

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Forums for Success

ERG OVERVIEW

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that **foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with organizational mission, values, goals, business practices, and objectives.**

ERGs have **been an effective method of aligning [business and diversity strategies](#).**

Employee Resource Groups may play any of the key roles below:

- Offering a forum for networking and regular communication on topics of common interest
- Providing a platform to voice individual and group concerns and suggestions to employers
- Promoting awareness of challenges and opportunities that may be unique to particular groups
- Increasing the visibility and participation of employees from diverse groups within the workplace
- Connecting more senior employees with younger employees from the same cultural group to provide an additional level of mentoring and career development coaching
- Actively participating in recruiting activities

- Identifying and coordinating marketing and business development opportunities
- Cultivating relationships with, and encouraging and supporting participation in, associations and community organizations that represent a diversity of societal groups

WHY CREATE A JEWISH ERG

With antisemitism rising around the world, it is increasingly important for organizations to address antisemitism and ensure that their Jewish employees feel a sense of belonging and feel welcomed. A great way to do this is through the creation of a Jewish ERG.

Since the late 1960s, businesses large and small have worked to ensure that employees of all backgrounds are welcomed in the workplace. These diversity and inclusion efforts, which initially focused on race and gender diversity, have rightly expanded to include sexual orientation, veterans, disabilities, age, and more.

Unfortunately, according to [a new study](#) by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, religious inclusion has been relatively absent in the workplace, especially regarding ERGs. When this happens, we risk failing to address the gaps and inequities that keep us from creating truly inclusive workplaces where all people can thrive.

Not only is it important to create a Jewish ERG given the relative absence of religious or faith-based ERGs, but also because the Jewish community is more than just a religious group. Jews are also an ethnic group, a people, and a culture. Because of this complexity, antisemitism is more than just a religious bigotry but often takes the form of [a racialized bigotry](#). In turn, Jewish identity and antisemitism are often misunderstood. One way to fix this is through the creation of a Jewish ERG which can foster understanding and learning.

In addition, antisemitic conspiracy theories and stereotypes of Jews being overly successful has often caused them to be excluded from DEI work and has led to their experiences with bias and bigotry being minimized or ignored. Despite this, the antisemitism that Jews face continues to grow in the workplace and beyond. The commitment to creating a Jewish ERG sends a message of solidarity to the Jewish community that their experiences are important and that they are welcomed and included in the organization.

In addition to its role in combatting antisemitism, Jewish ERGs have various other benefits. For example, a Jewish ERG could give Jewish employees a group that provides support and advocacy for any common concerns they might have. It also provides a forum for Jewish employees to share things related to their Jewish identity, such as kosher recipes, Jewish holidays, and so on. Moreover, a Jewish ERG helps promote unity and coalition building by creating a forum where Jewish employees can collaborate with other ERG groups and stand together in solidarity for issues that affect multiple communities.

STEPS FOR EMPLOYEES ON HOW TO CREATE A NEW ERG

ERGs are often most impactful when they are initiated by employees from the group or groups the ERGs will bring together. While each company has its own processes, many follow some basic steps to set up a successful ERG:

Step 1: Secure a sponsor

If you are reading this document, you likely already have support from leadership to create an ERG. Nevertheless, it is still incredibly useful for the employee ERG leaders to gain support from someone in leadership who will be committed to the success of the ERG. This executive sponsor, whether Jewish or not, can act as an advocate

and a liaison between the ERG and leadership and can provide guidance to the ERG. It should be noted that while this step is highly encouraged, ERGs can still be successful without a sponsor from leadership.

Step 2: Set a mission and goals

Next, it is important to determine what the ERG's purpose is. This can be done by the ERG leaders before any official meetings are conducted or can be decided by members at the first few meetings. Not all ERGs have the same mission. Some are dedicated to professional development, community building, networking, enhanced learning, advocacy, and more. Furthermore, ERGs can include multiple tracks in their mission and should not feel limited to only doing one thing. For example, an ERG can be dedicated to both professional development and community building.

Once the mission and purpose have been established, goals should be set up. These should do two things: (1) Set up specific outcomes that embody the mission and purpose of the ERG; and (2) Provide a means of measuring how successful the ERG has been. To measure the success of an ERG it is easier to pick quantifiable goals, but some (e.g., improved sense of belonging) can be difficult to quantify, and so qualitative goals can be set as well.

Step 3: Outreach and recruitment

Once a sponsor has signed on and the ERG's mission and goals have been established, the next step is getting people involved through outreach and recruitment. Some methods include advertisements, posts in communication channels, email blasts, networking/word of mouth, and any other established communication mechanisms in your organization. The goal here is simply to spread the word and ensuring that employees who would benefit from membership in the ERG are aware of its creation and will join.

Step 4: Other things to consider

At some point the organization and leadership apparatus for the ERG needs to be decided. In addition, it should be decided whether or not a budget is needed and how it would be funded. Lastly, the frequency and content of meetings needs to be considered. These can either be decided by the individuals who helped create the ERG or can be decided by the members.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

[“How to Build an Effective Employee Resource Group \(ERG\) Program”](#) by Noelle Salerno, Indeed

[“How To Start An Employee Resource Group At Your Organization”](#) by Janice Gassam Asare, Forbes

[“Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity & Inclusion \(REDI\) Index 2021”](#) by Religious Freedom & Business Foundation; for the full report go [here](#)

[“The link between economic and religious freedoms”](#) by World Economic Forum

[“The Importance of Employee Resource Groups for Your Workplace”](#) by Sheba Lasley, EveryoneSocial