

# NORDSTROM

## Company Spotlight: Black Employee Network

February 1, 2021

Reflecting the communities we serve and creating a place of inclusion and belonging isn't just the right thing to do, it's what's best for our customers — and it starts with our people. [Diversity across our company](#) brings different perspectives to the table to inspire innovation to ultimately better serve our customers. But it's not just something you say — it's something you live. It is imperative for us to continue our progress in offering a place where employees can be themselves, contribute their ideas, be heard, and do their best work.

One of the ways we do this is through our Employee Resource Groups. Our Black Employee Network (BEN), which started as a small group that got together every month, transformed into a community where Black employees could share their experiences and goals with each other and help guide the direction of our company. In honor of Black History Month, we spoke with three leaders of BEN about their career journeys, experience with BEN at Nordstrom and how other employees can be allies.

**Melissa Lewis, Director of Merchandise Planning**



**Tell us a bit about yourself, your career and role at Nordstrom.**

I am a first-generation American with origins from Trinidad and Belize. I grew up in the OC of Southern California, which is where my career in retail began. I moved to Seattle in 2012 to join Nordstrom as the Direct Planning Manager in Women's Designer Apparel. Today I support Merchandise Planning for our fleet of Women's Apparel brands as well as our Young Adult Buy Planning team. I have three daughters and three dogs, all of whom keep me busy in my off time.

**How did you get involved with BEN and how has that impacted your experience at Nordstrom?**

I joined as part of the leadership team in August of 2020 but, I remember when the network was a group of Black women getting together for lunch every month to build community and solidarity. As a member, it has been amazing to watch it evolve into a formal Employee Resource Group that not only has the power to improve the experience of our Black employees at Nordstrom but, has also informed company priorities.

On average, we will spend 90,000 hours of our life at work. Now imagine what it might feel like to spend most of those hours in rooms where no one else looks like you or shares similar life experiences. The BEN can counter that reality by facilitating meaningful connections for our Black employees across the organization, to build a sense of community and belonging.

**How can employees support groups like BEN and celebrations like Black History Month not only in February but all year long?**

There are so many ways to support this program outside of just being a member, namely making it easy for others to take part. If you are a people leader, create space for your team members to attend events and engage in our programs, share out event details when you learn of them, and check-in with your team after events to understand the value they added to their holistic work experience. You can also share your network and introduce us to the great people you know who are doing great work to support the Black community.

**Paige Cropper, Merchandise Allocator**



**Tell us a bit about yourself, your career and role at Nordstrom.**

I began my Nordstrom career in 2017 with the Buying and Planning Internship, where I was able to support our Men's Active & Trend Shoes team as they prepared to open the Men's New York store. After completing my MBA from Hampton University in 2018, I returned as a Merchant in Training and later transitioned to a Merchandise Analyst. I was recently promoted to Allocation, where I support our Off-Price Apparel. I am an only child that grew up in Charlotte, NC who enjoys listening to Beyoncé and volunteering in my community.

**How did you get involved with BEN and how has that impacted your experience at Nordstrom?**

Previously, I served as a volunteer and now I am an event co-lead and Employee Resource Group representative. The organization has allowed me to become more involved in guiding the progression of our company over the last couple of years. I love being a part of such a strong community within the workplace while learning and educating alongside my peers, which is one of the reasons I became a leader. I want to help the next Black girl or boy navigate their journey like those who have helped me.

Being able to continuously share my experiences is incredibly meaningful to me. I can only speak for myself, but as a young Black woman, using my voice can mean so much to so many. Ranging from educating and sharing how I grew up, to even relating to those who share similar backgrounds as me. You never know how your story can help someone, so, I strive to be vulnerable and transparent in hopes that my story inspires others to spark a courageous conversation at work or even in their community.

**How can employees support groups like BEN and celebrations like Black History Month not only in February but all year long?**

There is a plethora of ways you can support BEN or similar organizations, not only by attending and supporting our events throughout the year, but by challenging yourself to invite someone as well. Once you personally invite that person, they may feel more comfortable to join with you! Extend yourself by extending the invitation and bringing someone on the journey with you. The Black Employee Network only grows stronger by understanding the value of community engagement within the company.

**Ron Harper, Senior Vice President Supply Chain Operations  
BEN Executive Sponsor**



**Tell us a bit about yourself, your career and role at Nordstrom.**

I was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. After completing my undergraduate degree in Industrial Management from Michigan Tech University, I went on to attend the University of Denver where I received my master's degree in Transportation and Supply Chain. I have worked in the Supply Chain industry for 28 years and began working for Nordstrom in 2019 as the Senior Vice President of Supply Chain Operations.

**How did you get involved with BEN and how has that impacted your experience at Nordstrom?**

In October I joined the network as the CO-Executive Sponsor to support the BEN leadership team in achieving their objectives. I believe there is tremendous opportunity to engage in a variety of ways, from delivering community impacts to creating a sense of community internally all while supporting corporate outreach and growth. This Employee Resource Group can influence the Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging mission to improve not only the experience for our Black employees, but all diverse employees.

My mission within the organization is to help continue to educate and support the community of Black employees at Nordstrom, provide the broader organization insight and perspective, and to support emerging business opportunities for the Nordstrom brand. It's so inspiring watching the organization grow and listening to all the meaningful conversations taking place both in meetings and across the rest of the company.

**How can employees support groups like BEN and celebrations like Black History Month not only in February but all year long?**

Black History Month is a great time for all employees to take the opportunity to engage in several sponsored events, which are meant to open dialogue further and deeper understanding. But these events and conversations aren't exclusive to Black History Month — anyone can join events all year and I encourage you to have conversations as often as possible.

To learn more about what diversity, inclusion and belonging (DIB) means at Nordstrom, visit us at [www.nordstrom.com/diversity](http://www.nordstrom.com/diversity).