

Denver IT Executives Focus Group (DITEX)

(Unanimous Advisory Group Approval 2/24/21)

Mission – Values – Guidelines

Mission: The mission of the Denver IT Executives Focus Group (DITEX) is to support a select group of transitioning information technology professionals who have previously served as Directors, Vice-Presidents, CIOs, or similar level of scope of responsibilities to obtain their next position in a like role. Each member's mission is to help every other group member graduate from the group by supporting them in finding and landing a new Technology Leadership role. The partnership continues from the landing point, as a DITEX alumnus to pay forward and make hiring from within DITEX a priority.

Values

- *Trust* - DITEX is fundamentally built on trust to share job search information with active members openly. In some cases, this may not be possible when confidentiality/non-disclosure agreements bind members; in other cases, members may not have time to share all their job search information in weekly meetings or periodic updates. But in all cases, we strive to help each other by sharing relevant job search information promptly.
- *Service* – We leverage our strengths to assist active group members. We make every effort to participate in scheduled group meetings and provide professional and moral support. This includes, but is not limited to, one-on-one meetings, teambuilding activities, introductions, socials, and community events. DITEX alumni members are expected to contact at least one active member every quarter through the DITEX social or individual contacts directly or through mutual acquaintances.
- *Abundance* – We operate with an abundance mentality! We believe there are enough roles available for everyone in the group and do not see each other as competitors for positions. We endorse others from the active group to submit simultaneously for a role with the goal that at least someone from the active group would land the role. We share networking opportunities and job leads with active group members in a timely fashion and what we learn in job interviews.
- *Reputation* – DITEX as a whole, and each member, proactively maintains and protects the group's executive-level presence; branding to partners, recruiters, and potential employers; and the quality of its active membership in all activities, including but not limited to recruiting new members, meeting with partners, and in communicating with all alumni, recruiters, and potential employer representatives.
- *Partnership* – To expand DITEX influence and reputation and create new engagement opportunities for members, we seek and work with partners outside our group who share our values and take the long-term view of professional relationships. We seek enduring professional relationships with other group members and partners that will span all levels of roles and promote the “pay it forward” guiding principle. This value is nurtured by activities such as guest SMEs, alumni relations, job coaching, and partner meetings.
- *Volunteerism* – We do not charge for group membership, nor do group coordinators receive any payment for their services rendered. We are a team with a shared goal to help each other land in their next IT Leadership role and volunteer our passion for working together towards this unified goal.

- *Confidentiality* – We exercise high confidentiality in our partnerships, as well as data and content shared within the group. We have a trusted advisor perspective, with open sharing in our group and partner relationships, and only share information with discretion and permission.

Guidelines

1. Group Size – Optimally, the group size should be approximately 12 members, with 15 as a maximum for active group membership. Once the maximum size is reached, some options are:
 - a. Use managerial discretion to temporarily allow a small “overflow” beyond 15 if deemed acceptable and manageable by the group.
 - b. Find an additional Group Coordinator from within the group or a new qualified member from the outside and split the group, perhaps along geographic lines or whatever way makes sense.
 - c. Evaluate current group membership to determine if there are members not living up to core values, commitments, and guidelines and counsel them out of the group.
 - d. Maintain a waiting list for new members.
2. Membership Eligibility
 - a. Membership of the active group is open to executive-level IT candidates active in transition. Eligibility is limited to those who are currently unemployed in their professional field.
 - b. Appropriate executive-levels for prospective candidates are “on average” expected to be Senior Leadership, Director, VP, SVP, or C-suite. It is understood that role titles may vary among industries and companies, and we are actively maintaining and protecting the DITEX brand for executive talent.
 - c. Membership is primarily for executives in information technology (IT) and technology-centered related fields.
 - d. Candidates for membership may come to DITEX’s attention through a variety of methods, including an invitation from an active member, self-nomination (e.g., via the DITEX public web site or direct contact with an active member), referral by a DITEX alumnus, referral by a DITEX partner, or other methods not specified here.
 - e. It is critical to interview and screen prospective group members. A designated Membership Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that candidates are interviewed per the *DITEX Process for New Candidates* and that interviews are conducted per the *Membership Candidate Interview Guide*.
 - f. Returning eligible alumni are placed at the head of the waiting list when returning. This is provided, however, that they can provide evidence of quarterly contact with DITEX, are active members of the “Denver IT Executives (DITEX) Alumni” LinkedIn group and are still connected to the generic DITEX LinkedIn profile.
 - g. Executives who are currently employed but expect to become unemployed soon may proceed through the DITEX process for new membership. Candidates who successfully complete the membership process, but are still employed, will be placed on a “Candidate Deferral List” and will be placed on the waiting list when they notify the Membership Coordinator that they are unemployed. The DITEX Process will determine their position on the waiting list *for New Candidates*.
3. Meeting Attendance and Participation

- a. A member's participation in scheduled meetings is critical to the success of the member and the group. Members who cannot be prompt for meetings or attend irregularly will be deactivated from the member list and not invited to scheduled meetings. As a courtesy to other members and our hosts, members should arrive at least five to ten minutes before the scheduled meeting time.
 - b. If a member consistently misses meetings, they will be contacted by the Group Coordinator to ascertain that member's interest in remaining as an active member.
 - c. Member participation also includes:
 - o Responsibility to locate appropriate hosts/partners and provide introductions for the Hosting Coordinator or Group Coordinator to plan future meetings.
 - o Facilitate networking events and other events helpful in job search, in collaboration with the Social Coordinator or Group coordinator.
 - o Post articles, names of books, websites, blogs, etc., relevant to networking, job search, and soft skills enhancement.
 - o Volunteer for primary and/or back coordination tasks.
4. Weekly Meetings – The recurring active group meetings are usually held once per week and kept regularly scheduled to allow members to plan to attend. Usually, these meetings are two hours in duration during business hours.
5. Meetings should be planned to meet the changing needs of the group. The Host Coordinator or Group Coordinator should solicit ideas from other members on what would be helpful to them. Additional agenda items for regular meetings, or reasons for holding special meetings, may include the following:
- a. Presentations – by host company representatives when they are hosting the active group or by a member with specific expertise of interest to the group.
 - b. Résumé review workshops – members helping each other with tuning their resumes.
 - c. Value Statements – members helping each other in tuning their value statements.
 - d. Mock Interviews – conducted as panel interviews or individual interviews. Preparation for such exercises is important and should include definition of the positions being applied for, interview questions, and roles to be played by group members. After the interviews, there should be an opportunity to provide constructive criticism to the mock interviewee. When possible, the mock scenario should reflect an actual interview coming up for a member, including position, corporate interviewing style, and position description.
 - e. Networking Event Preparations – the group can prepare by sharing best practices and intelligence about attendees at other networking events such as SIM meetings, C-Level at Mile High, or the Colorado Technical Association (CTA).
 - f. Celebrations – the group may wish to organize an event to celebrate recent graduates or holidays. Always consider inviting alumni members to such events.
 - g. Meetings with Other Groups – Meetings with other group coordinators in the Denver Focus Groups or inviting them to regularly-scheduled DITEX meetings for information sharing.
 - h. Social Events – Quarterly social events where we invite hosts, partners, alumni, and other potential, influential individuals to network at local establishments, as agreed upon by the active members.
 - i. Adhoc small group meetings – To enable additional accountability and cohesiveness in helping each active member, there could be breakouts of the larger active group into small working groups with shared interests and purpose aligned to the DITEX mission. There shall be no discrimination for any member to join any of the small working group.

6. Partners – There are a number of consulting and staffing companies, as well as IT services vendors, who would welcome the opportunity to host the group meetings, bring value to members and extend the DITEX network.
 - a. Screening prospective host partners is just as important as screening prospective group members. The Hosting Coordinator or Group Coordinator should meet with prospective host partners to determine if there's a fit and manage expectations.
 - b. The Hosting Coordinator should coordinate an agenda with each host partner. It is up to the active group to decide if they would like to have a portion of each meeting to themselves without partner personnel present.
 - c. The Hosting Coordinator and Group Coordinator should remind members to dress professionally when meeting at a host partner site, bring business cards, and prepare questions in advance for the host partner.
 - d. Before each meeting, the Hosting Coordinator should send the host partner a list of active members with their contact information (including LinkedIn URL) and highlighting those who will attend the meeting hosted by the partner.
 - e. The Hosting Coordinator should also provide the host representative with bios of all active members and the attending advisory group member, topics of interest for the active group, and an agenda for each such meeting.
 - f. The Hosting Coordinator, Group Coordinator, and all members should thank the host partner following the meeting.
 - g. The Hosting Coordinator should coordinate with the host partner and active group members to gauge interest in having the partner host future meetings. In some cases, it may make sense to set up a periodic meeting schedule with the partner.

7. Group Coordinator – The Group Coordinator should embody the principles of servant leadership in her/his governance of the group. In a group comprised of people accustomed to being organizational leaders, it should not be difficult to find someone qualified to take on the role of Group Coordinator. Nevertheless, to successfully fulfill the Group Coordinator role, a significant time commitment is needed, and the group may want to consider implementing two Co-Coordinators. A Co-Coordinators approach also makes for smoother transitions in leadership, as one of the coordinators may graduate from the group. The primary responsibilities of the Group Coordinator are as follows.
 - a. Schedule advisory group meetings – time, place, and agenda.
 - b. Work collaboratively with all other DITEX active group coordinators including, but not limited to, Membership, Socials, Hosting, Web & Data or other future coordinators as adopted by the DITEX active members
 - c. Facilitate the succession plan for the Group Coordinator role.
 - d. Screen prospective partners and collaborate with other active members to introduce partners to the group.
 - e. Facilitate a greater degree of involvement from group members while finding ways to enable them to share their ideas and strengths with the rest of the group.
 - f. Be a fierce advocate and enforcer for the values of the group.
 - g. With the Membership Coordinator, Social Coordinator, Hosting Coordinator, and others administer the LinkedIn group, group sharing folder, and group shared calendar.
 - h. Coordinate with other Focus Groups, as appropriate.
 - i. As a participant in the DITEX Advisory Group, keep alumni informed of group needs, notify of graduating members, and request assistance from them, as appropriate (see more information below).
 - j. Delegate authority – in a group full of senior leaders, the Group Coordinator should be sure to delegate tasks to group members, as appropriate.

- k. If needed, remind the active group of common business practices and protocols, e.g., dress codes for meetings; formats for presentations; determine objectives for hosted events; provide guidance on digital etiquette; and provide leadership regarding formats and timing for presentations, bios, and other forms of representative communication.
 - l. Be a champion for building close relationships – The ability to serve fellow members is often limited by how well they know and can represent each other. We are not likely to recommend people for positions, and should not for healthy brand management, if we do not know them as more than acquaintances. One useful approach to foster stronger lifetime professional relationships is an “Allow me to introduce” exercise.
 - o Example: The Group Coordinator may assign pairing or small group assignments to each member of the group so they can plan to meet one-on-one. The objective for such one-on-ones could be for them to interview each other so they can introduce one another in the next group meeting. All active members should be developing a strong “elevator pitch” or “30 second me” to introduce their colleague. Interview questions should be directed accordingly to uncover relevant experience, transferable skills, industry experience, and position the person is looking for. The Group Coordinator might then rotate pairing assignments before the next meeting and repeat the process.
8. Alumni - Those who land (find employment) graduate from the active group and become alumni, and these alumni can be a valuable resource to DITEX.
- a. Alumni are expected to maintain contact with DITEX by attending quarterly socials, responding to active member inquiries, attending focus groups, mentoring sessions, or other related activities.
 - b. DITEX alumni members are expected to contact at least one active member every quarter through the DITEX social or individual contacts directly or through mutual acquaintances.
 - c. The Advisory Group, Group Coordinator, and Active Group members will network with alumni members through Slack, Zoom, and other channels to build lasting relationships.
 - d. There is no size limit to the alumni group.
 - e. LinkedIn and Slack – LinkedIn groups and Slack are valuable tools for active group members and alumni. While these tools are great for communication and online networking, they should not take the place of face-to-face networking and relationship-building.
9. Advisory Group Members – The Advisory group should be made up of Alumni, Partners, Friends of DITEX type individuals who share the passion and spirit of the Charter values and want to contribute to the active group members’ success. Their primary function is to ensure consistency in the overall facilitation of DITEX and serve as a bridge between the active group members and alumni to help foster collaboration and cooperation in the mission of assisting the active group members in finding their next employment position. Another aspect of their mission is providing guidance and/ or reviews back to the active group regarding Mission, Values, and Guidelines as warranted.
- a. This is a group of 4-6 members whose commitment to DITEX is for 12 months, renewable as warranted and desired by the active group members
 - b. Should any member leave the group, the remaining advisory members would work with the active group to refill the position
 - c. The primary liaison back to the active group members would be the Group Coordinator

- d. These members agree to support the weekly active group meetings by having one member attend each of the meetings. This can be in person or virtually via current video and/ or audio hosting applications
- e. Should there be a potential conflict of interest between a host company and the attending advisory member, they shall recuse themselves from the meeting and facilitate a replacement member attendee.
- f. Participate in weekly meetings to provide feedback, coaching, and mentorship to DITEX members as they navigate their search
- g. These members also agree to support monthly, or as warranted, small group sessions between alumni and active members. Specifically, they would help facilitate alumni participation and coordinate as needed with the Group Coordinator
- h. These members can also be a bridge to other local industry groups and facilitate wider meetings or to look at best practices within other groups for consideration within DITEX
- i. Within the advisory group, there should be a designated DITEX historian to ensure historical and archival information is safeguarded via Dropbox or a similar type of archival tool