

The Keys to Effective Employee Resource Groups

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can enhance the employee experience and help improve your company's culture in various ways, from building community and connection for employees to providing insights about your customers or feedback on your products and services. What differentiates an ERG from an affinity group (e.g., a wellness club) is organizational and executive sponsorship, allocated resources, and—sometimes—influence on the organization's strategic goals.

While culture efforts are evolving, ERGs remain incredibly popular across industries. [Paradigm's 2025 Benchmarking Report](#) found that 90% of companies are continuing to support ERGs. Some companies are just beginning their journey with a single ERG, while others have multiple global ERGs that have been in place for years. But, while many ERGs are started with the best intentions, we often hear the same three challenges: a lack of clarity on the role of ERGs, waning enthusiasm, and burnout from ERG leaders.

Wherever you are in your ERG journey, this checklist can help you overcome those challenges and build effective, sustainable ERGs.



1. Determine the Role of ERGs

Start by clearly articulating the role ERGs will play in your broader culture strategy. While ERGs can have a tremendous impact, they are not a replacement for a comprehensive strategy, or an avenue to solve all culture challenges and concerns. To avoid misalignment, it's important to firmly establish the role of ERGs in your overall culture strategy early.

First, determine the scope of ERGs. We often recommend the 4Cs framework from [Dr. Robert Rodriguez](#) to determine the role of ERGs at the company, which could range from creating community to impacting the business:

- **Community:** The ERG creates connections with the community inside and/or outside of the company.
- **Culture:** The ERG encourages company-wide allyship through celebrating and educating.
- **Career:** The ERG helps advance underrepresented employees to leadership positions and/or aids in efforts to diversify talent pipeline.
- **Commerce:** The ERG helps ensure that your company's products are relevant to their community and connects that community to your business.



2. Set Internal Guidelines and Follow the Latest Legal Guidance

Next, ensure your ERGs adhere to the latest legal guidance in the regions in which they operate. In the U.S., for example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) published new guidance around ERGs in March 2025 stating, “limiting membership in workplace groups, such as Employee Resource Groups (ERG), Business Resource Groups (BRGs), or other employee affinity groups, to certain protected groups” could be considered unlawful. While your exact approach should be determined with your legal counsel, we recommend participation in ERGs should be open to all employees.

You should also determine other requirements for ERGs at your organization, including:

- What qualifies an ERG to form and receive funding from the organization?
- Is there a minimum number of members required?
- Is there an employee(s) interested in leading the ERG?
- Who is a potential candidate for an executive sponsor?
- Does the group need to define objectives and goals?



3. Provide Executive and Operational Support

Effective ERGs need engaged executive sponsors and strong relationships with HR leaders to ensure alignment and enable their success. Executive sponsors should be leaders that have the authority to connect ERGs to resources across the organization. To ensure success, executive sponsors should have clear expectations for their role and be held accountable for following through with those responsibilities. In terms of operational support, having a dedicated HR person who is responsible for working with ERGs and establishing alignment is key to success. This person can also help set and distribute budgets.



4. Create structure for ERGs

A common barrier to success for ERGs is not being aligned as a group around objectives and responsibilities. At minimum, we recommend every ERG has clear objectives: What goals does the ERG want to accomplish? How will they accomplish each goal? Who is responsible for organizing meetings or executing on initiatives? A charter can help create this structure.

Effective ERG Charters often include the following:

- **Mission Statement:** Define the ERG's fundamental purpose: Why does the group exist?
- **Goals and Objectives:** What goals does the ERG want to accomplish? How will they accomplish each goal?
- **Operations and Resources:** What are the specific initiatives the ERG will own? What workstreams exist and how will they be managed? What support is needed from leadership?
- **Communication Norms:** How will the group keep members engaged and up to date on initiatives? How will the group include members across locations, roles, and levels?
- **Key Roles and Responsibilities:** What is the role of the ERG leader, executive sponsor, etc.? How are they chosen/selected? How are decisions made?
- **Membership:** Who can join the ERG (e.g., is the group open to allies)? How do employees join? How does the group increase membership?



The Role of ERG Leaders

ERG leaders are key to organizing and driving the group's efforts. Key responsibilities include creating and/or maintaining the ERG's charter, leading ERG meetings, outlining initiatives, and meeting regularly with the executive sponsor. While we know ERGs can help drive meaningful progress on culture strategies, many of these efforts go unrecognized. Paradigm's data from clients using our Blueprint platform show that most organizations are not recognizing the investment ERG members are making. For example,

- 16% of organizations understand how much time ERG members are investing.

This lack of recognition and understanding is likely to have the biggest impact on your ERG leaders, who are critical to these groups' success. To help your ERG leaders make faster progress and avoid burnout, consider forming ERG leadership committees (as opposed to, or in addition to, individuals leading the ERG) and rotating leadership roles on a regular basis.



5. Empower ERGs

Once expectations are set and structure is in place, you need to empower ERGs to be successful — this starts with ERG leaders. Strategies to consider include:

- Creating an ERG leader toolkit with tips and resources (e.g., information on how to engage leaders, secure budget, etc.).
- Providing your ERG leaders with training and coaching (e.g., how to communicate effectively with and influence key stakeholders). This type of training is also a great way to create a cross functional community of leaders across various ERGs.
- Pair new ERG leaders with leaders from well established and successful ERGs to help them build momentum. These mentors can draw on their success to help the new ERG leader launch their group, navigate the organization, and understand where and how to get support.



6. Build and Sustain Momentum

Finally, ERGs will struggle to be effective without engaged members. There are several strategies you can use to build membership:

- Communicating about ERGs often (e.g., sharing upcoming ERG events, giving updates on progress, and reminding employees how they can participate).
- Include information about ERGs in onboarding, which also helps foster inclusion for new employees from underrepresented groups.
- Ask managers to support ERG efforts by encouraging employees to get involved, recognizing involvement in performance conversations, and attending events when appropriate.
- Include hourly employees. A common practice for organizations with these populations giving employees paid time to participate (e.g., 1 hour per month allocated to attending ERG events) so they can feel included and benefit from these groups.

Finally, track ERG membership over time. It is not only an important success metric, but it can also highlight when your organization needs to help leaders sustain momentum when enthusiasm wanes. Employees often join ERGs because they are passionate about culture efforts, but they might put it on the backburner when things get busy or the group hits roadblocks. In these scenarios, it can be helpful for executives to tout the benefits of ERG membership, like access to leadership, the chance to weigh in on overall strategy and provide feedback, and the opportunity to take on leadership roles. Also be sure to publicly recognize an ERG's successes, reward them when they meet goals, and consider allocating time for ERGs in members' job expectations.

Looking for support in making your ERGs more effective or training ERG members? Paradigm can help. For more information on our ERG offerings — and our Culture for Everyone Platform , from which this resource was adapted.

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