



CASE STUDY:

bluebird bio x ERG Leader Certificate Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



CLIENT:

bluebird bio, a trailblazing biotechnology company with nearly 400 employees across 33 states, is pioneering innovative gene therapies for severe genetic diseases.



CHALLENGE:

There was a clear opportunity to enhance the connection between their established ERG programs and business outcomes as they connect to goals, engagement, and retention.



SOLUTION:

[ERG Leader Certificate Program](#), [MicroVideos](#), and [TDM Library](#).



OUTCOMES:

- ▶ **ERG Leader Outcomes:** Leaders gained confidence, practical tools, and a deeper understanding of their roles, fostering trust and open dialogue.
- ▶ **Organizational Outcomes:** Enhanced ERG effectiveness, increased collaboration, and a significant ROI.
- ▶ **Strategic Impact:** Strong support and commitment from the board, alignment with industry benchmarks, and successful implementation of equitable pay practices ensuring fair compensation for women and people of color.

What bluebird bio says:



We needed a program that would provide our ERG leaders with the strategies needed to lead an ERG and the professional recognition they deserved. I expected some [feelings of] empowerment, and I was completely blown away by the turnaround after this certification. ERG leaders now are equipped to drive significant changes within their groups and across the organization, delivering a higher ROI to the organization.



– Marie Wilson,
Associate Director of People

INTRODUCTION

With nearly 400 dedicated employees spread across 33 states, bluebird bio is pioneering innovative gene therapies for severe genetic diseases. Their goal - to treat and potentially cure diseases at their genetic roots - is as ambitious as it is noble. This commitment to innovation extends to their workplace culture, where they strive to create an environment that supports and values every team member.

Recognizing the critical role that Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play in fostering an inclusive workplace, bluebird bio looked to further empower their ERG leaders to drive even more impactful change.



THE CHALLENGE:

Elevating ERG Leadership at bluebird bio

While bluebird bio had already established ERGs and demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion, they recognized an opportunity to further align these groups with the company's business goals and retention strategies. They sought to equip their ERG leaders with additional skills to more effectively communicate with executives and secure buy-in for DEIB initiatives.

As the company grew and evolved, so did the need to ensure that its ERGs were more than just social clubs. They needed to be powerful drivers of business impact and inclusion.

Marie Wilson, Associate Director of People, emphasized the importance of providing ERG leads with enhanced operational tools and leadership development, noting that the ERG leaders were eager for a structured approach that could further elevate their contributions to bluebird bio and their careers.

TDM'S SOLUTION:

The ERG Leader Certificate Program

We partnered with bluebird bio to deliver the [ERG Leader Certificate Program](#).

Marie initially viewed the program as a *“playbook”* for their ERG leads. However, the outcomes far exceeded their expectations.

The program's comprehensive approach ensured that leaders gained not only practical tools but also a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As Marie noted, the training fostered *“a reciprocal vulnerability”* among the leaders of different ERGs, leading to a cohesive and holistic approach to ERG leadership that extended beyond individual groups and promoted collaboration across the organization.

Participants were particularly struck by the program's ability to foster trust and create safe spaces for open dialogue. This training emphasized understanding diverse communities and practicing inclusive leadership, allowing leaders to openly discuss their competencies and areas for improvement, ultimately enhancing their ability to represent underrepresented communities.

Marie observed that the training had a profound impact on the ERG leaders, empowering them to fully embrace their roles within bluebird bio. The program instilled a sense of ownership, enabling leaders to confidently step into their positions and represent the voices of underrepresented communities. This newfound confidence not only strengthened their leadership within the ERGs but also fostered a deeper sense of trust and safety among the members, creating an environment where meaningful and impactful DEIB work could thrive.

In addition to the ERG Leader Certificate Program, bluebird bio has leveraged other TDM resources including [MicroVideos](#) and [TDM Library](#).

“I love the MicroVideos,” said Marie. *“We've actually been able to use them to spark discussions, especially with the ERG leads and the executive sponsors. We even used [TDM Library] for some learning and development opportunities. So, I think we've been able to upskill ourselves in a way.”*



OUTCOMES:

Transformative Impact of the ERG Training

The ERG Leader Certificate Program has yielded remarkable outcomes, reflecting a deep-seated transformation in both leadership and organizational culture. The impact of this program is evident not only in the enhanced capabilities of the ERG leaders but also in the broader strategic initiatives driven by the People & Culture team, with strong support from the board of directors.

Empowered Leadership and Day-to-Day Integration

Leaders have utilized the strategies gained from the training to structure their ERGs more effectively. At the beginning of the year, ERG leads shared their goals, resulting in an iterative and thoughtful goal-setting process.

Marie shared how the training led to significant improvements:

“The [ERG] charters really were able to solidify: What is this ERG? What are we trying to do? What are we here for? And what are our responsibilities? So people could really have something to ground in. The addition of the charters has really allowed the leads to operate as one, which just elevates the strategy of it so much more. The collaboration between the ERGs has increased tenfold.”

The updated ERG charters now provide clear guidelines and goals, ensuring that each group operates with a defined purpose aligned with bluebird bio’s overall mission. This approach has not only exceeded expectations but also yielded a significant return on investment (ROI) for the organization. *“What we set out to do is focus a bit more internally and it’s actually having an even bigger ROI for the nest [bluebird bio team],”* Marie added.

The impact of the training has also extended to bluebird bio’s onboarding practices. Marie explained, *“As part of our new hire orientation, we spotlight the ERG program and give some insight into what each ERG is about. And we try to have an [ERG] lead come to the orientation and talk to them about it. [DEIB] really is ingrained in who we are, and of course, it has to be intentional. So we weave it in as much as we can throughout the employee life cycle.”*

Board Involvement and Strategic Alignment

The board of directors has been deeply involved in supporting ERG initiatives. By consistently presenting DEIB metrics and progress at quarterly board meetings, the People & Culture team ensures that DEIB remains a priority.

Pay Equity and Doing the Right Thing

One of the most significant outcomes of their DEIB strategy has been bluebird bio's commitment to pay equity. Andrea Walton, Chief People Officer, highlighted the company's achievements in this area, stating:

We've taken on pay equity, and we can now say that we're an equitably paying organization for women and people of color. Aon, a company we use to benchmark, tells us from a biotech space what other companies are doing in regards to pay equity. We want to be aligned with or above average in our industry for equity.



– Andrea Walton,
Chief People
Officer

Andrea elaborated on the broader impact, saying, *“This work has solidified us as leaders in the DEIB space. When we compare the work we’re doing to our competitors, the feedback from our board, executives, and CEO has been that this has been a movement. We are doing things that other companies have been trying to do for years.”*

CONCLUSION: Empowering Change and Shaping the Future

The ERG Leader Certificate Program by The Diversity Movement has not only empowered bluebird bio's ERG leaders but has also reinforced the company's commitment to DEIB. The training has equipped leaders with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to drive impactful changes within their ERGs and the organization.

Looking ahead, bluebird bio is committed to furthering its DEIB journey by continuing to work with TDM and leveraging their resources for future training and development.

Andrea articulated the company's vision: *“Strategically, I want to create more leaders that are women, LGBTQ+, and people of color, and that's the bottom line. And I think that this work creates avenues for those leaders. The biotech space has a big opportunity with these groups. Thankfully, bluebird is exceeding that. The area that we still have opportunities [for growth is] within the Latinx community, but we'll continue to do the work. So, the ultimate goal is for everyone to go through this work with us, ERG leads, ERGs, leaders that are our allies. Growing leaders so that the biotech space looks like our communities and the country, period.”*



Call to Action

If your organization is ready to embark on a similar journey towards DEI excellence, consider partnering with The Diversity Movement. Our tailored, comprehensive training programs can drive meaningful, lasting change and support your organization's goals.

[Reach out to us today](#) to learn more about how we can help you create a more inclusive and innovative future.