skills in the process of driving and supporting change.

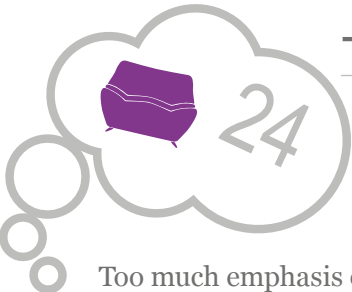
Make a point of meeting new network leaders working across the UK (or global) sectors. Commit to reading two new books a year about insights from change agents that trigger behavioural or cultural change.

**Look out for sources of inspiration
on the PurpleSpace platform (www.purplespace.org)
and follow us on twitter (@mypurplespace).**

And then share what you have learnt with others.

Think about inspiration porn

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Too much emphasis on the experience of disability being ‘inspirational’ can create an own-goal. While we can all be inspired by the stories of how humans navigate difficult life experiences, these things are not unique. In fact they are as unique as a bowl of cornflakes. The question is ‘what can we learn from them to improve the experience of accommodating disabled talent at work?’ – and what are we ‘inspired to do?’

“Make time to capture those simple but critical lessons from when you’re fire-fighting issues (as well as those you glean from the inspirational stories). It’s cathartic to capture honestly what went wrong (and what went right) and share with others.”

Giles Barker, Transport for London

“I’ve lost count of the numbers of times people have told me that I’m brave for just talking about my mental illness. It’s not the stating of facts that is courageous, it’s how you use those facts to give people not only truth about themselves, but good truth.”

Helen White, Barclays

25 Take time out

Like any aspect of managing a business unit, or project, or new product, we all need time out from time to time.

If you are working until midnight on this agenda then maybe it's time to have a long hard chat with yourself. Or maybe it's the moment to take some time out.

You will come across many individuals who are managing health conditions and disability and some will experience times when they are struggling. That can be hard to hear. And it's normal to want to do everything to help. Sometimes you will need a break.





“Sometimes it is important to exercise detachment: not taking on the problems of others and being sufficiently self-resilient. As the chair of a network you need to look after yourself so that you are still in a fit state to be able to lead your network. That doesn’t mean you can’t be empathetic or supportive, of course.”

Jeanette Rosenberg, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

“I’ve often said yes to things because I want to be seen to be doing it all — that or nobody else is volunteering! It’s vital to engage your members in a way that makes them want to be active participants in the success of your network — a one person network won’t succeed in the long run.”

Helen White, Barclays

Write your eulogy



We all need meaning in our life, in one shape, size or form. If you were writing two sentences about what you wanted folk to say at your funeral about your leadership role regarding disabled talent, what would it be?

“He spent his time gathering and sharing knowledge. He spent his time giving confidence to others. Overall, he spent his time encouraging us to be ourselves.

Oh, I forgot to mention, he was also a little vivacious to boot!”

Giles Barker, Transport for London

“A leader once asked me what I wanted to be famous for and it excited me to think about it. I now challenge the team to define what we want to be famous every year for as a result. ”

David Caldwell, Barclays

Brand your network



Networks that flourish are those that zing themselves with a positive branding. They are unashamedly positive, expectant of good things, supportive of the other people networks and generous with their know-how. Think about how you create the tone of your network, how you share your values and how you build your brand awareness.

“Spend time, and money if necessary, really getting the branding of your network or campaign right. Get a name, imagery and colours that people will remember. Own your own language and use it as a tool to engage people.”

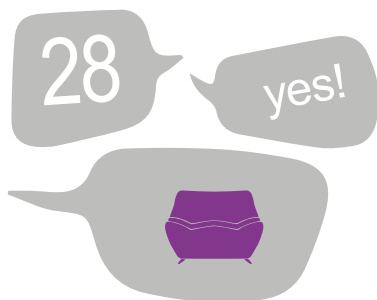
David Caldwell, Barclays

“For us we use ‘One Degree of Change’, a small change can help transform your perception on disability.” And reinforce your brand at every opportunity so it becomes synonymous with your network.”

**Emeka Nnaemeka and Eros Adamides,
Bank of America Merrill Lynch**

“We had great fun redesigning our logo and selling it to our network and stakeholders. We are very proud to unfurl our banner at our events, and people now recognise us.”

Ann Moghaddami, Houses of Parliament



Get top-level buy-in or go home

The network / ERG needs to be aligned to the existing governance structures in terms of where it sits in the business and the overarching diversity strategy.

Different organisations will do these things differently. But we haven't yet come across a network / ERG that has soared without top-level buy in and executive sponsors and champions who can open doors and conversations.

Oh yes, and some budget or resources can help too. And biscuits. Biscuits during conversations with executive sponsors are important too.

“Executive sponsorship and support is crucial. Steve Thorn, a member of CGI’s UK board was keen to provide direction to support CGI’s disability strategy. This enabled participants to become personally involved and motivated to contribute to the success of the programme. And with a senior executive openly sharing his story it has promoted a culture of openness about disability and disability confidence.”

Philippa Green, CGI



“Sometimes bringing in someone else (e.g. a more senior board disability champion) to do what you can’t do yourself will work better than if you tried to influence at the senior level yourself. The trick is knowing when you need to bring them in and not being the network that ‘cried wolf’. You can’t ask them to deal with minutiae and you don’t want to abuse their time and effort.”

Jeanette Rosenberg, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills



Get your messaging and communications clear

You have to be clear with your messaging and be prepared to put some energy into this. Networks, in partnership with the diversity and inclusion teams, that build a clear and ongoing story of change across the organisation, do well. Make friends with the communications team, the social media team, the in-house designers, the message givers.....

“It may seem obvious but effective communication is critical to the success of the network. Improving the way we communicate with our members has been transformational.”

John Parkinson, Department for Transport

“Find someone who can write as you would like to, so you can share your ideas with them – keep them close and lavish them with praise (which they can write).”

Martha Wiseman, BT

Celebrate and share success



The basic rules that apply to good team leadership apply in exactly the same way when working with key people supporting a network. It is important to celebrate and share success stories. Take time to have a 'mission moment' during your meetings. Take a moment to draft a letter of thanks to a director who has helped 'unblock' something that had become stuck. Share your successes, however small.

"Every success we share and celebrate makes our network stronger and helps to publicise the network."

Dr Hamied A Haroon, University of Manchester

"It's simple: give credit immediately when credit is due."

Katia Ramo, CMS Cameron McKenna

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