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How To Start an Employee Resource Group: 9 Steps To ERGs



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How do you start an Employee Resource Group?

To help you identify the steps to forming an ERG, we asked business leaders, HR professionals, and everyday employees about their tips for forming an Employee Resource Group.

Here are nine steps to starting an ERG:

- Leadership Buy-In
- Bias For Action
- Ensure There Are Enough People Interested
- Define The Group's Goals
- Write Out Your Mission
- Make it Peer-Led
- Don't Forget To Advertise
- Reward and Recognize ERG Contributions
- Stay Nimble and Connected to your Base

Leadership Buy-In

(ERGs) are workplace networks for team members with shared characteristics, special interests, or life experiences. Generally employee-led rather than leadership-run, these voluntary affinity groups support professional development, strengthen business impact internally and externally, and promote commitments to a diverse workplace. Building an ERG program is one positive way for organizations to show an investment in their employees by putting dedicated company resources towards employee education, community building, and social impact initiatives. A vital step towards building a successful ERG is getting leadership buy-in. While you don't need senior leadership for

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the ERG to be successful, leadership buy-in is key to the success of the ERG.

Mark Christensen, People & Partnerships

Bias For Action

Employee resource groups are a great way of creating belonging and fostering a sense of inclusion within your company. At my boutique [SEO agency](#), we are encouraged to use our "bias for action" to create ERGs as needed. The key is to identify a cause that echoes within people and invite them to participate in get-togethers via social, water cooler talk, or through other employees.

Nikitha Lokareddy, [Markitors](#)

Ensure There Are Enough People Interested

Before launching an ERG, it's important to plan its structure and outcomes. The ERG needs to have someone assigned to a leadership role, long-term goals, and a regular engagement plan. Answer questions like, 'how often will the group meet?' before starting the group. Find someone passionate about the topic of the group to lead meetings. Likewise, it's essential to find members within the companies who will be invested in the group.

The ERG needs to be focused on a topic that people feel is important. These topics can range from a women's network to mental health advocacy, to sustainability. Just ensure that there are enough people interested in the group to be relevant.

Grant Aldrich, [OnlineDegree.com](#)

Define the Group's Goals

When starting an Employee Resource Group, begin by meeting with your HR team and defining the group's goals and mission statement. Is the main goal to provide support, further career development, or enhance team members' personal development? Other common goals are to improve the work environment, workplace wellness, and environmental advocacy. After deciding the objectives and confirming with HR, recruit additional team members from your organization. Once there is a team assembled, schedule a meeting, and organize events working towards the mission statement.

Eric Holguin, [Herrman & Herrman PLLC](#)

Write Out Your Mission

The best Employee Resource Groups are aligned with their company's mission. To be successful, it's vital that you mirror and build upon your organization's values, culture, and goals. This not only ensures that you will get buy-in from leadership, but it can also help you move your company forward. A great first step is to write out your ERG's mission. Make sure to cross-reference and use your company's written mission and values to make sure you are on the same page.

Chris Abrams, [Abrams Insurance Solutions](#)

Make it Peer-Led

I believe the best employee resource groups are peer-led. Groups that are organized and driven by employees will adjust their focus to employee priorities, which can help support their goals. With this aspect in mind, the best way to start an ERG is to choose one to three team members to lead the initiative. Then, you can either assign a specific goal or theme or task the group with creating their own.

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Michael Alexis, [Teambuilding](#)

Don't Forget to Advertise

This might seem obvious but even if you have the best ERG setup, the most important step is letting your employees know that it exists. You can do this through the company intranet or through the company newsletter. Alternatively, you can go the more informal route and post it on Slack and company social media channels to alert employees that a new group has been created. Don't be spammy, as employees won't want to join if they feel it's an obligation but do post it frequently to get their attention, especially through casual company communications channels.

Tom Winter, [DevSkiller](#)

Reward and Recognize ERG Contributions

Given the tumult of 2020, employees are exhausted. It's challenging enough to complete the base requirements of their day gigs, never mind go above and beyond to build the community that is ultimately their company's responsibility. An Employee Resource Group requires a tremendous investment by its founding members. A company must formally recognize these efforts during performance reviews. The days of underrepresented minorities and women doing inclusion work for free are over. Employers must reward employee contributions, even if it's not part of their job description.

Janice Wilson, [Diversity Decoded](#)

Stay Nimble and Connected to Your Base

Program development is only one aspect of setting up a successful ERG; ongoing evaluation is critical to ensure that the organization is still meeting the needs of your members, employees, and co-workers. Listen to your members and community. Once you survey everyone, develop a plan, and get buy-in, remember to stay flexible. You may create a program that offers everything your employees ask for and come to find that some of the issues/concerns you aimed to address still exist.

Courtney Bolton, [Veer](#)

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