

# EXPERT INSIGHTS

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## Boehringer Ingelheim

*Q&A: Reflecting the new demographic diversity at work with the NxGen ERG*

Led by Jennifer Brown, Jennifer Brown Consulting, with Boehringer Ingelheim's Nancy DiDia, Executive Director and CDO; Stephan Klaschka, Director, Head of Clinical Applications Support; and David C. Thompson, Senior Principal Systems Engineer.

For 125 years, Boehringer Ingelheim has been a company committed to doing the right thing—for its patients and their families, for its communities, and for its employees. The firm is truly a world-class employer of choice as reflected in all of its policies and programs—a fact that has been validated by external stakeholders. With over 41,000 employees worldwide—10,000 alone in the United States—the company recognizes the importance of a well-rounded, balanced life, offering on-site fitness resources, childcare, and flexible work arrangements at many of its U.S. locations, as well as enriching opportunities to volunteer in the community. Boehringer Ingelheim is committed to creating and nurturing a diverse and inclusive environment that generates new ideas, enables increased employee satisfaction, motivates, and increases productivity.

*Q: Where did the idea for NxGen originate?*

A: The inexorable shift in population demographics suggests a broad impact on both society and the workplace and should be something that is planned for proactively. Stephan Klaschka formulated a business case for founding a new Employee Resource Group (ERG) for the “Next Generation at the Workplace” (dubbed “NxGen”) that focuses on understanding and leveraging generational dimensions. This request received approval and support through the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement under the executive leadership of Nancy DiDia.

*Q: Why was the Next Generation at the Workplace ERG necessary at Boehringer Ingelheim?*

A: The NxGen ERG reflects the demographic diversity of both the Boehringer Ingelheim workforce and marketplace. For Boehringer Ingelheim to remain competitive in both of these arenas, a fundamental understanding and appreciation of generational diversity is critical; the NxGen ERG attempts to provide such a forum.

*Q: How do you think your approach to creating and growing this new ERG was different from the past?*

A: As the most recently formed ERG at Boehringer Ingelheim, we were able to take advantage of previously unavailable technologies. These tools allowed us to quickly set up broad lines of communication for engaging and corralling our constituent members from across diverse functional areas. Specifically, we have used the microblogging tool Yammer to update, communicate with, and engage our members.

*Q: What is the business case for the existence of NxGen?*

A: There are many facets to a strong business case for the NxGen ERG. Communication and collaboration in the workplace can look different depending upon your generational outlook. With the inexorable growth of social media tools and the increasing socialization of the internet, the NxGen ERG has become a key player in understanding new opportunities that new technologies afford. More importantly, we are able to effectively communicate those opportunities across the organization taking generational learning styles into account. The NxGen ERG also provides a safe place to explore generation-related issues, establish benchmarks, share experiences, and gain deeper insight with regard to generation-related findings and topics outside of Boehringer Ingelheim. Moreover, our group supports Boehringer Ingelheim diversity and inclusion initiatives as well as the company's Workplace of the Future project, which is looking at ways to engender a more mobile workforce.

*Q: What makes NxGen innovative?*

A: To flourish and succeed in an innovative fashion, the NxGen ERG requires a formal structure and framework, including:

- Clear objectives, leadership, and resources;
- Collaboration with other ERGs
- Accountability
- A commitment to openness and transparency in our processes
- Adoption of novel technologies to ensure breadth of communication across disparate and diverse functional areas
- The fostering of employee engagement as a grass roots endeavour

*Q: How do you link NxGen to Boehringer Ingelheim business plans/activities?*

A: All NxGen projects are aligned to Boehringer Ingelheim's mission to be the premier research driven pharmaceutical company and deliver value through innovation to patients and their families. Furthermore, our projects and activities are structured to offer personal growth and development opportunities for our members, such as:

- Exposure to other areas of the company and insight to other departments,
- Increased engagement through project ownership
- The development of transferable skills (e.g., leadership, presentation, organizational, etc.),
- Visibility to senior management and decision-makers
- New career opportunities and professional development

*Q: How does the NxGen seek to drive innovation at Boehringer Ingelheim?*

A: We wish to drive innovation through open and transparent processes, such that any engaged individual, irrespective of functional area, feels like they can contribute. This is most easily explained through example. In our 'flagship' project, we have partnered with colleagues in Information Systems as part of a global initiative to deliver a particular technology solution. Specifically, we have:

- Played a critical role in the collection of project requirements and the development and delivery of final project specifications
- Presented project specifications to global stakeholders

- Played a critical role in the development of the final Request For Proposal (RFP) document, and Identified the finalist vendor (second highest scoring vendor in the RFP evaluation process)

*Q: Are there specific requirements for project size and scope that the NxGen group takes on?*

A: Under the leadership of Stephan Klaschka (chair) and co-chairs Katie Ohsann and Dr. David Thompson, NxGen has established and administers a substantial project portfolio. We prioritize and stage projects based on the business need and impact, interest, and availability of the members involved.

*Q: How are employees able to allocate time to create and develop NxGen projects?*

A: NxGen members have no explicit mandate, and their active participation is typically outside of their professional responsibilities. Through our business-relevant projects, Boehringer Ingelheim leverages internal education, and through increasing visibility, we hope to receive even greater support from decision-makers that recognize the value in NxGen results.

*Q: Do the initiatives that arise out of NxGen resonate with other generations in the workplace? Within Boehringer Ingelheim?*

A: NxGen affects and is inclusive of all Boehringer Ingelheim employees. A group such as this appeals across generations. Everyone in the workplace is affected by demographic change. Communication and collaboration styles differ depending upon generational outlook. As a group, it is imperative that we understand this and work tirelessly to educate others to the important aspect of a fully inclusive workplace. All of our initiatives we are currently working on are focused on inclusion.

*Q: What are the criteria necessary to make an ERG like yours successful?*

A: Business-focused and business-relevant activities, transparency, and the desire to change to prepare for Boehringer Ingelheim's future success internally (workforce) and externally (marketplace).

We think it is important to continually measure our success. For example, the NxGen team has established an annual business plan with both quantitative and qualitative success metrics. The qualitative aspects are with regard to the impact on Boehringer Ingelheim internally relating to, for example, organizational development, inclusion, awareness of workplace generational diversity, positive influence on the managerial decision-making process, etc. The quantitative measures relate to the value that the NxGen ERG adds to the business. Together with the executive sponsor, the NxGen ERG identifies key performance indicators (KPIs) or comparable measurable targets that are linked to BI business goals and objectives. At the end of the business year, we will review to see if the outcome of the NxGen ERG activities met the group's goals or not. Measuring our successes and sharing lessons learned will help to drive engagement and aid in recruitment of new members.

*Q: What role do NxGen members, executive management, and the overall company have in the ERG's success?*

A: The NxGen ERG requires an engaged executive sponsor who:

- Is genuinely interested in the inclusion of generational concerns and issues into Boehringer Ingelheim's world of diversity and business decisions

- Offers advice to the NxGen ERG on, for example, how to approach initiatives or activities, but also where to expect obstacles and resistance
- Actively helps the NxGen ERG to overcome possible resistance within Boehringer Ingelheim as an effective change agent
- Takes active interest in the NxGen ERG's agenda and progress
  - o Ensures the NxGen ERG's activities align and support core Boehringer Ingelheim business interests in a meaningful way
  - o Helps to identify measurable success criteria for the NxGen ERG that align with Boehringer Ingelheim business goals
  - o Serves as a liaison, educator, and agent of change between the NxGen ERG and the highest levels of management within Boehringer Ingelheim up to the CEO
  - o Provides opportunities to include the NxGen ERG in the preparation of or research that leads up to Boehringer Ingelheim business decisions
  - o Accepts accountability for the NxGen ERG's support
  - o Is well-connected across Boehringer Ingelheim business functions and, preferably, outside Boehringer Ingelheim
  - o Authorizes and effectively executes executive competencies on a highest functional level within Boehringer Ingelheim

Many of these qualities we also demand of our workers and expect from our company.