

CATALYST

ERG Guide

ERG communications

Executive summary

A comprehensive communications strategy will help an established ERG or one just getting started. Your communications strategy should have clear objectives, target a range of audiences, and effectively use a variety of available tools. ERGs with a communications strategy in place are in a strong position to communicate their goals, progress, and successes both internally and externally.

Overall strategy

A strong ERG communication plan should incorporate the following success factors:

- **Frequent communication:** Use a range of systems, including social networking tools, and be open to using new tools.
- **Connect the dots:** Emphasize how the ERG contributes to both business goals and the employee value proposition.
- **Tailor the voice to the audience:** Leverage a range of communicators and choose ones who make the most sense for the intended audience and level of discussion.
- **Integrate:** Take advantage of existing business events and communications methods. Weave communication about ERGs into discussions about recruitment, employee value proposition, community service activities, or other relevant topics.
- **Recognize and respond:** Showcase group successes, respond to employee questions, and highlight role models and their stories.

It might seem daunting to incorporate these overarching goals into every email or talking point, but keeping a few questions in mind will help tailor your message and maximize impact.

- **Objective:** What is your goal? What is the main message you are trying to convey?
- **Audience:** Who are the intended recipients?
- **Tool:** What method or venue will be most effective?
- **Timing:** What is the schedule of communications?

Know your organizational audience

ERG members

Regular ERG communications should let members know about meetings, events, and new activities and developments. Consider including questions in an ERG member survey about preferred communication methods. When new members join, ERG leaders should communicate basic information about how the ERG works, its structure, and membership requirements or expectations.

Remember that communication goes two ways. Create systems for formally soliciting feedback from members to align with their interests, needs, and ideas. Methods for obtaining feedback include:

- Quarterly, annual, or biannual surveys.
- Feedback cards for individual events.
- Periodic member focus groups or interviews.
- Open discussions at ERG meetings.
- Conversations with individual members.
- Annual or year-end ERG review sessions.

Highlighting the ERG's accomplishments can reinvigorate members and reinforce the vision. It is also meaningful to recognize or reward the success of individuals or regional chapters. Whether through a formal event such as a luncheon or conference, during regular scheduled meetings, or through written communications, make sure to pause and acknowledge the wins along the way.

HR and other department partners

Because many ERGs' goals and activities dovetail with those of HR or other departments, good communication with those offices will help align overall strategy among all parties. Suggested touch points include:

- Discuss annual plans with the appropriate offices and coordinate activities.
- Advise HR representatives about workplace issues and opportunities from the vantage point of ERG members.
- Serve as a trusted sounding board for HR and leadership for relevant topics.

Senior leaders

Some successes may speak for themselves, but targeted communication with senior leaders can directly demonstrate your ERG's effectiveness as a business partner. This could include:

- Updating senior leaders on the ERG's role and contributions to the business with an annual or semiannual report.
- Discussing business issues and opportunities and how the ERG can help address them.
- Creating opportunities for ERG members to meet with senior leaders to discuss business topics.
- Providing talking points about the ERG and related topics that will be helpful to senior leaders.
- Fostering mentoring relationships.

Get the message out

There are multiple ways you can communicate within your organization. Here are a few ideas to get started:

- **Events and activities:** All-staff meetings, programs co-sponsored with other ERGs, philanthropic or volunteer activities, informational “meet the ERG” sessions.
- **Verbal communications:** Formal speeches, webinars, podcasts, small group presentations, word of mouth between colleagues.
- **Written communications:** Email, newsletters, shareable slide decks, annual reports, press releases, the organization’s website, social media, or internal productivity apps like Slack or Teams.
- **Tailor to your audience:** Meet people where they are, especially frontline employees. Consider using printed posters or flyers, QR codes, and communication through managers for those who may not have access to corporate email or the intranet.

Online tools and social networks

Smart ERGs leverage social networks to connect employees and share information with stakeholders including customers, shareholders, and prospective and current employees. ERGs can take advantage of online social networking tools already in use by their organizations such as Slack and Teams (for open brainstorming), intranet sites, or other social media sites like LinkedIn to communicate with members. Using virtual networking tools allows ERGs to break down barriers based on demographics and location, encouraging collaboration around common interests across borders and time zones.

ERGs can also use social networking tools to keep leadership, fellow employees, and the public abreast of activities and achievements. Featuring ERGs on company social streams may even be an effective recruiting tool to highlight organizational culture.

Explore the guide

- Key ERG concepts
- Building and growing ERG membership
- Developing an ERG
- Cultivating ERG support and collaboration
- Establishing ERG governance and structure
- Common ERG challenges and solutions
- ERG programming and initiatives
- Measuring ERG success

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