

THE ERG PLAYBOOK

HOW TO LAUNCH A FAITH-BASED
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP
AT YOUR COMPANY

From ENDEAVOR - a Global Faith at Work Ministry,
in Partnership with the THEOLOGY OF WORK PROJECT



TO FAITHFUL LEADERS IN THE WORKPLACE,

We've been praying for you.

There is a growing movement in companies around the world. Christians no longer want to leave their beliefs at the door when they walk into their places of work. They are tired of separating themselves into Sunday-believers and Monday-through-Friday-workers. They want to bring themselves, all of themselves—their beliefs, their values, their hopes and ideals—into the work they do every day.

And so we have seen the rise of ERGs, or Employee Resource Groups. ERGs have cropped up in every industry, location, and functionality you can imagine. No matter where people work or what they do for their job, they are hungry to connect with those who share their identity and beliefs. ERGs let these workers know they are seen, heard and valued in their workplaces.

This is good news for business. Companies with ERGs report better success with employee retention and job satisfaction. It seems that people are happier at work and do better at their jobs when they are allowed to express their calling openly. ERGs seem to be a win-win for Christians and employers alike.

But not all has been smooth sailing for Christians in the workplace. Many companies are fearful about faith-based groups gathering on their premises. They say that religion has no place in the workplace. They say “We already have a Christmas tree.” They put up roadblocks or even threaten their employees with legal action.

This workbook provides a roadmap for the faithful leader who wants to launch a faith-based ERG. In it, you will learn how to assess your company's readiness, and the readiness of your network. You will find language for your vision, and learn to deflect common objections. More importantly, you'll hear from other ERG leaders who went before you. From then you'll hear what worked and what success has meant for them and their organizations.

**We hope to encourage you.
This work is important.
We are already praying for your success!**



ROADMAP TO ERG LAUNCH

What is an ERG? Why Start an ERG?

Christian or Interfaith?

Evaluate Your Spiritual Health

Evaluate Your Company Atmosphere

Evaluate Your Network

Language Your Vision

Understand Religious Freedoms

Develop Your Framework Checklist

Overcome Objections

Set Your Event Schedule

Plan Your Launch

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FAITH-BASED EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS DELIVER BUSINESS RESULTS

Typical 1st year retention of employees is **10%**
Among members of ERGs, retention jumps to **85.6%**
Participation in an ERG increases retention by **756%**

FAITH-BASED EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS SUPPORT DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

66% Muslims report discrimination at work
50% of Jews report discrimination at work
33% of Evangelical Christians report discrimination at work
45% of victims of religious bias consider leaving their jobs

FAITH-BASED EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS SOLVE DE&I AND RETENTION PROBLEMS

“To be able to integrate my faith and work makes me feel accepted and appreciated as who I am.”





WHAT IS AN ERG?

An ERG, or Employee Resource Group, is an organization of similarly minded individuals who support one another through shared activity and growing relationships.

ERG members may be of one faith or many. They may work together at one company or network across multiple organizations. Their meetings might be tightly scheduled or they may flux and wane depending on the season.

The bottom line is that members of an ERG support one another and facilitate success for both individual members and for their wider organizations.



ERG = EMPLOYEE + RESOURCE + GROUP

If you want to know what an ERG is, you need look no further than the name: **EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUP**.

EMPLOYEES are individuals who work to accomplish the goals of a larger organization. While they may have some control over the job they take and the type of work they do, employees often do not choose the people they work with or their broader company culture. They spend their days around people they might not otherwise associate with, in a culture that may be foreign or hostile to them. For these reasons, employees have an incentive to connect with other people who share meaningful similarities and beliefs.

RESOURCES meet these employees' needs. When a city needs water it looks to its natural resources. When a company needs good workers it looks to its Human Resources. And when people need strength, encouragement or advice they look to their personal resources - the wealth of wisdom, faith, and positive relationships they have built up over time.

GROUPS are what happens when people come together. Something powerful happens when people come together to form a group. They are stronger in their numbers than the sum of their parts. Within a group, the powerless gain power and the voiceless find a voice. Individuals find fellowship and support. The lonely no longer feel alone.

In short, an employee resource group is a group of working people who help and support one another together as part of a larger whole. They may be in one organization or across many. They may represent one faith or multiple faiths. They may address societal ills, or meet the needs of their own members. The bottom line is that ERGs make people feel safer, more connected, and stronger than they would be on their own.



WHY START AN ERG?

Employee Resource Groups yield numerous benefits both for individuals and their organizations as a whole. A research study by P. Douglas in the Journal of Employment Relations found that ERGs improve organizational outcomes because they strengthen their members' commitment to the company they work for. Members have an increased sense of joy and purpose in their work. That in turn cultivates better individual performance and overall success. In one company's internal survey, 75% of the employees saw the company as a better company because of the activities of their ERG.

“It's improved my personal and professional relationships. It's grown my career no doubt.”

“I have more joy in the everyday work.”

EMPLOYER BENEFITS

“I feel like we have increased innovation. We service Christian and faith-based organizations who use our apps, and so we have adjusted our apps to accommodate them. I think it increases our innovation when we acknowledge that religion is ok.”

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

“To be able to integrate my faith and work,” says one ERG leader “makes me feel accepted and appreciated as who I am.”

DAY-TO-DAY BENEFITS

“Overall, I would say I have more joy in my life than ever before,” says a participant of a Christian ERG. “I have way more joy in the mundane, everyday work than ever before.”

**Quotes taken from original research pioneered by Helen H. Chung et al. in collaboration with The Theology of Work Project.*





CHRISTIAN? OR INTERFAITH? WHAT'S YOUR STRATEGY?

Some companies are open to ERGs dedicated to a single faith. Other companies fear singling out a particular religion and leaving out others. If your company is opposed to a Christian ERG, the best option is often to propose an interfaith group.

Christians needn't be afraid of the interfaith option. An interfaith ERG does not demand that its participants water down their faith, or accept that all beliefs are equal. Interfaith simply acknowledges that each religious group has deeply-held beliefs. Each group has a right to the benefits that come from gathering with like-minded believers in the workplace. The interfaith umbrella makes this possible for everyone.

In an interfaith ERG, Christians can plan activities that nurture employees of the Christian faith. Muslims can gather around their shared beliefs. And Jews can organize celebrations that reflect their heritage.

Looking outward, interfaith ERGs plan community events that inspire their coworkers and benefit worthy causes. These campaigns demonstrate that unity is possible despite cultural differences. They build company morale. And they show that even as each participant holds strongly to their personal beliefs, all are free to express the fullness of their religious identity in the workplace.

FORMAL or INFORMAL? CHRISTIAN or INTERFAITH?

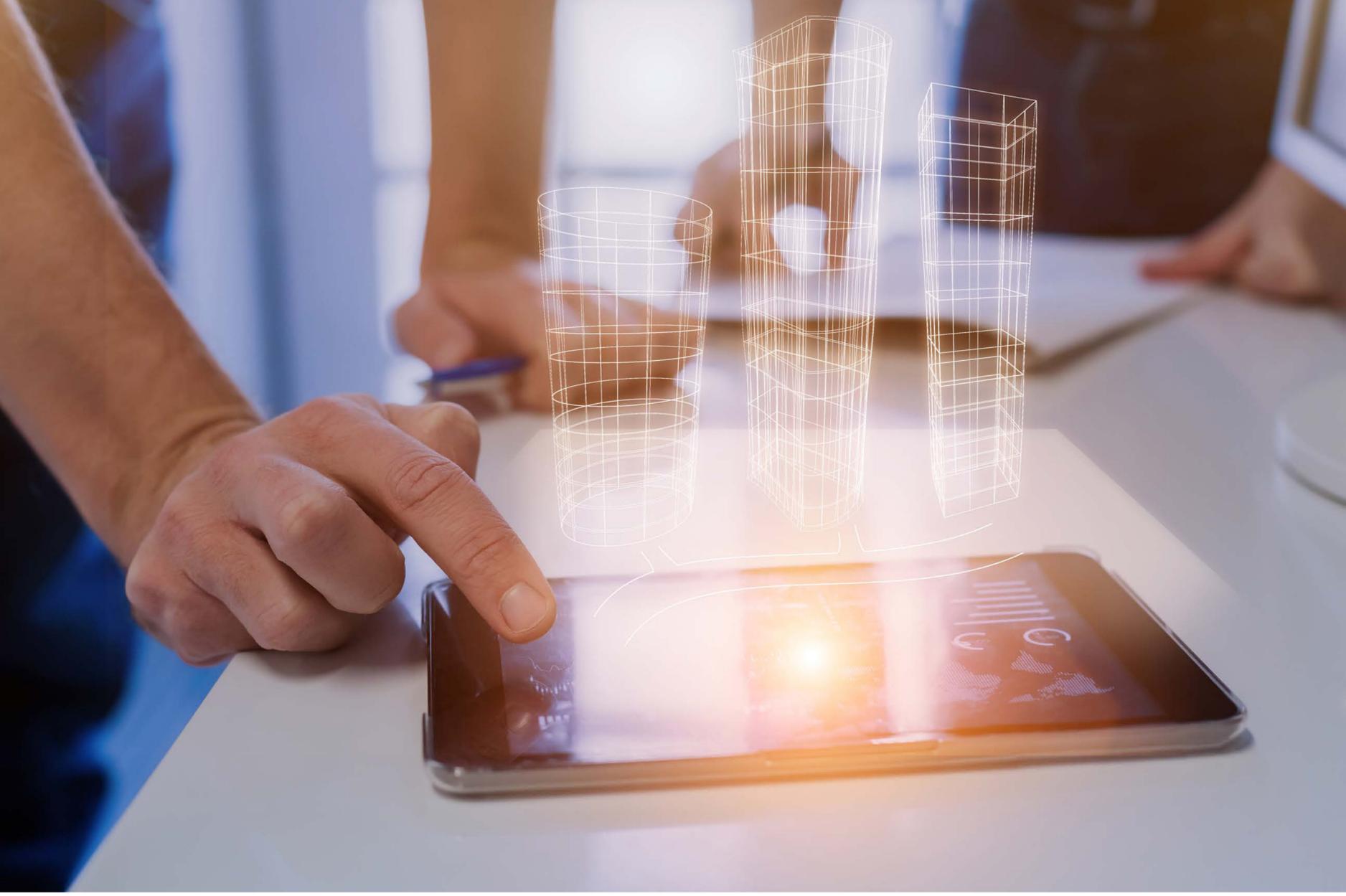
<p>FORMAL CHRISTIAN ERG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company funded • Listed on company website • Specifically Christian • Does not exclude other faiths from starting their own ERGs 	<p>INFORMAL CHRISTIAN ERG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not company funded • Not listed on company website • May still include thousands of Christian members
<p>FORMAL INTERFAITH ERG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company funded • Listed on company website • Open to all faiths 	<p>INFORMAL INTERFAITH ERG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal networks of people of faith • May come together to plan a community event or charity drive • May develop into more formal groups

“For some places or countries, a Christian ERG can never be formal.”

“At companies such as ExxonMobil or Amazon, they have a very organized, informal Christian group. They don’t get funding, they’re not on the external website, but they have thousands of participants.”

“At Intel I kicked off this formal multi-faith group. I think it’s the best of both worlds. The goal is to create a Christian group, but at the same time help the Bahai or the Druze or the Hindu. It opens up doors to talk with them about their faith. They feel supported. At the same time, you can email the head of HR and they will actually listen to you, because they see you’re trying to help everyone at the corporation, even if they agree with you or not. Don’t you wish everyone would do that?”

- Craig Carter, Global Leader of Intel’s Christian Employee Resource Group



LAUNCH STRATEGY

THREE PHASES TO SUCCESS

1 EVALUATE

A critical phase before you put any boots to the ground. What is the state of faith in your company? Are there any rules and procedures in place? What about your own solidity in faith? The answers to these questions will help determine your next steps.

2 DEVELOP

Build grassroots participation in and approval for your group. This is the most important “off the radar” step in growing your group. Who are your supporters? What is your mission? This is critical to making sure other employees will want to join you and find value in staying.

3 LAUNCH

Set a calendar and create a plan for introducing your ERG to your wider organization. In this stage you leverage best practices in marketing and communications to make sure other people at your company understand your purpose and value.

1 EVALUATE

STATE OF YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Before you make any moves to starting an ERG at your company, you need to take stock of your own spiritual health. The Questionnaire on the next few pages will help you reflect on your spiritual health and find ways to improve in areas where you may be falling short.

Many Christians ignore this step, opting instead to jump into the work before taking their own internal temperature. Although it's understandable to want to get 'right to it,' it pays to take some time to be circumspect. You can't start a program for other people if you're not taking care of yourself. And you can't expect other people to follow you if they don't already respect your work ethic.

Know your heart and know the one who knows your heart best.
-Psalm 139:23-24

“I believe that my work is not about me; it's about the greater good. Every day, I get up and try to do something to improve the world in some way. But, I'm humble enough to know that I'm human, that I'm one of 11,000 people at this company. There are 10,999 others that make just as much of a difference. My job is to help them make more of a difference.”

- Erik Fyrwald, CEO, Nalco

“Integrity starts with a moral standard. If you don't have a moral compass and if you are not linked with God, it is very difficult to live it out.”

- Ed Kobel, President, DeBartolo Development

PERSONAL SPIRITUAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

How strong is your day-to-day connection to God?

- Very connected to God
- Somewhat connected to God
- Neutral - sometimes connected and sometimes disconnected
- Somewhat disconnected to God
- Not at all connected to God

How strong is your feeling of calling?

- I feel called to my day-to-day work
- I'm trying to discern a sense of calling
- I feel called to faith but not to my particular work
- I don't feel a calling
- I've never thought about calling before

Do you find joy in life?

- I feel great joy in my life and in my work
- I often feel joy in my personal pursuits, but not in my work
- I sometimes feel joy
- I rarely feel joy
- I can't remember the last time I felt joy

SPIRITUAL HABITS

How often do you pray?

- I'm always praying
- I pray several times throughout the day
- I pray in the morning or at bedtime, but rarely during the day
- Sometimes I pray once or twice a day
- I hardly remember to pray

How often do you pray ABOUT YOUR WORK?

- I'm always praying about my work
- I pray about my work before I start my workday
- I pray when I encounter a big problem at work
- I hardly remember to pray about my work
- I've never prayed about my work

How often do you meet with other Christians?

- I meet with Christians on a weekly basis to talk about life and get support
- I meet with Christians on a weekly basis to socialize
- I meet with other Christians sporadically
- I used to meet with other Christians regularly, but I don't do it now
- I don't talk with other Christians

How often does scripture come into your mind?

- Often a verse of scripture pops into my head relating to the situation I'm in
- When I face a problem, I look to scripture to give me inspiration
- I read scripture in the morning and it starts my day off right
- I hear scripture only at church on Sundays
- I haven't read scripture in a long time

WORK HABITS

Do you show excellence in your work?

- I strive to do the best I can in my work
- I don't always give it my all, but I have a good track record at work
- I work hard when I need to, but I slack off at other times
- I do the bare minimum I need to do to get by at work
- Other people see problems in my work

Do you help others in your workplace?

- I go above and beyond to help other people in my workplace
- I have several people I regularly advise or mentor at work
- I have some close connections at work
- I am polite at work but I mostly keep to myself
- I actively dislike my coworkers

How much do you value money?

- I want to succeed to further God's purposes in the world
- I want money for safety and security
- I want to impress other people with my wealth
- I care about money more than anything else

WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

The following are time-tested methods to improve your spiritual health. These are good ideas whether or not you plan to lead an ERG at your company.

1) MAKE BIBLE READING A DAILY PRACTICE

Set aside a few minutes each day to read the Bible and reflect on its meaning. Many people do this first thing in the morning, before you get distracted by the challenges of the day. You can use devotional Bible reading plans like those available on the YouVersion app, or the video studies on PRS.work.

You can also use the tried-and-true method of the Lectio Divina for encountering scripture. The Lectio Divina involves reading a single passage of scripture multiple times and letting it sink in. As you read a single passage over and over again, new meanings jump out at you. You can encounter God through this process of discovery.

The 3rd century Church Father Origen of Alexandria was the first to write about the practice of the Lectio Divina. Origen believed that God was incarnate in scripture and that people could be touched powerfully by God through slow purposeful reading of the Bible.

Lectio Divina Exercise

1. Read (Lectio). Read the passage slowly. What words or phrases jump out at you?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

2. Reflect (Meditatio). Read the passage again. What emotions does it stir up? Is there anything God is saying to you personally through the passage?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

3. Respond (Oratio). Read the passage again. Is there a response or action step God is inviting you to take?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

4. Rest (Contemplatio). Read the passage one last time. Allow the divine reading to sink in.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

2) JOIN A SMALL GROUP

Small groups are gatherings of like-minded Christians who meet on a regular basis – usually once a week – to read the Bible, discuss their lives, and pray for one another. Your church likely sponsors many small groups. You can also find small groups through Christian business associations. Participating in a small group is a surefire way to ensure you get the spiritual support and accountability you need from a group of your spiritual peers.

*As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.
-Proverbs 27:17*

3) PRACTICE REST

Starting an ERG can be a strenuous process. So it's important that you're practicing balance in all areas of your life and incorporating healthy rhythms of rest, play, and rejuvenation.

Many Christians find it helpful to take a full day off each week for rest and spiritual rejuvenation.

A practice of physical rest puts you in a frame of mind to remember God's big promises of both rest and success for you and your company.

And the Lord gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their ancestors; not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the Lord had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

-Joshua 21:44-45





EVALUATE YOUR COMPANY

The next step to planning for an ERG is to evaluate the company at which you work. In this phase, you'll be looking at both the spiritual climate at your company, and any official policies are in place regarding Employee Resource Groups. You'll learn how to frame the value of your ERG to fit in with your company's desired outcomes for diversity and inclusion, as well as business results. And finally, you'll develop the language to present the idea of your ERG to relevant stakeholders.

Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven is the one who will give us success, and we his servants are going to start building."

-Nehemiah 2:20

COMPANY FAITH ATMOSPHERE QUESTIONNAIRE

Does your organization currently have any Employee Resource Groups? Other names could be Affinity Groups, Business Resource Groups, or Business Network Groups.

- Yes
- No

If yes, what types of groups or subgroups does your company currently offer?

- Women
- Environmental
- Next Generation
- LGBTQ
- Religious
- Interfaith

Does your organization currently have a Diversity & Inclusion or Diversity, Equity & Inclusion team?

- Yes
- No

What is the name and title of the head of your company's D&I or DEI team?

Name/Title: _____

Do you know this person?

- Yes
- No

Does your organization currently celebrate any holidays or observe certain annual days aligned with causes?

- Christmas
- Hannukah
- Kwanza
- Earth Day
- International Women's Day
- Other _____

EVALUATE YOUR NETWORK

In your workplace, do you know people who match the following criteria? List their names.

Is a Christian

Is of another faith

Is an Executive or in a Senior Leadership role

Is in Legal and/or HR

Are you connected to people outside of your company who could help you? List their names.

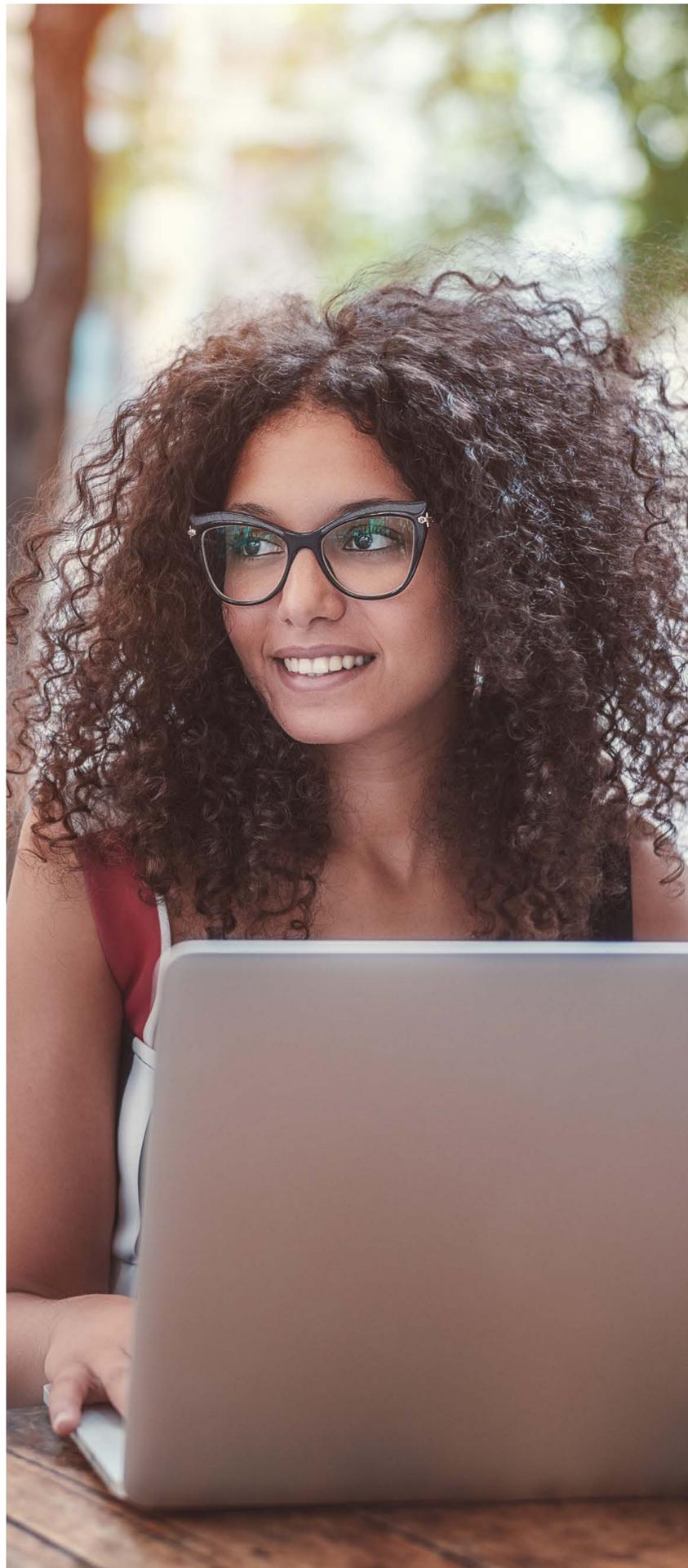
Industry-wide Christian groups

ERG leaders at other companies

Centers for Religious Freedom

Church Groups

Other





PUTTING LANGUAGE TO YOUR VISION

A key step in the planning process is developing the messaging that will help you “sell” your ERG to key decision makers at your company. This is easier than you may think. A lot of the values companies profess will be served well by introducing a Christian ERG to their ecosystem. This chapter will introduce you to several important frameworks to take into account as you craft the language you will use to describe your ERG. These include Diversity and Inclusion commitments made by your organization, national standards protecting freedom of religion, and complementary company objectives such as employee retention and improved recruitment.

“When we created our mission statement, we were very focused. We said: “Faith is who we are. It’s unique to our authentic self. It’s something that impacts everything. In the workplace and outside the workplace.”

*- Glenda Cameron, Interfaith ERG
Global Co-Leader, Dell Technologies*

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Many companies have stated policies related to Diversity Equity and Inclusion. You can directly employ the language of these policies to make a case for your ERG. Here are some examples of real DE&I policies, and how they might pave the way for a Christian ERG. See if your company has a DE&I policy, and note its unique language in the space below.

KEY TERMS IN COMPANY DE&I POLICY

“At the Ford Foundation, diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of who we are. Our commitment to these values is unwavering – across all of our work around the world.”

A Christian ERG fits into Ford’s **commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**. Values, such as those expressed by our Christian employees, are at **the core of who we are**. A Christian ERG will demonstrate Ford’s **unwavering commitment** to these values **across all of our work around the world**.

“Amazon’s mission is to be the earth’s most customer-centric company, and this mission is central to our work in diversity and inclusion. Diverse and inclusive teams have a positive impact on our products and services, and help us better serve customers, selling partners, content creators, employees, and community stakeholders from every background.”

A Christian ERG expresses Amazon’s **mission to be the earth’s most customer-centric company**. When Christian’s are supported through a faith-based network, they have a more **positive impact** on **diverse and inclusive teams** that work to **better serve customers and stakeholders from every background**.

YOUR TURN

A Christian ERG fulfills our company’s DE&I objectives because:

“FAITH INCLUSION HAD A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR IMPACT.”

Sue Warnke is the Senior Director of Content and Communications Experience at Salesforce, and the president of Faithforce San Francisco, an internal interfaith organization.

“We need to work within the language of our leaders, just like Paul did when he would go into a city. You speak as they speak and use that language.”



“Piggyback on all of this incredible diversity work. Faith inclusion and faith diversity help the business.”

“We have all sorts of data to show that by having a faith group in the workplace, we have improved recruiting, retention, innovation, productivity, and morale.”

We have people that will leave other companies – big competitors of ours – and come to Salesforce because of this faith inclusion. They didn't feel safe or free to pray at their other company, and they see that they can do that at Salesforce, and they come here for that. So it was a multi-million dollar impact.”

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

There is no law that mandates employers to allow faith-based Employee Resource Groups in their organizations. However, there are national and state laws that protect your ability to talk about your religion in the workplace, and protect you from discrimination based on your religion.

TITLE VII

Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, businesses may not discriminate against employees on the basis of religion. Discrimination includes being passed up for a promotion, being harassed because of your religion, or experiencing hostility in your workplace.

Title VII does not mandate employers to allow faith-based Employee Resource Groups to meet within their companies. You may always talk about your faith with other people in your workplace. However your employer is not legally mandated to provide a sanctioned venue for those meetings.

STATE ENFORCEMENT

If you experience religious discrimination in your workplace, such as being harassed or denied a promotion due to your faith, state enforcement agencies will provide assistance and advice. Many states have an independent Commission Against Discrimination that offer trainings and mediate disputes between employees and their employers.

In building a case for an ERG in your company, it may be helpful to bring in resources from your state's anti-discrimination commission showing that employee groups increase the type of awareness and openness that prevents harassment and discrimination. Alternatively, there may be state-wide nonprofit groups that are not state funded but provide training to businesses and employees.

INCLUSIVITY

For reasons of legal compliance – and good evangelism – it's important to keep membership in your ERG open to all employees, whether or not they are practicing Christians. If membership in an Employee Resource Group is limited, employees who are excluded could claim discrimination. To protect yourself, and should include language in your ERG mission statement making it clear that all employees are welcome regardless of their faith background or beliefs.

BUSINESS RESULTS

When framing the language you'll use to position your ERG, it helps to align your vision with the results your organization is after. These include recruitment and retention.

RECRUITMENT

Diverse companies are seen as excellent places to work. When a prospective employee sees Employee Resource Groups that reflect their background or deeply held beliefs, that prospect feels more confident accepting a job where they know they will have allies and an immediate personal network.

“Appreciating and capitalizing on diversity is a winning strategy – this can be seen in the frequent overlap among Diversity Inc. magazine’s list of top 50 companies and Fortune magazine’s 20 most admired companies. As different as their products or services may be, what all these companies have in common is management’s belief that the diversity of their employees is essential to their success in the marketplace.”

- Priscilla H. Douglas,

“Affinity Groups: Catalyst for Inclusive Organizations.”

RETENTION

In the age of the great resignation, retaining dedicated talent is more important than ever before. The work of Employee Resource Groups – especially faith-based groups – helps organizations fight employee attrition head-on.

“It has increased the retention of existing employees. They are less likely to leave because it’s so rare to be acknowledged in your faith. You feel that you won’t find that somewhere else. It increases recruiting, because we can talk about our faith inclusion publicly and employees, for whom that is important, are very drawn to that. It increases our branding, because we really do show up as an authentically trailblazing organization when it comes to all types of diversity, not just the traditional ones.”

- ERG leader quoted in Chung et al.

At AT&T, 1st year retention of employees is 10%

Among members of ERGs at AT&T, retention jumps to 85.6%

Participation in an ERG increases AT&T’s retention by 756%

2 DEVELOP

DEVELOP YOUR FRAMEWORK CHECKLIST

Now that you have assessed the lay of the land in your organization, and fleshed out your messaging, it's time to develop the framework you'll use to launch your ERG. The checklist below provides a foundational list of components. You can add to it based on your unique context as you learn about the D&I structures available to you. Do these things before presenting your proposal to executives, D&I Team, and key stakeholders.

ERG FRAMEWORK CHECKLIST:

- o **Mission Statement for your ERG.** Answer the question: What is your value-add? How will your ERG benefit the company?
- o **Proposed Team Structure.** Global, Regional or Localized? What core leadership functions are needed? Who will handle member engagement? Follow-up with new leads? Manage communications? Measure community impact?
- o **Proposed calendar of events.** Plan at least 6 months of programming. What is the desired outcome for each event? Format for each event? Include at least one event with one or more other ERGs (especially non faith-based groups) to build bridges and solidify your ERG's place at the table.
- o **What KPIs will you measure for success?** Attendance? Leadership growth? Number of events? Community impact?
- o **Guiding Principles and Rules of Engagement.** What guardrails will proactively reduce risk of inflammatory behaviors? Get clear on who your ERG is and who your ERG is not... Always bring it back to the mission.
- o **Testimonial Bank.** Document quotes from other employees around the impact this group would have on their engagement, growth, and productivity. Capture all positive soundbites to reference early and often. Don't underestimate the power of story!

PRESENT PROPOSAL TO KEY LEADERSHIP:

- o Executive Sponsor(s)
- o D&I Leads
- o Other ERG Leaders (i.e. Pride, Womens, etc)
- o Additional key stakeholders

CULTIVATE ALLIES

Build relationships with people of faith in your workplace. Here are some ways to reach out to potential allies long before launching an ERG:

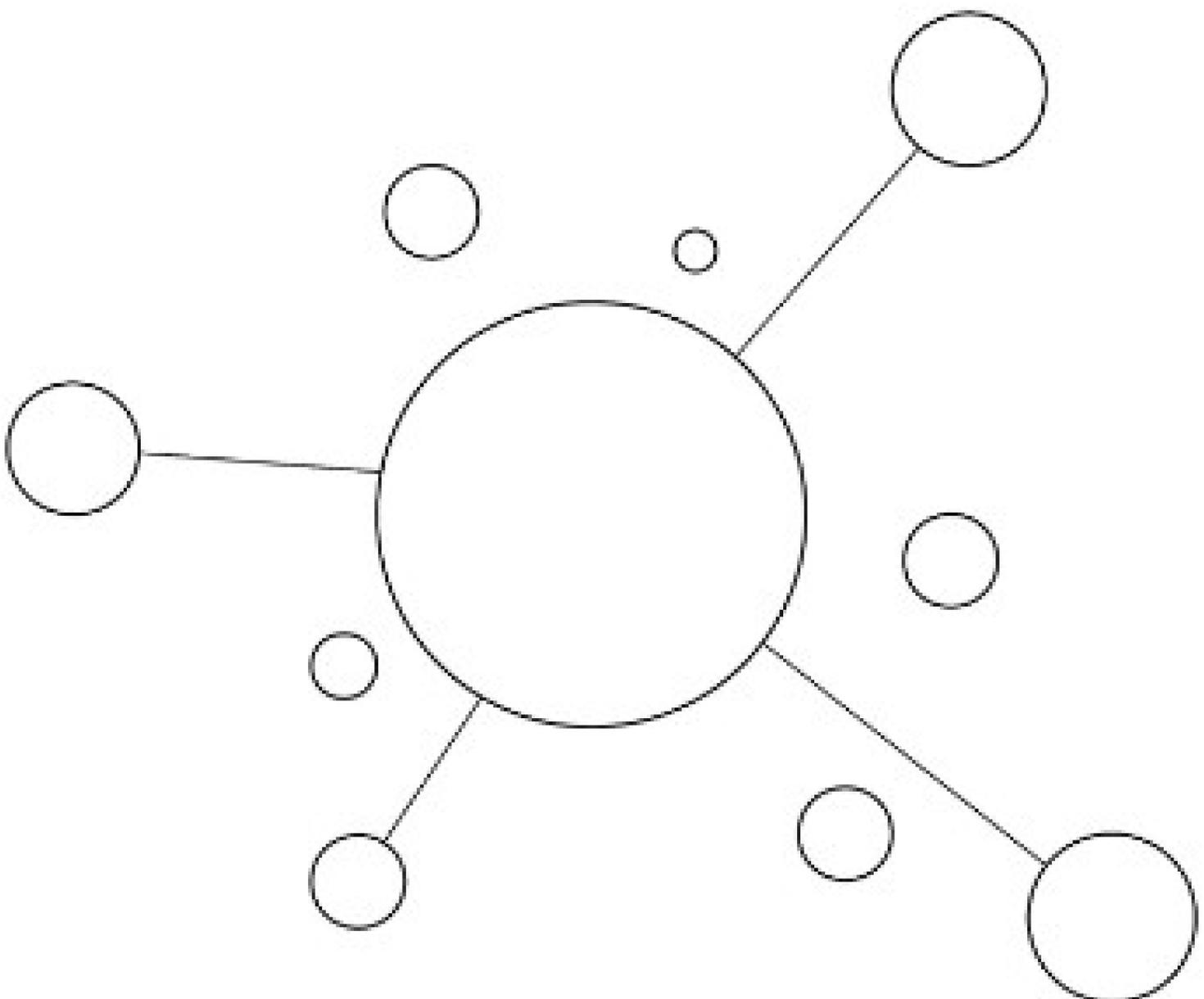
- Reach out to Christian coworkers to learn more about them.
- Start an informal prayer group, bible study, or small group. This could be as few as three people meeting before work for “coffee and discussion.”
- Start an online group. Use social media, Discord, or whatever on-line platform your company uses to start a faith-based group.
- Identify Christians in leadership in your company. Would any be open to sponsoring your ERG?

“I can’t say enough about the importance of executive sponsors. Have executive sponsors that will support you.”

*- Glenda Cameron,
Interfaith ERG Global Co-Leader, Dell Technologies*

NETWORK MAPPING EXERCISE:

Imagine yourself as the center of a network of potential allies. Fill in the circles with those closely connected to your mission, and others who are loosely connected or not yet connected. Is there an executive sponsor in one of these circles?



HEAD OFF OBJECTIONS

As you develop relationships that lay the groundwork for your ERG, you have the opportunity to head off objections before they start. This involves making friends out of potential enemies and thinking through the messaging that will defend your ERG project from naysayers.

MAKE FRIENDS FROM DOUBTERS

Sue Warnke is the Senior Director of Content and Communications Experience at Salesforce, and the president of Faithforce San Francisco, an internal interfaith organization.



“I know a lot of atheists at work who are very out in their atheism. There’s tension there, sometimes. There’s the assumption on both sides of what each other believes.”

“So what I did is I strategically set up a meeting with two or three different atheist employees who felt really strongly about faith and had experienced some pain related to organized religion. I had a one-on-one with them. I would just ask – not pushing my faith – but really ask about their position, why they felt that way and what their experiences were.”

“Those conversations led to real breakthroughs where they then asked me about my story. They realized that I didn’t represent this sort of negative version of Christianity like what they had experienced. They realized there are more types of Christianity out there – that it’s not all pushy – and that it is really, truly just about loving each other.”

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Here are some common objections to Christian ERGs. You can present these talking points to leaders and potential sponsors as you develop your launch plan.

CONCERN: A Christian ERG will exclude non-Christians.

ANSWER: Membership in a CERG is open to anyone, regardless of religious affiliation. Non-Christians will be invited to participate and welcomed at all CERG activities. Opening the door for multiple faith-based groups allows employees to express the fullness of their identity at work, AND benefit from learning more about their coworkers. This strengthens individual expression and team unity.

“Being able to appreciate other people and understand where they’re coming from in life gives me more insight into the person and what they care about when they’re doing their job. Knowing them better helps me understand how I can help them, and what they can offer me.”

- Jason Rosen, Texas Instruments Jewish ERG chair

CONCERN: We already have a multi-faith employee group.

ANSWER: Multi-faith groups fulfill the purpose of bringing employees together across different backgrounds. Single faith groups fulfill a different purpose that is just as necessary for the health and wellbeing of employees. In a Christian Employee Resource Group, these employees have a space to share the particular challenges and questions that come from living as a Christian in the secular workplace. The unique outlet of a Christian Employee Resource Group allows Christian employees to support one another and as a result give themselves more freely and completely to the diverse teams in which they work.

CONCERN: It’s real minorities that need a resource group.

ANSWER: Many people don’t realize that practicing Christians are actually a minority in the workplace. Over the past decade, workers identifying as religion “none” – those who are agnostic or self-identify with no religion – outnumber practicing Christians in most places of work. For this reason, Christians for whom their faith is an essential aspect of their personality often feel embarrassed or even minimized in groups of their peers. A group of like-minded peers provides critical support for these minority employees who might otherwise struggle to find their place in the organi-

CONCERN: I'm a Christian, and I won't participate in an interfaith group. I don't compromise my faith.

ANSWER: Participating in an interfaith group does not invalidate the deeply-held beliefs of Christian members. Interfaith doesn't mean "either/or" – it's "Yes, and." Yes, you can have a body of Christian believers meeting together unapologetically around their shared faith in Jesus. You also create opportunities to gather with colleagues of other faiths around the things you share in common. As a Christian, you can have the confidence that participating in an interfaith group need not shake your faith in Jesus. Rather, it gives you the opportunity to share your faith with others.

“They told me: We don't do religion here.”

Glenda Cameron is the Customer Incident Manager at Dell Technologies and Global Interfaith ERG Co-Leader.

“When I reached out to the folks that were in charge of diversity and inclusion to say, “Hey, I'm interested in seeing what it takes to start a faith-based employee resource group,” their very first instinct was, “Oh no, no, no. We don't do religion here.” They even came back with some very legal language including cease and desist.

But I had examples of other people in the marketplace – other companies that were out there doing this. So I kind of jumped a few levels and reached out to the Chief Diversity officer. And she agreed to schedule some time to talk. She said one of the first steps was to see if there was some kind of a significant interest. So I put a little bit of a teaser out there to the EMC community. I posted it into the online portal: “Hey, if we were to start a faith-based group, who would be interested?” And I was overwhelmed by the number of people.

So when I went back to our Chief Diversity officer to say, “Look, here are the numbers.” She said, “Okay. Yes. That's enough.”



SET YOUR EVENT SCHEDULE

Plan for an engaging event at least once a quarter. Events galvanize your base of support and give members a fun opportunity to meet one another and grow connections. Here are some possible events.

Q1

Q2

Q3

Q4

DISCUSSION GROUP

Plan for regular meetings – whether they’re weekly, monthly, or quarterly – where members can learn together, network, and share problems and prayers. This could be before work, during a lunch break, or after work at a local watering hole. Group Bible Studies are available on Theologyofwork.org

SPEAKER LUNCH

Invite a speaker on a topic of interest such as Stewardship or Leadership. While nationally renowned speakers are a draw, don’t discount the value of a company insider sharing their faith story. A well-respected team member will inspire their contacts to come to the event and experience the ERG community.

MISSION DAY

Participating in a day of community service builds team spirit and demonstrates the values your ERG embodies to your company. Consider partnering with a local charity, or participate in a walk for a cause.

INTERFAITH EVENT IDEAS

Becky Pomerleau is the co-leader of PayPal's Interfaith Employee Resource Group, BELIEVE. She shares the programs that have brought PayPal's employees together.

INTERFAITH FAIR

“Our ERG itself is interfaith, but then we have faith chapters. Those faith chapters will run some of their own programming and they get budget allocated from the interfaith ERG. At the ERG level, we try to do as much in a more inclusive space as possible. So what do I mean by that? We're coming up on December, and you have multiple faith backgrounds with some form of holiday in December. So we're going to have what we're calling our interfaith fair. Being PayPal, we're going to have a holiday market where small businesses come and you can go shopping. And each will share its programming: the Christian table will be more Christmas focused, the Jewish table, Hanukkah focused, etcetera.”

INTERFAITH MEALS

“When it comes to the springtime, you have Easter, Passover, and Ramadan, all going on around the same time. We did a combined Passover and Easter event this past year, where we talked about the similarities and the differences between the two holidays. With Ramadan, we do a fast-a-thon where we encourage people of all faiths to come together and fast for a day, to understand what it's like to live at least one day in the shoes of someone who's fasting. And then we break our fast together.”

MENTORSHIP

“In terms of other types of programming, we do a mentorship program where you can choose to be matched with someone of your own faith background. Or you can choose to be matched with someone not of your own faith background. Because maybe you want to learn from someone of a different faith background.”

PRAYER REQUEST LINE

“We have a prayer request on our intranet where people can put in either anonymously or non-anonymously a prayer request. People have said how meaningful it is to them to know that their colleagues are praying for them, regardless of what their faith background is. For me personally, it makes me feel that I'm living out my God given purpose with the life that God has given me.”



“YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE PART OF A FORTUNE 1000 TO START THESE ACTIVITIES.”

Markee Johnson founded an ERG leader at EMC, which merged with Dell Technologies. She is the co-founder and director of Endeavor, a global Faith at Work Ministry.

“With our faith group at EMC, we found the most traction in a Bible study. Andy Stanley has a curriculum called Life Lessons Over Lunch, where they take his Sunday sermons and condense them down to 20-minute talks. The way that they stitch it together is actually attractive even for non-Christians, because these biblical principles are life lessons. It’s an awesome opportunity to bring in people of other faiths and dialogue around topics of life. We also saw a lot of traction around a prayer call. What I love about these examples is that you don’t have to be a part of a Fortune 100 or Fortune 1000 to start these activities.”

“From a multi-faith perspective, events that positively impact the community really unify people. It is a great way to debunk misconceptions that people have around Christianity. Some of the most powerful social movements were started because Christians had an awakening to the truth that all men and women were created in the image of God. At Dell Technologies, our anti-human trafficking initiative brought people together across different faiths. We solved a huge challenge for diversity and inclusion, because these 13 different employee resource groups didn’t really partner on anything, but they could all come together on this.”



ANNOUNCE YOUR LAUNCH

You are ready with your mission statement, core group of supporters, and schedule of events. It's now time to launch your ERG to your work community.

COMPANY COMMUNICATIONS

Make use of company-wide communication channels such as Slack, Teams, or internal social networks. Share your mission statement, an invitation to your first event, and make it clear that all are welcome to attend.

SAMPLE EVENT POSTING FOR INTERFAITH ERG

Interested in faith?

Connect with colleagues from all different faith backgrounds in our new interfaith employee resource group.

The mission of the interfaith ERG is to host events, share resources, and support one another around issues of faith, belief, religious practice, and understanding.

Please join us for the first of our Lunchtime Speaker Series on x date at x time in x location. All are welcome.

For questions contact leader name at extension x.

SAMPLE EVENT POSTING FOR CHRISTIAN ERG

Want to connect with Christians at work?

Join the new Christian ERG for the first of our Lunchtime Speaker Series on x date at x time in x location. All are welcome.

The mission of the Christian ERG is to host events, share Christian resources, and support one other in a community of faith.

For questions contact leader name at extension x.

PRAY. PRAY. PRAY.

When you are faithful in your work, God is faithful in the results. Every step of launching your ERG can be an experience that grows your faith. Pray for God to bless each person you reach through your ERG. Pray for the success of your coworkers and company. Pray for God to multiply your results. We are already praying for you to succeed!

“My Father is still working, and I also am working.”

-John 5:17

SAMPLE PRAYERS:

May our company grow to bless all employees, customers, stakeholders, and the world.

May our ERG reach many people hungry for faith and connection at our company.

May our events touch and inspire people.

May others become curious about faith through our communications, our events, our personal integrity, and our good work.

May great conversations flourish at our company as a result of our ERG.

May all leaders of our ERG find flourishing in their jobs and lives, and may all those we touch find flourishing.

May we in all draw closer to you, God.

Amen.





RESOURCES

These online resources offer further help for ERG leaders.

THE TOP 10 CAUSES OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

“It’s important for people to feel that their own personal values are reflected in company values.”

- <https://officevibe.com/blog/causes-of-employee-turnover>

14 CAUSES & REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER IN 2022

“Roughly two thirds of professionals would reject a new job offer if they had work friends at their current company, says a survey analysis from the Society of Human Resources Management.”

- <https://teambuilding.com/blog/employee-turnover>

1-HOUR BIBLE STUDIES FOR SMALL GROUPS

“What is the most challenging thing you’re trying to achieve in your work? Who do you need to influence to make it happen? Four biblical principles apply to leading up:”

- 1. Be consistent and faithful in service*
- 2. Be an example*
- 3. Be patient and persevere*
- 4. Be bold at the right time*

- <https://www.theologyofwork.org/small-group-studies>

RESOURCES

STUDIES ON DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

Three major religions feel marginalized at work

- 66% Muslims report discrimination at work
- 50% of Jews report discrimination at work
- 33% of Evangelical Christians report discrimination at work
 - <https://news.rice.edu/news/2022/christians-jews-and-muslims-experience-workplace-discrimination-differently-new-rice>

EFFECTS OF DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

45% victims of religious bias said that they were considering leaving their current jobs

- https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/documents/08-0625religionsr_updtfinal.pdf

PROMOTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

“New research highlights a significant upside to businesses from a focus on religious freedom. Making religious freedom a part of corporate social responsibility (“CSR”) can produce direct, positive benefits to company operations, improve economic markets, and lead to lasting changes in communities where the human right of religious freedom traditionally lacks roots.”

- <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/research-white-paper>

EXAMPLES OF FAITH AT WORK IN OTHER COMPANIES

Video case studies and testimonials

- <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/business-examples>

CORPORATE RELIGIOUS EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (REDI) INDEX

The REDI Index is a benchmarking measure of a company’s commitment to including religion as part of its overall diversity initiatives.

- <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/redi>

EUROPEAN LABOUR LAW

Religious freedom standards in the European workplace

- https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/european-labour-laws-veys/documents/08-0625religionsr_updtfinal.pdf