

**Interview with Fiona Jackson, Radius Consultant, and Belton Flournoy, Founder of Protiviti  
UK's LGBT+ group and a Head of Pride in the City for Pride in London Protiviti**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
FJ	So, what network is it that ... do you lead a network at the moment?
BF	Yeah ... well, I don't lead a network anymore ... but I am the ... one of the executive sponsors for the proPride Group withing Protiviti. So, maybe I can just do a quick background on myself ...
FJ	Yeah, please – that might help when I'm doing the questions to make sure that we're focusing in the right way.
BF	So ... I ... initially ... I'm a Director in Protiviti which is a global management risk consultancy ... and, a while ago, I created the UK arm of our network proPride so I kind of created the network in the UK. When I created that network, I felt like I didn't know what I was doing and I needed help so I went and joined the E&LP programme which, again, I can talk to the impact ... but it ... it helped amazingly and so it transformed – we ended up solidifying and completely changing how we operated and ran a network and it started to become quite successful. One of the things I realised is the importance of continuity and I was getting more senior so I ... held ... I passed the helm to more junior people because, if I leave, I want to make sure it's sustainable and you can't have just one passionate person running it. I then took a role as ... Head of Pride in the City of Pride in London ... which is the role that ... which is ... where I actually helped to found it initially with Pride in London called Pride in the City ... and it's kind of building off what I did with my network and I was like If I did this with my company, how can we help other companies do it? And so now we partner with companies to do one-off events ... to help them, I guess, instigate, be that spark of their D&I journey and so we helped London Stock Exchange ... once their network last year and they think just by letting Pride in the City close the stock market one day, which was quite exciting ... and it's ... it's just interesting because, since then, I've been doing so many things. Spoken on panels at the D&I Telegraph conference. This year I'm a Top 10 inspirational leader by the British LGBT awards ... for the work that's been done in Pride and I think a lot of that really stemmed from ... the frameworks that I learned at E&LP because it helped me go on to do that to my firm and then continue on into the, I guess, public sphere helping other organisations start their journeys – not manage their networks but just kind of start their journeys in that way. So I ... I have you guys to thank so I'm ... I'm frequently called in to help you guys with things because I'm one of those people that's very thankful for ... kind of the output that I got from the programme.
FJ	It sounds amazing so, not only have you had an impact in your own organisation, but you're doing it sort of across the sector of the City of London, if you view that as a sector ... and helping other people get going ... which is sometimes the hard place to start, isn't it?
BF	Mm mm
FJ	Where do you start? I'd really like to hear about the programme.
BF	The London Stock Exchange is that exact reason where ... it's an old conservative company where they just didn't think they needed to be visible about it. They did one thing and it was the spark. People had flags. The executives were saying How can we support more? And they're not throwing a lot of ... their, I guess, funding behind the feelings that they had before and so it's really that spark that helps organisations do more with ... with the passion that they have pent up already, in a way.
FJ	And discovery and uncovering ... from that perspective? So, we're starting talking about the programme already. That was really interesting background for me, thank you. And one of the things ... I've sent you across the questions and we may go

through them roughly and ... and off ... off on interesting tangents if we ... we start going down one if that's alright with you but the theme will be roughly those and I'd ... I'd like to start first of all thinking about what was the practice that you learned, and you've alluded to just now, with going on the E&LP programme that really has stuck a chord with you and, you know, the difference that it's made?

BF

So, I think that the simple word is structure ... so I think ... we ... we created a network and we were doing a lot of good things ... but I think ... and too many people think that's enough ... and I think there's one ... I'll kind of tell you about a couple of the themes ... and it's controversial, one of the things I'm saying but then I'll tell you why and how I think it's valuable. So the first is understanding why do you want your network to exist? I think too many times you say Oh, let's just have a network and we start doing ... doing things every year or we say What are we going to do next year? But you need to figure out why. What is the driver? And that driver can change ... but, are ... are you looking to increase diversity and so you want to focus on recruitment? Are you looking to ... provide visibility and impact the actual company culture? So you need a focus on awareness and education. Do you ... want to publicly showcase your ... the organisation's commitment to diversity? Well you need to do webinars or something external but, if you don't understand why you're doing it, then you're just passionate to do a lot of random things and, as we know, ... that's not an effective strategy. So once you understand what ... the why, then you're able to move ... move to strategy and so we ... we sat down and we said How can our network ... what do we really want to achieve? And we said two things – we wanted to create a network to allow our employees to feel empowered as well as our customers to face the future with confidence and so how can we make sure that both our employees and our customers are able to do it. The ... my company is small – we're 100 and ... in the UK, we're ... we're around 150 ... but last year we won Best D&I initiative in all of London and we ... you would not be able to tell our size by looking online because our social media presence is so huge and so I think, for so many people, thinking small is ... a hinderance to them. So, once you understand why you have your network and what that objective is, you can then move into strategy and only then because that's when you can say OK, what do we want to do to meet the why that we've defined? And then, when you define that strategy, you can do things such as Do we want to increase ally engagement? Do we want to increase the visibility with our customers? Do we want to increase collaboration with other internal teams? But, having that framing to consider your ... when you develop your strategy as opposed to just sitting in a room and saying What do we want to do next year, it transforms the conversation and it ties it back to your company's objectives as well which is a core point.

Once you have the ... the why and the strategy, the other thing that I think many people struggle with, and we did at first, was funding. Everyone struggles to get funding ... and they say How do I get funding? How do I get funding? And I think my controversial answer is ... you need to understand that businesses are here to make money ... as a primary goal ... and then developing a ... a culture in these other aspects are just as important because a happy culture leads to happy revenue generation but not everyone in the organisation feels that way. So you cannot go into an organisation and say It's the right thing to do; we have to do to it. What you need to make sure you're doing is articulating the value to the business that you're providing based on those activities that you're doing. So, if we know why we have our network, and we know the strategy where we've aligned those items to the why, then let's start measuring them ... and make sure you measure the outputs of ... what you're looking to do as part of your event. And I think you guys went through this whole framework and walked us through each of these stages and ... I guess with the ... with the funding, I think, for us perspective – to give you a couple of examples because I know you asked for some ...

FJ

Yes please

BF

I think ... one is we used to just hold events and we used to be like, Yay, we had a lot of people at the event; it was super, super successful and all of our effort was put before the event. What we've now realised is ... you will get more funding if you strategically understand what outcomes do you want to have as part of that event and then leverage information post-event. So, yes, it's great to have people in the room and talk about a great topic because everyone does that. What's more meaningful is if you can interview the person after ... if you can set up a one to one with the speaker and some of the executives about a topic that's relevant to the business. They love that because that's helping the business expand their network. Track the number of people you have and say How do we want to follow up with these people? How do we want to engage them? Do we want to invite them to future events? Are there any that could potentially leverage our company services? Can we tie them in with marketing in any way? Those questions typically aren't asked but those are critical because, if you can articulate potentially the increase in people you're engaging with, that's a ... a huge benefit.

Can you ... can you ... are you doing anything on the social media? Create a hashtag for your event and then track and monitor the actual exposure because I guarantee any organisation with a marketing team, they run analysis on the exposure of their campaigns and, if you can tell them we did this event, we created this hashtag, we asked people to tweet and we had 75 tweets from it, marketing will actually know what value to the organisation that provides in a financial standpoint and you can use that in some of your conversations. So ultimately it comes down to track, track, track. Executives like measurable outcomes ... and, if you can start tracking your actual outcomes and what you're doing with the information and how you're providing a value back to the organisation, they're more likely to give you funds next year because you're running an effective, mini-business within the business. But I think lots of times the ERG leads don't work with the executive sponsors in the right way because, in essence, the executive sponsors should not be the approvals of the budget, which they typically are. They should be How do we increase funding? What are the objectives we need to do? How can we better align this to corporate strategy? And that's how you should, I guess, engage those executives and we're lucky to have ... Peter Richardson, who's the Head of the UK, who not only believes in it but he challenges us and he's ... he's like Yes, I'll give you money to do any event. You just need to tell me exactly what we're going to be doing before and exactly what we're going to be doing after and, at first, I hated that because I felt that we should just be doing this; I shouldn't have to do this extra work but then you start realising, once you start doing it, the value that it's providing in terms of visibility to other people, in terms of visibility to executives who might not be as passionate about it, they become more passionate when they start seeing that so I think ... it's been such a fantastic way to ... to ... to get that funding. And obviously with those metrics, how do you then ... who do you want to see the message? Because too often or not we ... create these great events and then we send a thank you to the people who came and the people who attended – the only people who knew ... know about it are the people who attended from our side. We don't do any further sharing internally to our organisation. So how do you make sure you're getting visibility? Because even if you do an event and the entire executive team sees an email about it because you send it to just them saying Thank you, that makes them feel something and they're more inclined to see what you're doing because you can't expect, as an ERG network lead, that the executive team are going to know or even care what you're doing so you have to make it meaningful for ... for them to care and then provide a mechanism for them to see and understand what's being done and then they actually start caring about it and then they might want to do it or you might be able to hit a chord with someone in a different way. So I'll ... I'll pause there but I think those are ... the ... they why to the strategy, to the funding, to the visibility of four real areas that are important for people to ... to manage.

FJ

And ... and it sounds to me like the, sort of, the learning that you took from the initial programme, which I believe was a couple of years ago now when you went on it, and

you applied it within this context and what you're saying is how you applied it ... have you ... can you sort of talk me through ... an event where ... where you've seen some of that that you've just spoken about in action? So, I think it is ... you know really great ... advice, really, and guidance about how to run a network but what sort of events were ... were you running with ... because it sounds like you were doing some with external clients. Can you give me some examples of the sort of things that you've run?

BF

Yeah, yeah, so ... back ... the very first year, I had zero funding ... you know, not zero but very, very minimal funding. So, we're based in the Shard and one of the ideas I had was OK let's not use lack of funding to prohibit us to do an event so there's something called ... a View from the Shard and every once in a while they hold ... silent discos so what I did was I ... found the invitation, I had to buy a ticket. I ... created an invite and then we sent it out to people saying We're hosting a silent disco on the rooftop of the Shard, please come. Well I was just piggy-backing on an existing event and having people collect buy tickets ... and the ... because we're in the Shard, you know, that perception from external people didn't necessarily see it and ... we could send that to a variety of our ... our senior clients and, while they wouldn't want to come to that event, that's still a prestige that comes with it. And then we had the ... you know, the ERG network leads and other people come and it was a really great event and we had a little corner and we were wearing our rainbows and that was great. We then, obviously started to build our mailing list from that. We took ... made sure to take lots of pictures and then obviously we used that as a platform to receive funding for the following year. We then decided to hold ... an event on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor of the Shard, which we were going to pay for, so I went and ... found some speakers and, again, you go into charities and just emailing them is a great way to find them. Pride in London, Pride in the City – we now help people provide speakers and ... we ... found some speakers; we then said Can we create a survey? So we created a survey, created some questions, sent that out and worked with marketing to create a ... confidence in the workplace survey results sheet so we had some meaningful information to give people. We then had an event where we had a panel discussion with a variety of business leaders and the topic ... was really well attended and, not going to let my secret out of the bag, but one of the things that I did was (laughs) – I guess I am letting it out of the bag –

(laughs)

BF

I ... Top 10 lists from all of the award publications ... and I guessed email addresses, so of every single person on there, inviting them to the event. And so we, you know, we just guessed people's emails and said Please come, this is before GDPR (laughs) and then, once we had people register for that event, we then had people's contact information in order to do additional things with. And I think that was more of the beginning stages and some of the first journeys that we had and, again, we wanted to ... the whole theme, as we mentioned before, we're back to the why. We want people to feel confidence so the event was called Confidence in the Workplace and the whole topic was How do we empower ... people to be more confident and we made sure we had a very diverse panel.

FJ

Yes

BF

More recently, and I guess as you start to continue to do things, how can you ... you ... you remain relevant? So ... this last year we held ... a design thinking session so we're very big on innovative ways of thinking ... the Dyson vacuum came about as a result of design thinking ... and it's where you ... have silent activities so this will lead to multiple people to put their ideas down ... and then you group those ideas and then you discuss them. And, by going about that ... going about it that route, if you have a conversation ... let's say you were interviewing four people at the same time, only one person can talk at a time therefore, in that duration, you could only get one person's ideas, only as fast as they can talk. We can think and write faster and so, if you asked people to write down 15 ideas in five minutes, we can each easily do that.

We could then group those ideas in 10 minutes and then, at the end of that 25 minutes, you would have 60 ideas, grouped into potentially five themes that you could then have a 30 minute discussion on and that would get you much further than an hour long conversation would. And so design thinking really helps us to ... to tackle some problems so we ... held a session with a variety of business leaders ... and the goal was tackling different themes. How to support employees in remote locations? How do you better get funding for ERG networks and it was just a variety of those things and we then said What are the outcomes we want to have for this? Well, we, one, we want to provide meaningful information to people and, two, we want to try and create a sense of community. And so we really thought about What can we do after the event and so we had a ... a series of emails go out afterwards, trying to see if we could get someone else to host it, to try to make it a rotating type event and that didn't work. It was so exciting for us to ... trying to ... to try to do things differently. You know, as a smaller company, we see our role as helping to facilitate our clients and customers with how we work and engage and, from the Pride in the City perspective, if I look at an organisation like Barclays, who held a Pride in the City event, they said How can we engage some of our customers? And so then they through a Pride in the City event specialised with internal and then their customer base through their wealth management division. And it was the first time that they were able to do that and, oddly enough, the events team were always thinking of How can we engage ... this group of people? And so the events team and the marketing team were desperate for that to happen; the events team is actually desperate for ... to do an event to get help with it, to get funding for it and so it's How can you actually just think strategically of connecting the dots because, if you can connect the dots, then other people can actually do the work; other people can pay for it and you're getting a lot of the exposure as an ERG network group.

FJ So that leads me onto a slightly different subject on one of the things we also cover in the E&LP and that was about stakeholders and stakeholders' engagement and I think what ... what you're saying there is ... is thinking creatively about who the other stakeholders are in your organisation – not just, you know, your ... your sponsor etc but around the organisational structure and what they may want from a business function that you can then contribute to that then becomes something that's wider ... than just you.

BF Correct. Make sure ... make sure you understand ... so, going back to the first concept, understanding the why. Make sure, before you talk to someone, you understand their why. So ... so don't go to the CEO and say Oh I want to do this event and here's why we want to do it. You say We want to do an event because here's the objective we want to meet but we also think it would be beneficial for you for this reason ... and make sure you try and tie it back to the value it provides other people.

FJ Yeah, looking for the win-win

BF Yes, yes ...

FJ ... in the situation. So ... you've given us some really good examples of how you've used the learning. What do you think's been the longer term impact on your organisation as a result of what you've been doing? How's it changed it?

BF I think that ... I guess from an education and awareness perspective, I think we are ... it's now expected to be ... you're now expected to ... there's an expectation around ... your perceptions. And, when we had no network ... I once had a client and the client essentially told me ... we were about to meet a very senior individual ... and he said Belton, don't let them know you're gay. And I said Don't worry, I won't. And ... went and met with the person and it was a great meeting and then another friend of mine said Belton, what would you do if you were about to join a conference call and someone said Don't let them know you're black? I thought about it and I said I would open that conference call and be like Hi, this is Black Belton. Why? Because I'm

empowered by who I am and it means nothing and, if someone told me not to, I would shout from the rooftop about it. Yet, when someone told me to not say that about my LGBT status, I ... buckled and I now know ... I now know not to do that because I've been empowered because I had that comparison ... and so the ... the challenge for me at the time was If I was to go back to my company, who I know are very open and accepting, and say This happened to me, would they say Well that's a big account, is it a big deal for you? Or would they say That's an unacceptable ... do you want to leave that account? Like what would their response be and I didn't know. Yes they were accepting and yes they were open and yes they were very ... everyone I worked with was great and we did, you know ... I ... you know, I was out of the closet partly through events but I didn't know what that response would be. Since we've had our network, since we've been active and vocal, I've had two people come to me and say Belton, I wouldn't be out if it wasn't for this network. Thank you so much. That's the impact it had and there's no other way to articulate ... like I can articulate the ... the client exposure, the increased marketing we have, the passion we've developed but, to me, the most important impact is we now have people who can be themselves because they know where our company stands. They didn't know that before the network ... and I don't think we wouldn't have gotten there as fast if it wasn't for Radius because we wouldn't have learned the key ... we wouldn't have learned how to one be authentic in what we're driving but, two, to make sure that the messaging and the visibility was ... more strategic as opposed to emotional, in a way.

FJ Yeah, pointing out the business benefiting – being, I think previously I've heard it called, you know, there's the right thing and the bright thing and actually the right thing is the moral but the bright thing is the commercial business benefit that ... they go hand in hand and working with both, you know ... and you've talked a lot about the bright thing in the commercials but actually the ... what I'm hearing from the values driven pieces is actually it's the right thing that's had a lot of the impact on you as well ... as an organisation.

BF And ... I think that the ... the second effect has been ... I ... within the UK for, you know, 10 years now and we had a social committee, I think, planning events for the office and that was about it. And there was a ... there was a discussion Do we even really need ERGs and then I said Yes, I want to definitely have an LGBT ERG. We created it ... and ... and now, I think in 2017 and now three years later, we have an I-Matter network that's strong; we have a social committee; we have a sports committee; we have a ... an initiative for the growth and retention of women in the workplace committee and we're in discussions to create a BAME committee – all by passionate people because they've seen what proPride did. And proPride was really ... started from the strategy that you guys helped us to define so it's ... it's interesting the ... the knock-on effect it's had throughout the organisation and the culture.

FJ Yeah, sort of led the way and showed the reality of what could ... of what could happen.