



Build Better Networks, Together

GLOBAL ERG IMPACT REPORT

Building The Case For Employee Networks,
Resource Groups and Communities

2025

radius-networks.org

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BUILDING BETTER NETWORKS TOGETHER

At Radius we develop employee resource groups, networks, and communities for the world's most inclusive employers.

For more than 16 years, we've helped organisations to unlock the potential of these groups as a powerful strategic resource.

Starting life in 2009 as a successful diversity network, we were the world's first organisation to solely focus on the development and empowerment of employee networks. Today we're recognised as the industry leader.

Every day we see firsthand the powerful impact that ERGs can make, and the role they play in building belonging.

This groundbreaking report shares some of these stories with you for the very first time, along with the results from our survey, which shows beyond doubt that ERGs are a vital business resource of the future.

We'd like to say a big thank you to the many companies and employee networks who feature on the following pages. You're doing vital work, and it's a privilege to share your stories with the world.

We hope you enjoy reading the report as much as we enjoyed compiling it.

Let's keep building better networks, together.



Contents

p3 Executive summary

p4 About the survey

Survey findings

p6 Types of networks

p7 The global picture

p9 Employee networks shape strategy

p10 Employee networks drive change

p11 Employee networks have a strong positive impact

p12 Employee networks create belonging

p13 Employee networks enhance careers

p14 Reward and recognition

p15 Leveraging the power of employee networks

Employee network case studies & stories

 ERGs drive EDI strategy

p18 Tesco

p20 Aviva

p22 Rolls Royce SMR

p24 Arm

p26 University of Sunderland

p28 Nike

 ERGs create external impact

p31 HSBC

p34 NTT Data

p36 Siemens

p38 BBC

p40 Google

p42 EY

p45 Mars

 ERGs Spark Innovation

p48 EPAM

p50 Lloyd's

p52 Novartis

p54 Ericsson

p57 Disney

p59 Nestle

p61 Nationwide

p63 Invest In Your ERGs

Headline Terminology

EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

ERG (Employee Resource Group)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bringing together case studies, statistics and insights, the Radius Global ERG Impact Report builds a clear and compelling business case for employee resource groups - and is essential reading for anyone who works with or in support of ERGs.

Featuring some of the world's biggest brands, this landmark report evidences the trailblazing achievements of employee networks at companies such as EY, Google, HSBC, Tesco, BBC and Ericsson. In doing so, it shines a light on the vital role ERGs play in future proofing organisations, driving EDI strategy, developing talent and **building belonging**.

At the centre of this report is a unique survey - the findings of which will allow EDI teams to build their own business case for ERGs. The survey clearly shows that employee networks are delivering tremendous value, both inside organisations and beyond. Beginning our research in early 2023, we surveyed 100s of global organisations and interviewed 75 EDI or Network Leads for case studies. The findings were even more powerful than we predicted.

Together, these statistics and case studies paint a very promising picture - showing that employee networks are influencing change and belonging at scale and will be with us far into the future.

"We know that people have been retained because of our staff networks. They do amazing work in terms of building belonging and helping people to feel seen and valued."

University of Sunderland



99% of respondents said that employee networks have a positive impact on their organisation. **94%** felt that employee networks influence change. And **93%** said that employee networks contribute to their sense of belonging.

From creating spaces for conversations about faith and finance in APAC, to boosting social mobility in EMEA to elevating the employee voice in the Americas, this report reveals the value of tapping into the lived experiences of employee networks to connect with new customers. It also shows how ERGs can drive D&I strategy from the ground up, and be a vital strategic resource for EDI teams everywhere.

As you'll see, the employee networks in this report aren't just making an impact within their organisations - they are driving and influencing change across wider society - contributing to more equal and inclusive communities for us all.

When people come together, incredible things can happen.

Read on to unlock the impact of your employee networks, resource groups and communities.



FEATURING CASE STUDIES FROM

Arm
Aviva
BBC
Disney
EPAM
Ericsson
EY

Google
HSBC
Lloyd's
Mars
Nationwide
Nestlé
Nike

Novartis
NTT Data
Rolls Royce SMR
Siemens
Tesco
University of Sunderland

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Methodology

We invited more than 9000 people, from 1,400+ organisations - including EDI teams, sponsors and ERG Leads - from the Radius community to respond to our survey, which was open from June to August 2024. The survey was also shared by the Radius team on LinkedIn and by our partners ENEI and D&I Leaders with their communities, as well as Community Business, in order to gather a broad range of views globally.

Organisation Size

These respondents represent a wide range of organisations, of differing size and type. Around a third have 20,000 or more employees. One third have between 5,000 and 20,000 employees and the remaining third have less than 5,000 employees.

Industry Sectors

Many different sectors are represented in the survey findings. We had the most responses from the tech sector, followed by the pharmaceutical industry and banking sectors.

A Global Response

Our survey had an extensive reach, extending to many countries around the world. Geographically, our respondents were located across Europe, the Americas, APAC, Africa and the Middle East.

Terminology

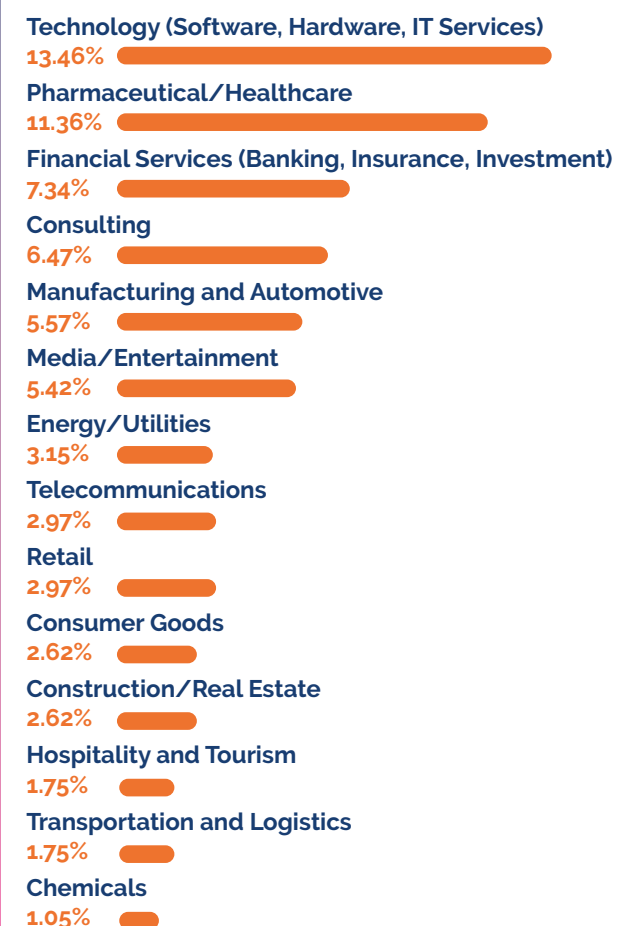
We know from our work with the world's most inclusive employers, that ERGs have many different titles. For the purposes of our survey, we mostly refer to ERGs as networks in the survey section of this report.

1,400+ organisations invited

PUBLIC SECTOR



CORPORATE



NON-PROFIT



OTHER



PREFER NOT TO SAY



What is the size of your organisation?



1-199 EMPLOYEES
1.9%

200-4,999 EMPLOYEES
32.5%

5,000-9,999 EMPLOYEES
21.8%

10,000-19,999 EMPLOYEES
9.6%

20,000+ EMPLOYEES
34.2%

RESPONDENTS

The survey was completed by:

- ▶ EDI and HR Leads
- ▶ Employee Network Leads and Committee Members
- ▶ Sponsors, Senior Leaders and EDI Champions
- ▶ Employee Network Members



SURVEY FINDINGS

- ▷ Types of networks
- ▷ The global picture
- ▷ Employee networks shape strategy
- ▷ Employee networks drive change
- ▷ Employee networks have a strong positive impact
- ▷ Employee networks create belonging
- ▷ Employee networks enhance careers
- ▷ Reward and recognition
- ▷ Leveraging the power of employee networks



SURVEY FINDINGS

TYPES OF NETWORKS

We know from our work with leading companies around the world, that organisations with up to 5000 employees typically have around 6 employee networks - often with many regional chapters. Organisations with more than 10,000 employees tend to have between 30 to 50 types of networks and communities and these numbers are reinforced by our survey.

Most employee networks span the protected characteristics. These groups are well established and have many members. One strand which seems to be growing is parents. This reinforces our experience here at Radius, where we see many organisations setting up such groups to support colleagues with parental and caring responsibilities.

Our survey also revealed lots of emerging networks, including menopause, men's networks, assistants, tech for good, returner networks and more. Many organisations also have emerging networks, which they use to drive progress in specific areas. Examples include grief, vegan, body positivity and introvert communities. These ERGs are often small, but they play a vital role in building belonging.



Network Strands

Established Employee Networks



Growing Employee Networks



Emerging Employee Networks

- Professional Development
- Bereavement and Grief
- Domestic Abuse
- Introverts
- Body Positivity
- Expats
- Return to Work
- Future
- Miscarriage
- Social Impact
- Childfree and Childless
- Immigrant
- PA/EA Assistants

SURVEY FINDINGS

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

The number of employee networks per organisation rises according to an organisation's size and geographical spread. In APAC, for example, most organisations have between 3 and 5 core employee networks, while in the Americas, that number often rises to 9.

The survey also shows us how the percentage of employee network types differs around the world. In APAC, the most commonly represented strand is Women's and Gender Equity (97%), followed by LGBTQ+, Disability, Race & Ethnicity and Veterans. In Europe, the picture is slightly different, with LGBTQ+ being the most popular network type (94%), followed by Race and Ethnicity, Women and Disability. While in the Americas, Women's and LGBTQ+ networks are equally popular (91%), with Race and Disability coming next. Sustainability is a growing area for all regions, with between 25 and 30% of organisations having eco networks. It was interesting to note that this percentage is higher in APAC than it is in EMEA.

Some global organisations have so many different chapters and communities that they lack the data and insights needed to adopt a more purposeful approach to ERGs.

For many EDI teams, this is an increasingly important area of focus. EDI Leads are striving for better oversight of their global communities and networks, in a bid to coordinate activities and elevate ERG impact.

This insight is borne out by our experience here at Radius, where we support leading global brands to co-ordinate the work of large numbers of networks.

We predict that emerging ERGs will continue to be an exciting area to observe throughout 2025 and beyond.

We will be doing a deeper dive on types of networks and how they interlink in our ERG Impact Workshops.

Most popular networks in APAC

Women's / Gender Equity / Lean In

97%

LGBTQ+

86%

Disability (incl Neurodiversity, Mental Health, Physical Disability etc)

78%

Race and Ethnicity (incl. Culture / Origins and specific countries)

76%

Veterans, Military and Emergency Responders

54%

Most popular networks in Europe

LGBTQ+

94%

Race and Ethnicity (incl. Culture / Origins and specific countries)

91%

Women's / Gender Equity / Lean In

89%

Disability (incl Neurodiversity, Mental Health, Physical Disability etc)

88%

Working Parents and Caregivers

58%

Most popular networks in Americas

LGBTQ+

91%

Women's / Gender Equity / Lean In

91%

Disability (incl Neurodiversity, Mental Health, Physical Disability etc)

87%

Race and Ethnicity (incl. Culture / Origins and specific countries)

87%

Veterans, Military and Emergency Responders

73%

Most popular networks in Africa and Middle East

Disability (incl Neurodiversity, Mental Health, Physical Disability etc)

73%

Generations (All, or Young Professionals / Next Gen and separate for older workers)

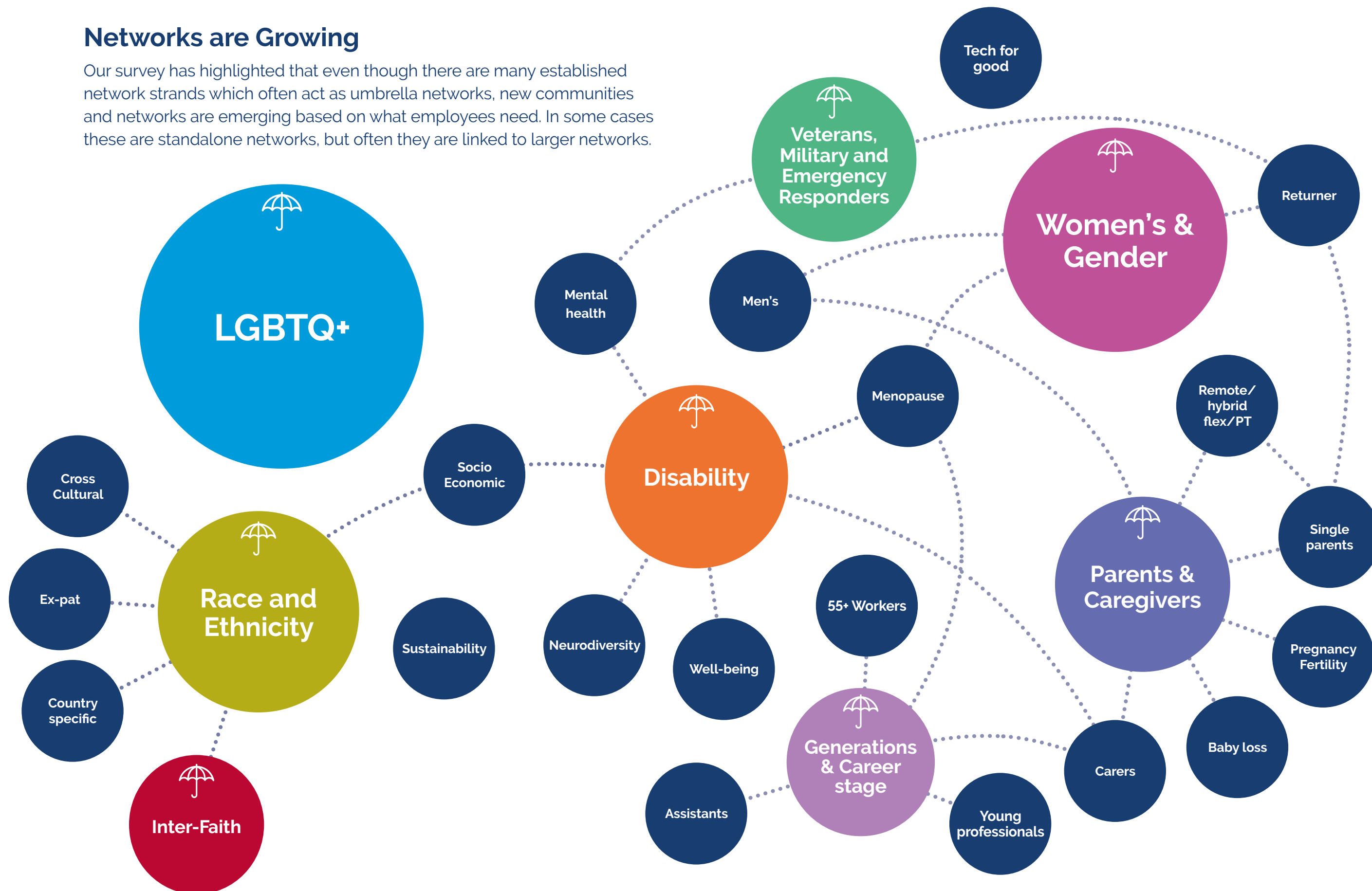
55%

Inter-Faith / Faith and Belief

36%

We had less respondents in this region so the findings are less representative

Our survey has highlighted that even though there are many established network strands which often act as umbrella networks, new communities and networks are emerging based on what employees need. In some cases these are standalone networks, but often they are linked to larger networks.

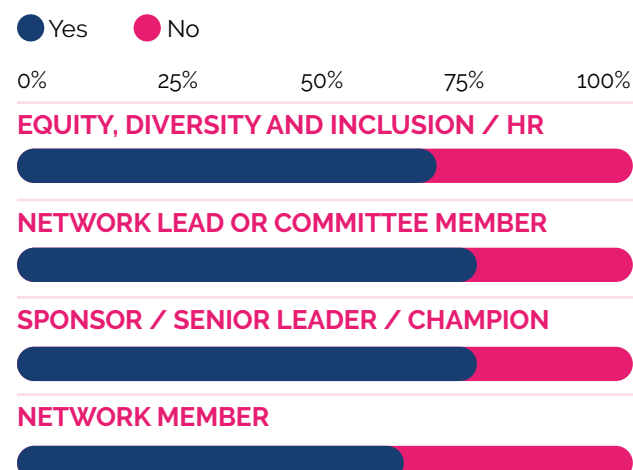


SURVEY FINDINGS

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS SHAPE STRATEGY

71%
OF EDI TEAMS
SAY EMPLOYEE
NETWORKS
DRIVE EDI OR
BUSINESS
STRATEGY

Do employee networks shape EDI or business strategy?



Our research shows that employee networks and resource groups have a positive impact on organisations by building belonging and driving change.

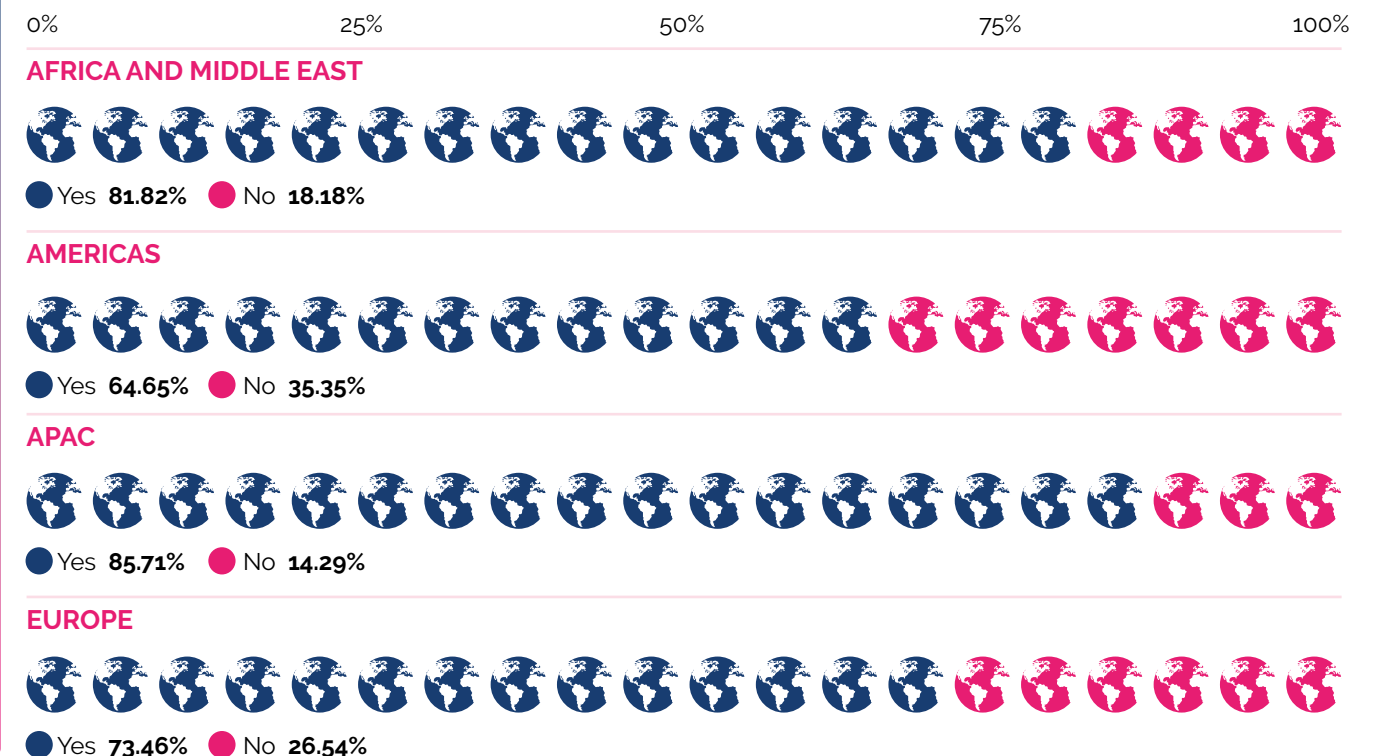
We were interested to explore how these outcomes can benefit organisations at a strategic level - particularly for EDI teams.

We asked our respondents if employee networks and resource groups have a role to play in shaping EDI or business strategy, and the results were impressive.

More than 71% of EDI Teams said that ERGs do shape business strategy. 74% of Network Leads or Committee Members, 64% of Network Members and 76% of Sponsors supported this view.

This powerful finding is highlighted further in our ERG case studies and stories, starting on page 16. Many of the organisations we spoke to said that their employee networks and resource groups actually set the direction for EDI strategy, helping them to embed EDI from the ground up.

Do employee networks shape EDI or business strategy?



Employee networks are shaping EDI strategy more than ever

When we look at this question across the world, we see that the extent to which networks are strategy-shaping varies. Survey respondents in Asia Pacific were most likely to feel employee networks shape strategy, with 86% saying they do so. 65% of survey respondents based in the Americas felt that networks shape EDI or business strategy. We know from our work here at Radius, that employee networks have been responsible for driving the agenda, and look set to do so long into the future, as EDI evolves.

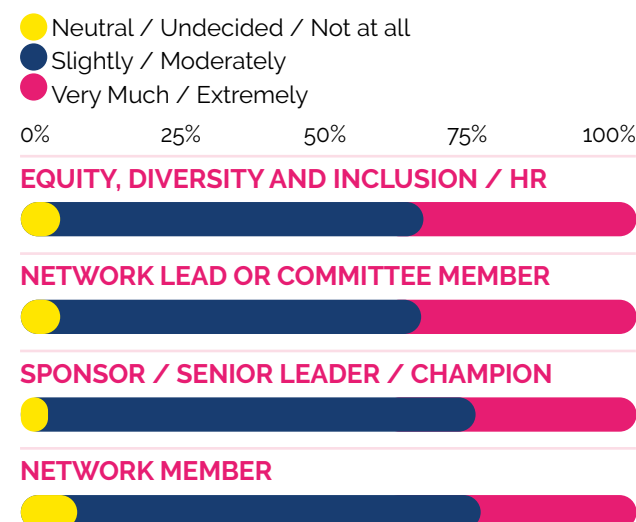


SURVEY FINDINGS

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS DRIVE CHANGE

94%
SAY EMPLOYEE NETWORKS INFLUENCE CHANGE

To what extent do employee networks influence change?



Our world-first research shows that employee networks and resource groups are driving change at every level, for businesses around the world.

94% of respondents said that these groups and communities are influencing organisational change.

We asked our respondents to tell us about the types of changes that ERGs are driving, and the results were compelling.

The responses to this question show that ERGs are driving far reaching change – both within their organisations and beyond. A recurring theme is their impact on policy changes, with many respondents saying that ERGs actively shape organisational policies and are a critical business resource.

ERGs are seen as crucial in educating the workforce about diversity and inclusion, while fostering a sense of community and belonging for underrepresented groups. They are also driving cultural shifts, enhancing visibility and representation for marginalised communities.

10 Most Common Areas of Impact



Policy Change/Influence:

This is by far the most prevalent theme, indicating ERGs are actively shaping company policies.



Awareness and Education:

ERGs are playing a key role in educating the wider workforce on diversity and inclusion.



Inclusion and Belonging:

Fostering a sense of community and belonging for underrepresented groups is a central focus.



Culture Change:

Many comments highlight ERGs' role in driving broader cultural shifts within the organisation.



Visibility and Representation:

ERGs are giving a voice to marginalised groups and increasing their visibility within the company.



Support and Safe Spaces:

Creating safe spaces and support networks for employees is a recurring theme.



Employee Benefits and Wellbeing:

ERGs are advocating for and influencing improvements in employee benefits and wellbeing initiatives.



Recruitment and Retention:

Many respondents noted the positive impact of ERGs on attracting and retaining diverse talent.



Collaboration and Engagement:

ERGs are facilitating collaboration and engagement between different departments and employee groups.



External Impact:

Some ERGs are extending their influence beyond the company, impacting brand image and community engagement.

ERGs create support networks and safe spaces, advocate for employee benefits and well-being, and positively influence recruitment and retention of diverse talent.

Finally, they facilitate cross-departmental collaboration, while extending their impact externally to boost brand image and community engagement.

SURVEY FINDINGS

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS HAVE A STRONG POSITIVE IMPACT

99%
SAY EMPLOYEE NETWORKS HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT

Our survey revealed that ERGs aren't just driving change - they are having a strong positive impact too - both for organisations and the wider communities they serve.

More than 53% of EDI and HR team respondents felt that employee networks have a strong positive impact on their organisation, and 45% say they have some positive impact.



49% of network leaders feel that they make a strong positive impact, while 50% say they make some positive impact.

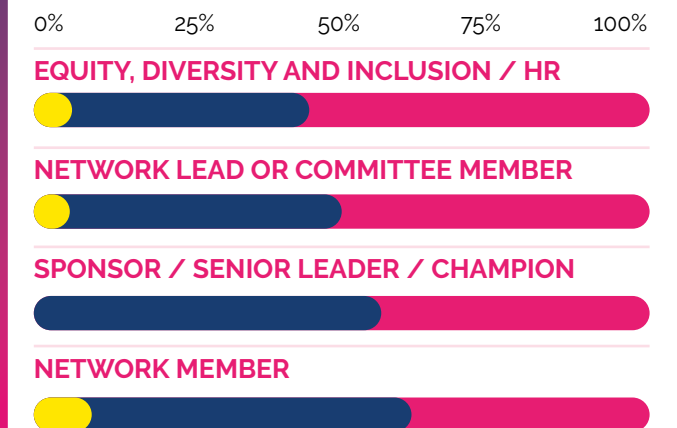
In many organisations, employee network sponsors play an important role in helping ERGs to make an impact and embed change. Our research shows that 100% of sponsors believe that employee networks have a positive impact, with more than 50% describing this impact as strong.

These statistics are brought to life by the ERG case studies we collected as part of our research, in interviews with some of the world's most inclusive employers.

Turn to page 16 to read these powerful stories.

What impact do employee networks have on your organisation?

- No Impact
- Some Positive Impact
- Strong Positive Impact



SURVEY FINDINGS

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS CREATE BELONGING

93%
SAY EMPLOYEE NETWORKS CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR SENSE OF BELONGING

Our survey clearly shows that being part of an employee network can influence a sense of belonging, with almost 93% of Network Leads and Members reporting this. This sense of belonging was felt most strongly by Network Leads (94%). As experts in our field, we know that the experience of running a network allows Leads to connect with colleagues at all levels, which in turn builds belonging.



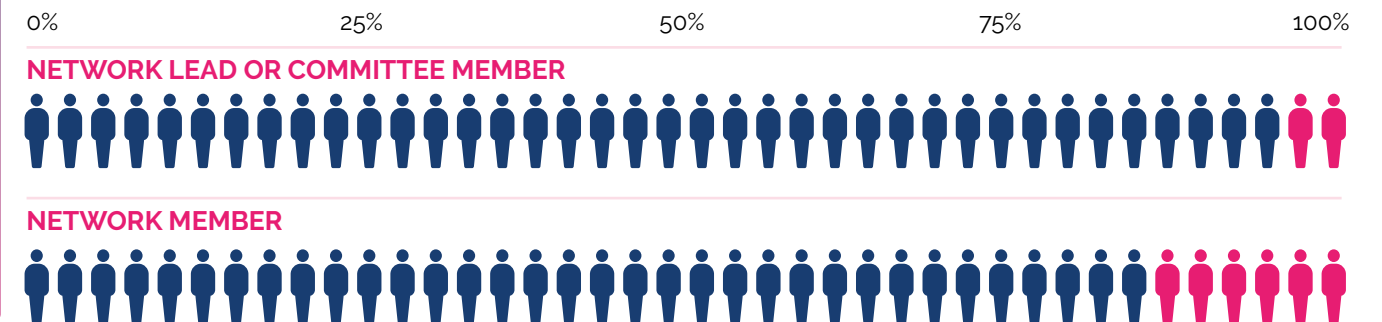
Network Leads:
94%
feel their employee network contributes to their sense of belonging



Network Member:
85%
feel their employee network contributes to their sense of belonging

Does your employee network contribute to your sense of belonging?

● Yes ● No



Our Impact Report interviews with EDI Leads and employee networks supported this finding further, with many organisations saying that their ERGs and communities are absolutely fundamental to building belonging. Indeed, for most of the companies we spoke to, belonging is absolutely critical to their DEI strategy.

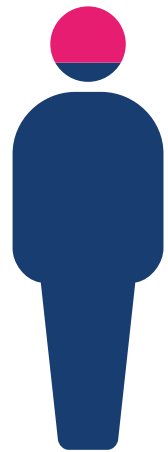
These organisations told us that employee networks build belonging in a number of ways. They create a sense of community, especially for those who might feel isolated, helping employees to find their place within the company. Employee networks also foster a culture of acceptance and camaraderie. And finally, they raise the profile of underrepresented groups, enhancing their visibility across the organisation.

Organisations are increasingly leveraging their ERGs to drive inclusion and build belonging

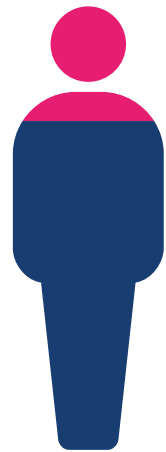


SURVEY FINDINGS

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS ENHANCE CAREERS



Network Leads:
84%
Feel their involvement
with a network has
enhanced their career



Network Members:
76%
Feel their involvement
with a network has
enhanced their career



Sponsors:
79%
Feel their involvement
with a network has
enhanced their career

**At Radius we see
many organisations
using their ERGs
as diverse talent
pipelines**

89% of Sponsors and Senior Leaders also feel that employee networks help diverse future talent to progress their careers - as do 82% of EDI and HR respondents.

Our interviews and case studies support this finding, with many network leads giving examples of being promoted in their day job, as a result of leading an employee network.

Perhaps most importantly, many EDI Leads also told us that they see their employee networks and resource groups as talent incubators with some organisations recruiting directly from these groups for key roles.

Today's network chairs are tomorrow's business leaders and organisations that embrace diverse talent can reap amazing rewards.

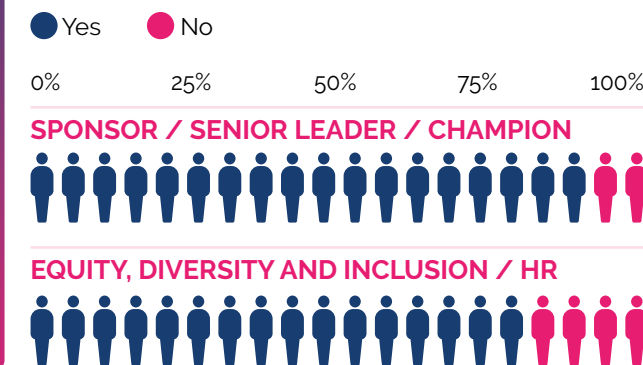
Our research shows that organisations that invest in their employee networks are developing the diverse leaders of the future.

Through our work in supporting and developing ERGs in organisations around the world, we know that being part of an ERG benefits careers. The experience of leading an employee network builds valuable transferable skills, and the chance to work alongside senior leaders opens doors to powerful mentoring opportunities.

84% of network leads in our survey felt that their involvement with an employee network had enhanced their career. And 79% of Sponsors felt that their career has been enhanced by supporting a network, which goes to show that ERGs can benefit leadership in rich ways.

80%
SAY EMPLOYEE
NETWORKS HAVE
ENHANCED
THEIR CAREER

Do you feel employee networks help diverse talent progress their careers?



SURVEY FINDINGS

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Network Leads say their effort isn't recognised

We asked ERG leaders and committee members how well recognised and rewarded they felt their efforts are. Only 10% felt their efforts were very well recognised with an equal split of 45% feeling "not enough" and "somewhat".

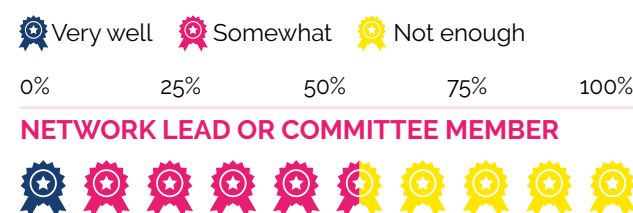
The responses from network members and network leads suggest that the efforts of employee networks and their leaders in creating safe spaces for marginalised staff and driving business impact across a range of areas, could be better recognised.

But senior stakeholders do recognise ERG impact

79% of EDI / HR and Senior Leaders / Sponsors felt that the contribution employee networks make to the wider organisation is somewhat or very well acknowledged.

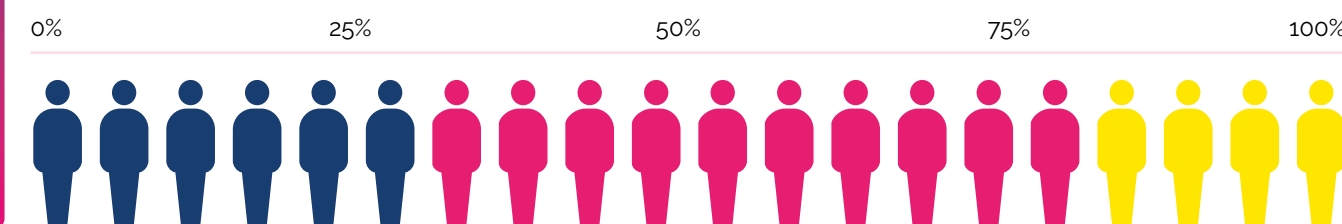
Our case studies, interviews and consulting experience, suggest that rewarding and recognising employee networks, e.g. through celebratory summits, investing in training or developing skills, can elevate network impact.

How well recognised and rewarded are the efforts of employee network leaders?



How well recognised are the contributions of employee networks in your organisation?

- 28% of EDI, HR, Senior Leaders and Sponsors felt networks were very well recognised.
- 51% of EDI, HR, Senior Leaders and Sponsors felt networks were somewhat recognised.
- 21% of EDI, HR, Senior Leaders and Sponsors felt networks were not recognised enough.



How organisations reward and recognise their ERGs

Our survey shows that the three most common types of recognition are: allocated time for network activity, investment in training and thank you schemes or internal recognition. These 3 rewards made up 76% of responses from Network Leads or Committee members. It was possible for respondents to select more than one answer and most organisations have more than one recognition mechanism.

What types of recognition are used in your organisation?



Organisations who effectively reward and recognise their ERGs see greater impact. Powerful ways to recognise network leads include greater visibility, training and allocated time. Leads who receive this feel rewarded and recognised.



SURVEY FINDINGS

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

Our research shows that when organisations fully leverage the power of their employee networks, they can drive significant impact as a critical business resource. But in some organisations, this is a missed opportunity.

Organisations could do more to leverage the power of their employee networks



70% of Network Leads and members say that Senior Leaders don't leverage employee networks for the full value they can bring. And yet our case study interviews show that senior support and sponsorship is critical to ERG success.

With this in mind, we were interested to find out if Senior Leaders feel that the Sponsor role is impactful. It was reassuring to find that 97% of Sponsors, Senior Leaders and Champions believe they can make a difference, by lending their support to ERGs.

Do your leaders leverage the full power of networks?

● Yes (30%) ● No (70%)



NETWORK LEADS AND MEMBERS

Finally, we asked EDI Teams if they feel able to fully support the ERGs in their organisation. Just over half (51%) of EDI and HR respondents say that they have the resources to fully support employee networks - a finding which is not surprising, given that many organisations have recently reduced the size of their EDI teams. In this climate of EDI cost-cutting, many organisations are choosing to double-down on their ERGs as a valuable investment for the future. Our research underlines the need for sustained ERG investment, to help EDI Teams drive and embed strategy from the ground up.

Are you able to make a difference as a Sponsor / Leader / Champion?

● Yes (97.4%) ● No (2.6%)



radius

EMPLOYEE NETWORK CASE STUDIES & STORIES

**ERGs DRIVE
EDI STRATEGY**



**ERGs CREATE
EXTERNAL
IMPACT**



**ERGs SPARK
INNOVATION**





ERGs DRIVE EDI STRATEGY



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS BUILD CONNECTION AND A MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

In organisations with a national and international workforce, creating a sense of belonging can be a challenge. At **Tesco**, employee networks play an important role in achieving this, by connecting colleagues and driving positive change across the business, as **Group DE&I Managers Laura Hong** and **Harriet Buckley**, explain.

As a leading multinational retailer with over 330,000 colleagues, Tesco is committed to creating an inclusive workplace that celebrates the cultures, personalities and preferences of all colleagues. Operating over 4,500 stores globally, Tesco's global DE&I strategy is underpinned by its colleague networks, which are seen as vital in helping everyone to feel welcome.

"Colleague networks are even more important in a dispersed workforce and this is especially true at Tesco. They connect colleagues across every site, helping them to feel included and giving them access to a wider support network", explains Laura Hong.

"Colleague networks are even more important in a dispersed workforce and this is especially true at Tesco."



Laura Hong, Tesco



Tesco has six thriving networks well established across the UK business, which offer colleague support and act as strategic advisors. The Armed Forces, Disability, LGBTQ+, Parents and Carers, Race and Ethnicity and Gender Equality networks, are well established across the business, and the retailer has worked hard to give all networks a shared sense of purpose. Localised versions of these networks are also in place, or currently being established, in other markets and businesses across the Group.

"We've been really purposeful around what our networks can deliver and the value they can add to the business, and this has 3 key elements", explains Harriet Buckley. "Firstly, our networks listen to and amplify the voices of our diverse workforces, so that we can better understand our colleagues. Secondly, they proactively consult and influence the business, by helping us to make more inclusive decisions that deliver our DE&I strategy. And finally, they actively celebrate and educate on the cultures, personalities and preferences of all our colleagues."

This clarity of purpose helps Tesco's colleague networks to deliver far-reaching impact, from influencing internal policy to shaping external operations. Tesco increasingly consults with its networks at the start of a decision making process and views their input as fundamental to enacting change.

A powerful example of this can be found in Tesco's Disability Network, which drives changes, such as workplace adjustments and accessibility projects, and has overseen a range of new initiatives, including developing uniform with specialised features for deaf colleagues. The network's vision is that every decision Tesco makes, should consider disability. The networks play an important role in shaping the colleague and customer experience and are seen by senior leaders as a valuable expert resource.





Similarly, Tesco's Gender Equality Network is making an impact inside and outside of the business. For colleagues, the network offers support, mentorship and inspiration, helping Tesco to be recognised as one of the Times Top 50 Employers for Women for the fourth consecutive year. One of their initiatives on which it consulted was the introduction of menopause-friendly uniforms made from a lightweight, more breathable fabric that is cooler and more comfortable to wear at work.

As one of the world's largest retailers, innovation is an important focus for Tesco, and colleague networks have a role to play here too, by sourcing new products and ideas that help Tesco serve customers and communities. "Our product and marketing teams work closely with colleague networks to develop products which reflect and meet the needs of our diverse customer base", says Harriet. The Race and Ethnicity Network supported F&F to develop a new range of skin-tone lingerie, while the Disability Network consulted on the creation of an autism friendly clothing collection for children.

By actively seeking the input of its networks, Tesco is shaping a culture in which innovation like this can happen. "We work really hard as a business to listen to colleague experiences through our networks, and then take action", says Harriet. This active listening is already improving the employee experience, through initiatives such as a flexible working

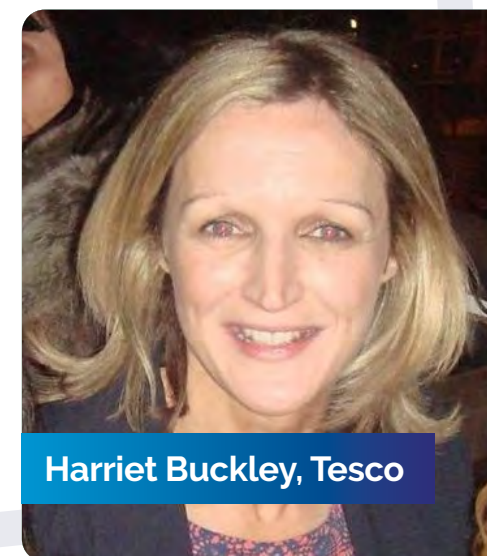
site on MS Teams. Set up by the Parents and Carers Network, colleagues can share and find potential job share opportunities "It's a really good example of a colleague network identifying an opportunity and working with the business to make it happen", Laura adds.



The sense of connection that Tesco's networks are building, extends right across the business. Its Armed Forces network, for example, ensures that new colleagues are well supported with the transition from military life, something which feels particularly important for colleagues who are based remotely.

Creating this sense of connection is also a focus for the LGBTQ+ network, and Harriet gives an example of a Tesco delivery driver who felt able to come out, after joining. "The network made a big difference to him personally. He feels confident to celebrate his identity, because his manager and the network showed him that he is part of a supportive workplace culture."

It's a great example of how employee networks can help businesses to build a powerful new narrative, one story at a time. "Our colleague networks are achieving so many great things for our business and customers, but it's the difference they can make at a human level that really stands out", says Harriet. "By helping our colleagues to feel that they can be themselves, we get the very best out of them, which benefits everyone."



Harriet Buckley, Tesco

"Our colleague networks are achieving so many great things for our business and customers, but it's the difference they can make at a human level that really stands out"

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS MAKE INCLUSION HAPPEN

Leaders have long recognised the value that diverse workforces bring. But not all diverse businesses are inclusive. So how can organisations put the 'I' into DEI? At insurance company **Aviva**, employee networks are fundamental to driving inclusion – creating a workplace where every voice is heard and valued. **Global DEI Partner Shamini Rajan**, explains how Aviva Communities make the magic happen.

Aviva has six employee resource groups, bringing together a wide range of support networks from across the business. Launched in 2017, the Aviva Communities run a host of programs and campaigns, promoting equality and social awareness, and ensuring that all employees have an equal voice and are fairly represented.

All six of Aviva's communities have won awards, not just for their work in improving the employee experience, but for their efforts across the industry and society as a whole. Global DEI Partner Shamini Rajan says that the networks are vital to the firm's DEI efforts and broader CSR strategy.



Shamini Rajan, Aviva

"The simplest way to put it is that, without employee networks, there isn't inclusion. These networks are our grassroots level. They build a sense of community, through their lived experiences, to make the organisation a better place."

Part of this work involves supporting the DEI team, and Shamini says that Aviva's employee networks are a powerful resource for her team.



"Without our communities, the company would not be where we are today. Our Global DEI Team needs these passionate volunteers on the ground. They are effectively an extension of our team. I don't think we could be as inclusive as we are without them. There is power in their voices."



"Without our communities, the company would not be where we are today. Our Global DEI Team needs these passionate volunteers on the ground."

One of the key areas of focus for Aviva's communities is gender parity. In recent years, the insurance industry has made great strides in enhancing gender diversity, but Shamini points out that there is still much work to do.

"We massively lack gender diversity across the financial sector as a whole", she explains. "There is some great work going on to address this. But we recognise that diversity means nothing without the inclusion piece. And our Balance Network helps us to drive this."



A recent winner of the 'Most Inclusive Gender Network' at the Women in Insurance Awards, Aviva's Balance Network campaigns for gender equality in the workplace. One of their priorities is advocating for all parents – especially men – to take six months of equal parental leave. The network's campaign led to Aviva becoming one of the first UK employers to introduce such a policy and the impact has been significant.

"Employee networks are the foundation of all things inclusion at Aviva and I firmly believe that all organisations should have them."



"We introduced the policy to help remove barriers to career progression, challenge traditional gender roles and level the playing field for women and men at home and at work when a new child arrives. It is a gamechanger," says Shamini. Data shows that the policy is very popular, with over 80% of men at the company taking six months out of work when a new child arrives.

Another powerful example of networks driving inclusion can be found in Aviva's Generations Network, which is working to bridge the age gap internally and externally. The group takes a data-driven approach to help the business understand its five generations of colleagues, enabling Aviva to better utilise this spectrum of experience across the organisation. The network's Co-Chair is also the creator of Workplace Age Diversity Index – a pioneering UK market benchmark, specialising in age equity in the workplace which is launching soon.

"Age is an often overlooked characteristic despite ageism being the number one most common form of discrimination in the UK", explains Shamini. "We're really proud of the work we've been doing to support our people of all ages, and we couldn't have achieved this without our communities."

Aviva harnesses the insights of its communities to influence policy and practice across the business. Its Workplace Adjustment passports, for example, are shaped by advice and input from the Ability Network. And the firm's Origins Network successfully lobbied for the introduction of a flexible bank holiday policy, which will enable colleagues to use leave at other times of the year, for example during religious festivals.

"Our networks regularly drive policy innovation and the flexible bank holiday pilot is a really powerful example of this", says Shamini. "Only a handful of organisations in the UK have done this, and our Origins Community made it happen with the support of their Executive Sponsors. The feedback we've had from our people has been amazing."

Supporting colleagues, customers and the wider businesses, Aviva's employee networks are making great strides for diverse communities everywhere. And when it comes to driving inclusion, their impact cannot be understated.

"Employee networks are the foundation of all things inclusion at Aviva", says Shamini "and I firmly believe that all organisations should have them. They play a pivotal role in fostering inclusion that drives innovation, problem-solving, and market reach. I have a lot of gratitude for our networks and I'm sure other organisations do too."



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS ENGAGE AND DEVELOP TALENT

Many organisations are at the start of their employee network journey. But even new ERGs can make an impact. Nuclear technology company **Rolls-Royce SMR** founded its networks in April 2023, and they have already delivered significant change for the business. **ED&I Manager Greg Turner-Smart** explains why they are central to the firm's Inclusion Strategy.

Joining Rolls-Royce SMR from its parent company in 2022, Greg Turner-Smart has an impressive track record as a champion for change. In 2015 he launched the LGBTQ+ network Prism, taking Rolls-Royce into the Stonewall Top 100. Greg has since been shortlisted for multiple diversity awards and in 2023 won the ED&I prize at the UK Nuclear Skills Awards.

As a former Network Chair, Greg feels that the experience of running a network opened doors to new possibilities and he's passionate about the career development opportunities that network leadership can bring. "Leading a network was for me, very empowering. My performance at



Greg Turner-Smart, Rolls-Royce SMR

"Leading a network was for me, very empowering. My performance at work improved and my career at Rolls-Royce accelerated."



work improved and my career at Rolls-Royce accelerated. Because I could bring my full self to work, I grew in confidence and I realised that I wanted to work in ED&I full time."

One of Greg's first achievements as Rolls-Royce SMR's new ED&I Manager was to set up employee networks. "I wanted to place networks at the centre of our Inclusion Strategy, so my priority was to get them up and running as soon as possible", Greg explains. He founded 5 'Inclusion Networks': Ability (specific needs), BETA (early careers), Genie (gender equity), Pride (LGBTQ+) and Reach (religion, ethnicity and cultural heritage) with the aim of driving the ED&I strategy from the ground up.

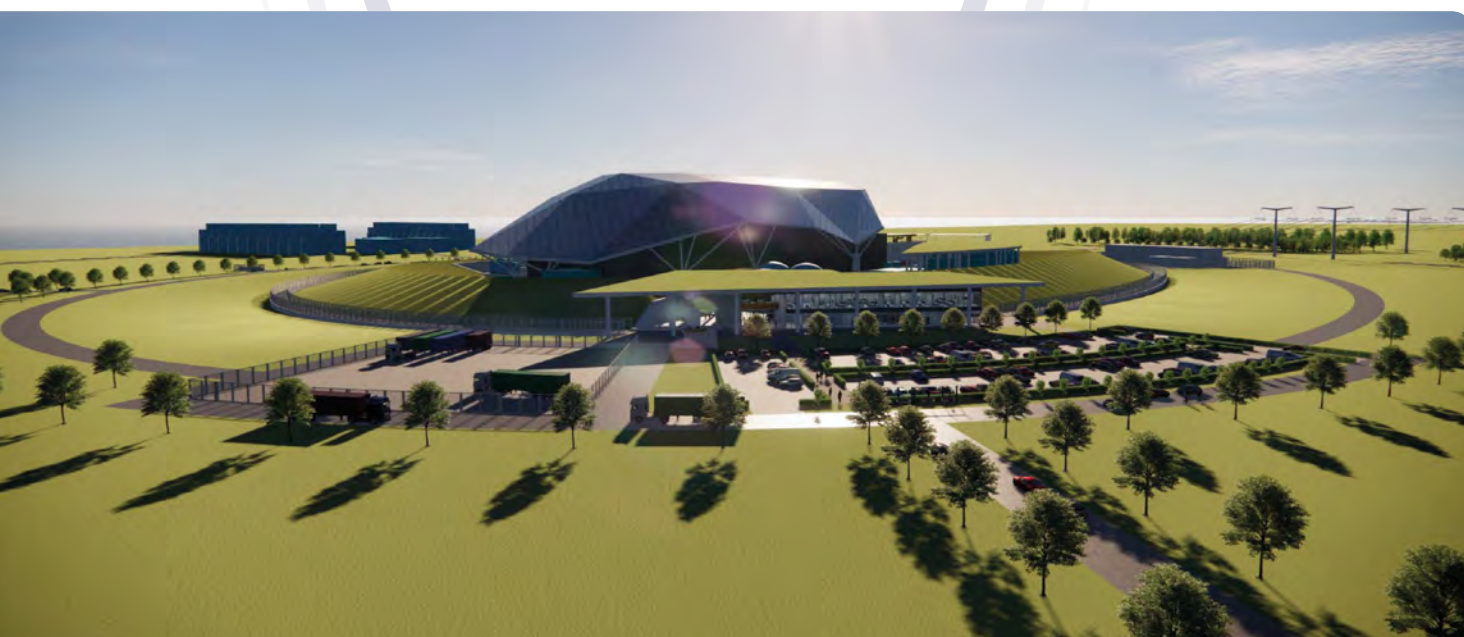
The firm's Inclusion Strategy has 5 key pillars of inclusivity: leadership, hiring, experiences, careers and external influence - and networks help to deliver each of these. "Our employee networks have only been active for 2 years but they are already having a huge impact in terms of building an inclusive culture", says Greg.

Research shows that inclusive work environments are more important than ever to Gen-Z employees, and Rolls-Royce SMR factors this into its talent strategy. "Increasingly, younger applicants ask us about employee networks as part of the recruitment processes. A sense of belonging is very important to them", says Greg.

As well as attracting the best talent, employee networks at Rolls-Royce SMR also help to retain it and its early careers network stands out for its achievements in this space. The BETA network (Bringing Early Talent Alive) creates valuable opportunities for young colleagues to take part in coaching and mentoring programmes. And they also gain valuable exposure to senior leaders via the company's Inclusion Forum, which meets quarterly to discuss and embed inclusive strategies across the business.



One of BETA's flagship initiatives is BETA Talk, an innovative podcast series modelled on TED Talks, which invites employees to share their career insights. The network is also active externally, engaging in STEM Ambassador work with schools and social mobility initiatives such as Circl's Future Leaders Programme, which creates opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.



"By challenging traditional perspectives and advocating for innovative approaches, the network ensures that young people's views are heard and considered"

Attracting diverse future talent is a key focus for BETA, but the network also works hard to keep existing employees engaged and motivated. "BETA plays a crucial role in providing a voice for everyone in the business", says Greg. "By challenging traditional perspectives and advocating for innovative approaches, the network ensures that young people's views are heard and considered."



The network's efforts have not gone unnoticed. BETA was named Employee Network of the Year at the 2024 Engineering Talent Awards, and they were also highly commended by judges at the 2024 Diversity Network Awards. Additionally, BETA was shortlisted for the Network of the Year at the 2024 British Diversity Awards, and the company's Genie Gender Network were also shortlisted at the Engineering Talent Awards; significant achievements given the relatively short lifespan of both networks.

"BETA is a shining example of how employee networks can accelerate careers and create a vibrant, inclusive community within an organisation", says Greg. "Their achievements underscore the potential of networks to make a lasting impact for business."

At Rolls Royce SMR, this impact is evident everywhere. Senior leaders now use employee network insights to improve ways of working. A powerful example of this can be found in the Ability Network, which supports colleagues with specific needs.

"The Ability network is very good at giving feedback about what does and doesn't work for neurodivergent people", says Greg. "Their insights are changing how we operate and our senior leaders actively engage with them to shape policy. Colleagues say that Rolls-Royce SMR is a great place to work, because our top team listens to our inclusion networks."

Reflecting on the achievements of these networks, Greg is incredibly proud.

"At Rolls-Royce SMR, our inclusion networks have had a huge impact on the business in a short space of time" says Greg. "They've created communities. They've built support networks. And they've been a voice into the business to make sure that everybody is represented when we're making decisions and adopting new processes. Our networks help people to feel included and valued. We want to create a really great place to work and they're helping us to do just that."

"At Rolls-Royce SMR, our inclusion networks have had a huge impact on the business in a short space of time."

ERGs HELP DEI TEAMS TO BUILD COMMUNITY

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play a powerful role in reducing barriers to inclusion and organisations that invest in their ERGs create a culture of belonging. Leading technology provider **Arm** leverages the power of ERGs to build a sense of community for its global employee base, as **Global DEI Manager Ian Shaw** explains.

Based in Cambridge UK, Arm is building the future of computing. With more than 8,000 global employees, Arm technology powers everything from sensors to supercomputers and touches more than 70% of the population worldwide.

Arm ERGs have been in place for around 6 years and following the launch of the company's formal DEI strategy, Arm evolved the concept of ERGs to better serve employees globally, by delineating two pathways: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Employee Communities.



Ian Shaw, Arm

"These groups are critically important, as they provide safe spaces for colleagues, remove barriers to belonging and promote inclusion and connection."



Arm ERGs are formally supported groups that build a sense of community for those from underrepresented and marginalised backgrounds based on primary dimensions of diversity, such as gender, sexual orientation and race/ethnicity. Arm Employee Communities, meanwhile, bring employees together with common interests that align with non-primary dimensions of diversity, such as religious affiliation, language, nationality, life stage, etc.

Both ERGs and Employee Communities follow a "glocal" approach, meaning they are globally aligned to Arm's DEI strategy. Global DEI Manager Ian Shaw says that this dual approach reduces barriers to inclusion and belonging for everyone. "Each location or chapter is consistent with the groups' overall charter and objectives, yet their approach is adjusted for local nuances", he says. To ensure alignment and understanding of Arm's DEI strategy at the global level, the DEI team brings together Arm's ERGs and Employee Communities under one collective along with other active DEI working groups.

Central to the company's DEI mission, Shaw says that when Arm ERGs and Employee Communities work together, they can drive significant impact. "These groups are critically important, as they provide safe spaces for colleagues, remove barriers to belonging and promote inclusion and connection. When they work together, they can also help to attract, engage, and retain employees, elevate organisational awareness on topics that impact specific communities, and provide feedback loops to the wider business on areas for improvement."





By amplifying the voices of diverse communities, Arm employee networks add huge value to the business internally and this is perhaps felt most strongly within the DEI team, as Shaw explains. “We view DEI as an enabler of our business strategy, and we know that data shows diverse and inclusive teams are higher-performing and more innovative. As such, our ERGs help the DEI team build inclusion into the DNA of our day-to-day work and integrate DEI broadly across teams and the business so everyone, regardless of background, can thrive and contribute to help us achieve our business goals.”

Arm ERGs are often leveraged by the DEI and People teams for their unique perspectives and community knowledge. They also provide consultation to key stakeholders across the business on workplace initiatives, employee orientation and onboarding, mentorship and other internal efforts.

Shaw cites many examples of how Arm ERGs have influenced change across the business, including the development of health benefit policies for transgender colleagues, led by Pride@Arm and the creation of a new accommodations process for prospective employees, shaped by the Neurodiversity@Arm ERG. Collectively, Arm ERGs are consulted when forming company-wide surveys which are used to better understand the demographics and needs of Arm's global population.

A striking example of ERG impact can be found in the company's Black@Arm ERG, which was launched in 2020 during a time of increased racial tension and global outrage sparked by the racially motivated murders of George Floyd and other Black victims. Black@Arm took the initiative to play a leading role in Arm's DEI journey by increasing company-wide awareness and elevating the voice of the global Black community, as Ian explains. “For two years, they planned and executed an enterprise-wide, multi day virtual DEI conference for Arm's global workforce - a huge achievement. The conference was well-received and attended and served as a catalyst to spark additional DEI efforts and conversations across the business.”

arm



“Arm ERGs help us foster an inclusive environment where representation matters, individuals are valued, diverse perspectives are heard, and everyone’s skills are fully utilised”

Reflecting on the legacy of Arm ERGs and Employee Communities, Ian says that they strengthen the company's culture of belonging and bring its core beliefs to life.

“Our ERGs are critical partners in driving Arm's DEI strategy. Whether through their individual efforts to build community, inspire allies, and educate employees, or through their consultative work with the People team, DEI team, and business leaders, their impact is felt across the company. Arm ERGs help us foster an inclusive environment where representation matters, individuals are valued, diverse perspectives are heard, and everyone's skills are fully utilised.”

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS DRIVE EDI STRATEGY

The role of employee networks is evolving and many ERGs play a key role in influencing EDI strategy. At **University of Sunderland**, ERGs don't just influence policy and projects – they drive EDI from the ground up. Former **EDI Manager Justine Gillespie** shares how its networks have evolved into a key strategic resource for the university.

The life-changing University of Sunderland has 25,600 students based in campuses on the north-east coast, in London, Hong Kong, and at its global partnerships with learning institutions in 15 countries.

Internationally recognised for its outstanding work in widening participation in higher education, as well as for producing 'world-leading' research that impacts people's lives, the University has nurtured its employee networks as a safe space for hundreds of employees.



The University has 9 networks covering a wide range of diversity strands, and when EDI Manager Justine Gillespie took on the role, she decided to centre her work around these networks, to leverage their insights and expertise. Five years on, the University of Sunderland's networks play a key role in driving strategy. "Our networks are central to everything we do. They identify our EDI priorities", explains Justine. While employee networks highlight unseen issues and contribute to strategy in many organisations, at University of Sunderland the majority of the EDI strategy is the change networks want to see.

"Our networks are central to everything we do. They identify our EDI priorities"

UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND



A powerful example of this can be found in the university's Family Network, which successfully changed Paternity Leave policy, after highlighting the issue with the EDI Team. Similarly, staff networks have helped the university to introduce Neonatal and Carer's Leave, anticipating the need for these new policies ahead of legislative changes. Justine says that how the University works with its networks, is central to their success. "We don't expect our networks to write policies or even do much of the work. Their role is clearly defined as an advisory one, which allows for greater impact." It's clear that Sunderland's networks have highlighted barriers and what is impressive, is how quickly these barriers have been removed in order for equitable experiences to be available for everyone.

The University evaluates its staff networks each year. Results from its annual survey show that nearly 100% of colleagues believe employee networks contribute to the value of inclusion while 89% say that they believe the University takes EDI seriously. Justine has no doubt that the university's approach to ERGs drives these positive responses.

"I think our staff networks are so successful because they are independent and don't sit within HR. They can see that their voices make a difference. There are so many examples of our networks driving positive change." At Sunderland, employee networks report into Justine and then directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, so they have a direct line which helps them drive a range of impactful changes with speed.

"We know that people have been retained because of our staff networks. They do amazing work in terms of building belonging and helping people to feel seen and valued."





UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

One such change came after the REACH (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) staff network braved a challenging conversation. The university had been putting a lot of time and effort into the Athena Swan Charter Mark and when REACH scrutinised data on career progression, they found that there were also significant barriers for ethnically minoritised staff. REACH worked with the EDI Team to present their case to the Vice Chancellor Executive. "The REACH Network posed a difficult question and identified a stark issue, which needed addressing", says Justine, explaining how they influenced the decision to work towards the Race Charter Mark. "Today, as a result of their influence, we're more committed than ever to closing the ethnicity gap."

As well as supporting the university's diverse recruitment drive, Justine believes that networks also support with retention. "We know that people have been retained because of our staff networks. They do amazing work in terms of building belonging and helping people to feel seen and valued."

Among its 9 staff networks, the university has two ERGs which are especially innovative in terms of their specificity. The Menopause Network supports many colleagues, as 60.75% of university staff are women and over 50% of that population are over 50. "Staff have told us that the Menopause Network has helped them to cope and that as a result, they've been able to keep working! The Menopause Network has also done incredible work in helping the University create Menopause Guidelines with policy changes such as including menopause as a reason for sick leave and providing additional days for this", says Justine.

"Our networks are seen as incredibly valuable and strategic change drivers. And as a result, we've created a greater sense of belonging for everyone."

Additionally, the university's Men's Engagement Network, provides a unique space for male employees and any member of staff that identifies as a man, boosting their engagement with EDI and encouraging them to become allies. "I felt very strongly that we needed to draw men into our EDI conversations and not just continue to point fingers at them", says Justine. "Our data showed that men weren't engaging with our networks or EDI training, so we created an environment where they could contribute and it's been incredible. The way they organise themselves and the types of events they run is completely different to the other networks and that is the beauty of it. They are doing what is needed to build space for much needed conversations and support around men's mental health and male prostate and testicular cancer, working intersectionally with other Networks and it's a movement that's really growing. It's my greatest joy!"

The University is also developing its Executive Sponsors and Justine says that over time, this will elevate ERG impact even further. "We're already seeing results, in terms of senior buy-in. One of our networks suggested a name pronunciation tool for email signatures and a Sponsor was able to action this immediately because they now have clarity about their role."

Four years into the university's network journey, ERG membership has increased an amazing five hundred fold and all networks have matured to become a vital strategic resource. The University of Sunderland's ten staff networks have positively impacted recruitment and retention, as well as shaping EDI policy from the ground up.

"One of the problems with a top-down approach to EDI is that it can be seen as performative", concludes Justine. "For us, a bottom-up approach – which leverages our networks' insights and their rich lived experience - has been very successful. Our networks are seen as incredibly valuable and strategic change drivers and as a result, we've created a greater sense of belonging for everyone."



EMPLOYEE NETWORK SPOTLIGHT – LATIN AND FRIENDS NETWORK, NIKE

Eugenia Martelli, Co- Chair of Nike's Latin & Friends network in the EMEA region shares her experience of how small employee networks can make a big difference

Eugenia Martelli is the Stores Supply Chain Director for Nike in the EMEA region, and Co-Chair of the Latin & Friends (LAFN) employee network at Nike. Originally from Argentina, Eugenia moved to the Netherlands to study, and started to work at Nike afterwards. The Netherlands is one of the company's key global locations.

Eugenia set up the Latin & Friends network three years ago to create a space for people with a shared Latin heritage to connect. The network began with just 10 members and now boasts more than 500. She says, "Most of our members are first generation immigrants who moved from Latin America for work or have Latin roots in Southern Europe. We founded LAFN to create a space of belonging."

"Most of our members are first generation immigrants who moved from Latin America for work or have Latin roots in Southern Europe."



Eugenia Martelli, Nike



She adds, "There are cultural differences when moving to a new country and it's important to have a space to talk about these and build networks locally. Sometimes someone will say "I am just happy I got to speak Spanish for the first time today."

The LAFN network runs events throughout the year focusing on career and personal development. Eugenia says that everything they do has a Latin lens so members can unlock their full potential. "If we design a workshop, we make it really relatable to our members, for example, we may look at how to transmit our Latin expression to get our message across in a more concise way."

LAFN also runs a Latin Heritage Month annually, with the aim of creating events and wider education in the company about Latin American culture. "The theme this year is "Unidos Con Corazón" which means united with heart. We hosted lots of events where we brought our love for Latin food into our food outlets with special dishes as a way for both our members to connect and also promote cultural awareness."

There are 8 employee networks at Nike bringing together employees globally with diverse experiences, perspectives, and ideas. Eugenia says her network works closely alongside these and with the DEI team. "We have multiple meetings throughout the month, and our goals are really aligned with theirs. As networks, we see ourselves as amplifying the DEI strategy."



One powerful example where the LAFN network has worked with the DEI and HR team is creating awareness on the pension policy provision for employees moving from their home residency to another country of work. Eugenia says, "We worked with the central HR team to provide information for employees to understand how this would apply to them. The change has reached employees in EMEA beyond our network such as teammates from Asia, so even though this work started with a Latin lens, it has had an impact on the entire EMEA community".

The network has also done a lot of intersectional working and Eugenia says this can have a striking impact on culture change too. She cites working with Nike's Women's network on a series of workshops about financial management. "Speaking out about money is a bit of a taboo for women in Latin America. We brought in some financial advisors to provide an overall picture of the resources available so women can be empowered to take financial leadership in their own lives."

She adds, "This is where I can see the longer term value of the network - I have a daughter and these are the things that I want her to know from day one."



Externally, networks such as Latin & Friends are passionate about social impact work within the wider community. Eugenia says, "over the past few years, the network has collaborated with our social impact team, to make donations to local organisations in the Netherlands, who do great work supporting Latin communities. Separately, we also work together with our procurement teams by providing suggestions on new vendors to help expand the diversity in the pool of suppliers used in the organisation."

Eugenia says, "Staff networks are driving a lot of great work at Nike. They not only create connection which is key to employee wellbeing but they drive engagement and are really good places where you can amplify the voices of members to make a change."



"Staff networks are driving a lot of great work at Nike. They not only create connection which is key to employee wellbeing but they drive engagement"



ERGs CREATE EXTERNAL IMPACT



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS INFLUENCE CHANGE - IN THE WORKPLACE AND BEYOND

Employee Networks are often seen as an internal resource but when leveraged to their full potential they can forge lasting change for society too. At **HSBC**, staff networks have influenced the employee experience for nearly 50 years and today, they have a powerful impact on how the bank delivers for customers around the world. **Jack Guest, HSBC's Senior Group Inclusion Advisor** explains why employee networks are a key driver for change, in the workplace and beyond.

One of the largest banking and financial services institutions in the world, **HSBC** serves millions of customers across 62 countries, through its three Global Businesses. HSBC sees this global reach as a key strength and the bank is committed to leveraging its diverse talent-base to build a connected workforce where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

"Creating an inclusive culture has long been a priority for HSBC, and employee resource groups are a key part of this. We see networks as being central to our EDI strategy."



Jack Guest, HSBC

HSBC



HSBC has a long history of supporting employee resource groups. The first was founded in London in 1975 ('Christians in HSBC') and today, the bank has more than 150 groups around the world, covering a broad range of diversity strands. Each group is supported by an umbrella global network and sponsored by senior ambassadors.

As HSBC's Senior Group Inclusion Advisor, Jack Guest is passionate about influencing impactful and equitable change across the financial system, and he sees employee resource groups as central to this mission. Based in Asia for many years, Jack led several groundbreaking initiatives that enhanced HSBC's reputation as a D&I Leader in the region and was awarded 'Community Business Hong Kong LGBT Inclusion Champion' for his efforts. Returning to London to take on the role of Senior Group Inclusion Advisor, he applied what he had learned to each of the bank's markets, with a focus on leveraging employee resource groups as a key strategic resource.

"It was really rewarding to be able to apply some of the breakthroughs we made in APAC to our global approach", says Jack. "Creating an inclusive culture has long been a priority for HSBC, and employee resource groups are a key part of this. We see networks as being central to our EDI strategy. They benefit employees because they help them to feel more engaged, valued and supported. And for customers, they drive innovation and dynamism, ensuring that we can deliver what our markets need and be super responsive."





A powerful example of this can be found in HSBC's Global Faith Network, which shapes how the bank understands and adapts to different religious perspectives in relation to money. "For many of our markets, faith is a really important factor when it comes to how people think about money", says Jack. "Our employee networks have helped us to understand and respond to these nuanced perspectives, which has in turn strengthened our reputation as a bank that understands its customers." The employee networks have created a shift in how both the commercial and personal bank connects with its community. Linked to festivals including Eid, Diwali and Hanukkah, the employee networks arrange events attended by HSBC's Country CEOs to improve multi-faith understanding. "Clients and customers say that our faith events help them to feel valued", says Jack. "They allow us to build deeper relationships which we couldn't achieve without our networks."

Another impactful example comes from HSBC's Pride Network, which has successfully delivered change for colleagues and customers across APAC. Founded in 2011, APAC Pride was ahead of its time, helping the business to increase its scope and reach for LGBTQ+ customers. The network has been behind some very visible campaigns, including replacing the iconic bronze lion statues outside HSBC's Hong Kong HQ for two rainbow replicas in 2016 – a powerful show of support hailed as "the first of its kind" in the region. Since then, the Pride Network has gone from strength to strength. Its achievements include expanding insurance beneficiaries to include same-sex partners and introducing gender neutral prefixes for both employees and customers. It's a wonderful example of how the network allowed the organisation to tap into a customer base that was not being served, as same-sex relationships were not eligible for insurance and banking products at the time by any providers in the region.



HSBC



"Our commitment to inclusion and specifically our work with employee networks has a direct impact on the image of our brand and our relevancy in the 21st century."

"Our employee networks identified that we needed to allow trans customers to choose the gendered title of their preference", explains Jack. "Having highlighted the issue, they were fully involved in making it happen. They helped us to work out a process, draw up a list of suggested titles and launch the scheme across key markets. The change simply wouldn't have happened without them and it's important for so many customers."

As an instantly recognisable brand, HSBC knows that it has an important role to play in supporting diverse communities and Jack Guest is passionate about the benefits this brings for the business – especially in terms of how the brand is perceived. "Our commitment to inclusion and specifically our work with employee networks has a direct impact on the image of our brand and our relevancy in the 21st century. We're very much seen as a forward-thinking organisation which in turn benefits our talent pipeline."

Many organisations agree that ERGs have an important role to play in attracting, retaining and progressing talent. But at HSBC, they are central to the process, as Jack explains. "Our staff networks are integral to our talent progression and inclusion strategies. We involve networks in the entire recruitment process, from testing our branding to see how we are perceived to encouraging members to act as ambassadors. We give network leaders 'spokespersons licences' so that they can talk on behalf of business, because they are some of the most powerful ambassadors we have."

HSBC sees its networks as a key resource when it comes to retaining talent. "Employee networks probably play the largest role in terms of retention", says Jack. "They are major cultural drivers at HSBC and this is very powerful, because when people can be themselves at work, they're fully engaged." The bank also recognises that networks can provide a future talent pipeline, because the experience of leading or participating in a network helps colleagues to develop new skills.

"I would say to organisations that employee networks can be a key talent incubator", says Jack. "If you want to find engaged, committed, energetic and hardworking people, this is where you should look. Here you'll find your changemakers, your future leaders. Employee networks are talent programmes in their own right."

For HSBC, rewarding and recognising this talent is just as important as nurturing it, and the bank makes sure that Network Leaders have protected time for network duties, while also rewarding their efforts through employee recognition programmes. HSBC's most recent staff survey shows that its Inclusion Index score is above the financial service industry benchmark, an achievement which they are able to demonstrate that employee networks have contributed to.



"Many businesses under-appreciate the power of their employee networks but at HSBC, they're part of our DNA"

HSBC



"We're focused on making HSBC a place where people feel valued, respected and supported and employee networks play an important part in this", says Jack. "They help to drive inclusion – not just for our colleagues, but for wider society too. This holistic approach means that we appeal to a much wider customer base. And our networks directly contribute to this, by helping us to create better products and services."

A compelling example can be found in HSBC's Ability Network, which leverages the diverse skills and abilities of employees with physical and mental health challenges. The Network was pivotal in supporting HSBC's transition to mobile banking, by ensuring that the bank's app is fully accessible. Today, it plays a key role in helping HSBC to achieve its strategic aim of becoming the world's most digitally accessible bank, through network members working directly with developers so that solutions can be designed for inclusion from the start.

Almost fifty years since HSBC's first network was founded, employee networks have evolved to become a vital resource that drives a strong and purposeful delivery of operations and strategy.

"Many businesses under-appreciate the power of their employee networks but at HSBC, they're part of our DNA", says Jack. "Our global networks have significantly changed our culture, helping us to build a truly inclusive business for our people and the wider communities we serve."



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS ELEVATE CSR AND CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are increasingly recognised as powerful drivers of social value. At **NTT DATA Inc**, they elevate DEI, CSR and strengthen client relationships, to give the company a competitive advantage. **Clare Stephens, VP of DEI at NTT DATA Inc UK&I**, explains how.

NTT DATA Inc – part of NTT DATA Group – is a trusted global innovator of IT and business services headquartered in Tokyo. Serving clients in more than 50 countries around the world, the company is proud to be recognised as a Financial Times 'Diversity Leader', thanks to its stated mission to 'make the IT and technology services industry equitable for all.'

The firm's 7 inclusion networks were founded in 2015 and today, they deliver considerable impact. As VP for DEI in the UK and Ireland, Clare Stephens oversees these networks and says that they are a key resource for the business.

"We have fantastic volunteers in our inclusion networks and they are integral to our DEI function, particularly in terms of their subject knowledge. They add a level of expertise, can reach out to communities more effectively, and our DEI initiatives feel more authentic when we amplify their voices."

The company is proud to be
recognised as a Financial Times
'Diversity Leader'



Clare Stephens, NTT DATA Inc



One of the ways in which NTT DATA Inc amplifies these voices, is by encouraging the groups to work together. "There's something counterintuitive about siloed ERGs", explains Clare. "I want our networks to work with each other to leverage their combined skills and build broader inclusion." This has been achieved through "interlocking governance", which sees the networks meet regularly to share strategy and work together on DEI projects and events.

Increasingly, these projects have an external focus, because NTT DATA Inc sees that its employee networks can make an impact client-side too. "One of our priorities is to leverage the power of our ERGs to build out client relationships", explains Clare. "We're working with a number of clients on collaborations with our inclusion networks, such as fireside chats and two-way mentoring opportunities." The firm is also working with its Alliance Partners to create a new Women's Network in the IT services space, giving colleagues access to industry expertise from companies such as Google and Salesforce, while further expanding NTT DATA Inc's already vast business network.

"One of our priorities is to leverage the power of our
ERGs to build out client relationships."





"There's a clear business benefit to extending the reach of networks into client-facing environments", says Clare. "It raises the profile of our networks and positions us as an inclusive employer. Plus, it's an opportunity for learning and sharing best practice. Yes, our inclusion networks primarily support our people, but they can drive competitive advantage too. These two things don't need to be in conflict with each other."

A key area in which ERGs are delivering business impact, is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), especially when tendering for public sector contracts. "The social value element is increasingly important in the tender evaluation process", explains Clare.

"So there's a clear benefit for us in terms of stepping up how we support and empower our ERGs. They help us to demonstrate the added value we can bring to our clients."

An example of this can be found in NTT DATA Inc's Friends of Armed Forces Network. Initially created to support veterans, the network now welcomes anyone who has worked in defence, the armed forces or emergency services, plus their allies, family and friends. In addition to creating a supportive community, the network is helping NTT DATA Inc to become a forces-friendly business. "It allows us to legitimately engage with the Armed Forces Covenant, which is something we very much want to do in the public sector space", says Clare.

With NTT DATA Inc's inclusion networks playing an ever more strategic role in the business, Clare is keen to expand their remit even further. "ERGs can sometimes be pigeon-holed into delivering DEI extension activities and events. I'm always looking for ways to give them a broader

"So there's a clear benefit for us in terms of stepping up how we support and empower our ERGs. They help us to demonstrate the added value we can bring to our clients."



and deeper reach so that they can create business impact and drive our competitive advantage." For Black History Month, for example, Clare invited senior leaders to participate in a workshop to talk about race in the workplace, hosted by the Culture & Ethnicity Network. "This was hugely impactful and will shape our DEI strategy moving forward", she says.

NTT DATA Inc's inclusion networks are also creating impact through the firm's talent strategy. They engage directly with the Talent Team to shape job specs and support with data capture. "Our networks enable us to be authentic when we say that we are an inclusive employer. They help us to attract more diverse candidates because they know that as an employer, we value and celebrate difference."

From talent attraction to client interactions, NTT DATA Inc's inclusion networks impact every part of the business and Clare Stephens is excited to support this growth.

"At NTT DATA Inc UK&I, our inclusion networks enhance our workplace culture by fostering inclusion and belonging, driving social value through community engagement and providing competitive advantage via partnerships and alliances. They really are the beating heart of DEI."



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS BUILD BELONGING TO GIVE COMPANIES A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Employee networks help organisations to build belonging. But why does belonging matter and how can it influence business success? At **Siemens**, belonging and innovation are closely linked, giving the company a competitive edge. **Gerhard Gleitsmann, Siemens AG's Global Head of DEI**, explains how.

With more than 80 ERGs spanning a wide range of characteristics and interests, Siemens has a long history of supporting employee networks. The global technology company recognises the link between inclusion and innovation and sees its ERGs as central to its mission to build belonging.



Gerhard Gleitsmann, Siemens AG

"ERGs provide our people with an opportunity to connect, innovate, learn, grow, and build empathy — together."

SIEMENS



"Belonging has always been a vital part of our company's DNA," says Gerhard Gleitsmann. "Since our company's creation, our culture of innovation has been built upon the collective engagement of our people — through their local communities, shared interests, and mutual activities. And today, we have at least 85 known ERGs across the categories of ability, culture, pride, women, and other diversity dimensions and interests."

"Belonging has always been a vital part of our company's DNA."

Siemens' ERGs are formally organised and highly engaged, working in synergy with DEI teams around the world. The company sees these networks as a vital business, culture, engagement, and development lever and says that they play a key role in making Siemens a great place to work.

"ERGs provide our people with an opportunity to connect, innovate, learn, grow, and build empathy — together," Gleitsmann explains. "By honoring our people's shared characteristics, experiences, and interests, our ERGs foster a sense of community and belonging within the organisation and far beyond it. As we say here, #BelongingTransforms."

This transformation is driven by Siemens' ERGs, which are recognised as a valuable, strategic resource. The company looks to its ERGs as subject matter experts, harnessing their insights to shape strategy, policy, and more.

A powerful example of this can be found in Siemens' drive towards gender equity — a key corporate ambition for the business. Siemens has several ERGs focused on supporting this vital work, including the Global Leadership of Women @ Technology & Innovation (GLOW@TI) network, which helps women to advance their



careers in tech and research. Meanwhile, the Siemens Pride network is helping to drive change for trans colleagues through initiatives, such as the Trans at Work program, which provides counselling and dedicated Trans Advocates for those who are transitioning.

Gleitsmann says that in a fast-moving world, there is a clear business benefit to having so many active and engaged ERGs.

“As a leading technology company, we help our customers all over the world to become more competitive, resilient, and sustainable,” he notes. “Today’s rapid rate of change brings new opportunities and challenges for our industry and the world around us, and we strongly believe that the more diverse we are, the more able we are to tackle the challenges ahead.”

Encouraging people to bring their true selves to work also gives Siemens a clear competitive edge. “We can better understand and represent the markets and communities we serve, elevating Siemens across the competitive landscape and in the minds of our customers and end users,” says Gleitsmann.

ERGs play a powerful role in sustaining this competitive advantage, because they build a culture of belonging where innovation can happen. “At Siemens,” Gleitsmann shares, “we understand that true innovation and success come from embracing the unique perspectives and talents that each person brings to the table. Our ERGs help us do that by contextualizing our corporate strategy and bringing it to life for their members through the lens of their diversity dimension.”



SIEMENS



In a challenging EDI landscape, Gleitsmann says that ERGs will continue to play an important role at Siemens — and other leading companies around the world.

“Regardless of the changes we are seeing in the world today, employee networks will surely continue to play a crucial role in shaping policies, programs, and practices that promote a greater sense of belonging for people everywhere,” he concludes.

Looking ahead, Gleitsmann says that organisations that invest in their employee networks will continue to reap the benefits. “In my opinion, the future of ERGs is bright. They play a crucial role in driving meaningful culture change and fostering an inclusive environment by building a shared sense of community, nurturing growth, and encouraging cross-departmental collaboration. At Siemens, ERGs support our Global DEI Office in raising awareness on key issues, promoting diverse perspectives, and supporting our people with their development. All of this contributes to a more innovative and inclusive workplace culture, now and in the future.”

“In my opinion, the future of ERGs is bright. They play a crucial role in driving meaningful culture change and fostering an inclusive environment by building a shared sense of community, nurturing growth, and encouraging cross-departmental collaboration.”



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS DRIVE INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Employee networks are fundamental to inclusion and belonging. At the **BBC**, they play a vital role in connecting staff across the world, while helping the broadcaster to ensure that it reflects the diverse communities it serves. **Steven Henry MBE, BBC Staff Networks and Development Lead**, shares the story.

As the world's leading public service broadcaster, every day the BBC informs and entertains millions of people in the UK and around the world. This public purpose drives the BBC's commitment to reflect and represent diverse audiences. Staff networks play an important role in delivering this, while supporting employees globally.

The BBC has **9 staff networks**, covering multiple strands of diversity.

- ▷ **BBC Ability** – supporting disabled staff
- ▷ **BBC Enigma** – supporting the BBC's neurodivergent staff
- ▷ **BBC Embrace** – a multicultural network
- ▷ **BBC Global Women in News (GWIN)** – a networking and development group for women
- ▷ **BBC Pride** – supporting LGBTQ+ staff
- ▷ **BBC Raised** – supporting BBC employees from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- ▷ **BBC Women in STEM (WiSTEM)** – supporting women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths careers at the BBC
- ▷ **BBC Young Talent Network** – supporting staff under 35 to develop careers at the BBC
- ▷ **Women at the BBC** – a pan-BBC women's network to support women at the BBC



BBC STAFF NETWORKS



Open to everyone, these networks support the BBC to create an inclusive culture for all, as Steven Henry explains.

"Staff networks play a huge part in providing peer support across the organisation. We like to think of our networks as partners and critical friends. It's a collaborative relationship."

With over 20,000 staff in the UK, the networks help the BBC to build a sense of belonging, which is fundamental to its D&I strategy. "When people feel that they belong, they're more enthused about coming to work", says Steven. "They're more engaged and perform at their best, because they feel included."

Joining the BBC in 2022 after a 25 year career in the army, Steven is the BBC's Staff Networks and Development Lead. "One of my responsibilities is to create a staff networks strategy. The fact that the BBC has a dedicated Networks Lead is a reflection of how much it values their input."

One of the BBC's networks is the Young Talent Network. Steven says that the group is doing great work to build belonging, while helping the broadcaster to retain and nurture talent.

"The Young Talent Network has excelled in the work it does for younger colleagues and improved their work life experience. During lockdown, it provided a vital connection for those working from home and has gone on to deliver great things for the organisation."

"We like to think of our networks as partners and critical friends."



With a mix of people from across the organisation, from public service to BBC Studios, The Young Talent Network is supported by sponsors from the BBC's Executive Committee. Steven says that it creates an important talent pipeline for the BBC. "It's vital that we support our young colleagues, because these are the leaders of tomorrow."

Staff networks like Young Talent also play an important role in supporting how the BBC serves its external audiences. The broadcaster sees diversity as fundamental to its creative output, and harnesses staff network insights to ensure its output is representative of the communities it serves.

"Collectively the networks have over 11000 members. They represent a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and lived experiences, and as such are a fantastic resource for our content makers."

While staff networks don't influence content, they can provide programme makers with insights and lived experience, as was recently



Steven Henry MBE, BBC

"The BBC Staff Networks have been instrumental in driving meaningful cultural change within the organisation."

BBC STAFF NETWORKS



the case with Inside our Autistic Minds. The landmark series follows Chris Packham as he explores the lives of autistic people across the country and brings their lived experience to life, through short film. It was supported by insights from BBC's Enigma network, which aims to build an understanding of neurodiversity in the workplace. The network also plays a key role in helping the BBC to attract neurodivergent candidates, through initiatives such as webinars, open days and workshops.

The Global Women in News (GWiN) network has a well-established mentoring scheme, which gives colleagues direct access to senior leaders. BBC Embrace – the oldest staff-led network at the BBC – offers a whole range of networking opportunities for Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees, with groups based across the world.

Reflecting on the achievements of the BBC's staff networks, Steven Henry is proud and excited about the future.

"The BBC Staff Networks have been instrumental in driving meaningful cultural change within the organisation. Our networks and community groups offer a platform for diverse voices, fostering inclusion and nurturing a sense of belonging among our staff. They play a pivotal role in raising awareness of diversity issues, shaping policies, and cultivating an environment where all employees feel valued and empowered. By actively engaging in dialogue and initiatives, they contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic culture at the BBC, where everyone belongs."



EMPLOYEE NETWORK SPOTLIGHT – WOMEN@GOOGLE

Founded over a decade ago, **Women@Google** is the tech company's largest Employee Resource Group. Since then, the group has grown to 120+ chapters with more than 20,000 members worldwide. **UK Executive Committee Member Alessandra Baldacchino** shares some of its achievements.

Women@Google is organised around three core pillars: Career Development, Culture of Inclusion, and Community Social Impact. It is designed to connect, celebrate and elevate every woman's experience and growth and encourage everyone to be an active ally, and has a number of chapters based on the team and/or geography, such as Women@UK, to capture local nuances.

women@Google
UK



The Women@Google network is behind a host of powerful initiatives driving inclusion across the organisation and beyond. These include POWER - a mentoring program, designed to empower and advance women in Google's community. Offering 3 different programmes for women at different levels in the business, POWER is now in its eighth year and has grown exponentially – benefitting hundreds of women around the world.

"Women@Google is powered by volunteers like myself and is very much made by women, for women. This means the programmes designed are more effective, informed and women themselves are given the opportunity to be a part of the solution to help the business retain and grow our female talent", explains Alessandra Baldacchino.

"Women@Google is powered by volunteers like myself and is very much made by women, for women."





Alessandra Baldacchino
Women@Google

Women@Google is organised around three core pillars:



Career Development



Culture of Inclusion



Community Social Impact

Grow Your Career Your Way (GYCYW) is another key achievement for the Women@Google network. This annual 3 day programme of events helps EMEA based Googlers to progress, “providing space, connections and resources to move their careers to the next level”, says Alessandra. 2023's event saw 1800 attendees from 10 EMEA countries – 6 of whom received an hour of mentorship with senior women leads across GBO and Cloud.

One of Women@Google's most powerful DEI initiatives is TellYourStory – a series of powerful workshops supporting more than 2000 people around the world develop their own elevator pitch. “TellYourStory enables women and underrepresented groups to foster sponsorship and grow through the leadership pipeline by way of impactful storytelling”, explains Alessandra. “The workshops empower people with memorable, repeatable stories they can use to communicate with confidence.”

Google has a longstanding commitment to increase the representation of women in tech more broadly, and is one of the founding members of Women@Tech - a volunteer-led UK organisation, dedicated to connecting, developing, and advocating for women in technology.



women@Google UK



Since it was founded in 2019, Women@Tech has made great strides across the industry, engaging more than 30,000 women in top UK Tech companies across its programmes. “It's brilliant as it allows us to connect with different Women@ communities from other companies across the industry to drive more impactful results”, says Alessandra.

Driven by women and allies working within the most influential tech companies in the UK, Women@Tech delivers a unique blend of mentorship and development programmes; networking events; and advocacy initiatives, to improve representation and progression of women within the Tech sector. It is also growing its research arm to drive thought leadership in the industry.

“It's a great way to expand one's network and get involved in fun cross-industry initiatives to boost your own career, such as launching a podcast, organising cross-company events, and networking in each other's offices!”

While there is still much work to be done, Alessandra is proud of the progress that Women@Google is driving. “Together, we are leading the charge towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future for all in the Tech industry”, she says.



“Together, we are leading the charge towards a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive future for all in the Tech industry”

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS CAN PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN DRIVING SOCIAL MOBILITY

Employee Networks and Communities can help drive social mobility, within organisations and beyond. At EY, they play an important role in advancing social equity, while helping the firm to embed its DE&I strategy, as **Matt Horne-Lynn** and **Lorna Culpin** explain.

As one of the largest professional services Networks in the world, EY has a unique opportunity to address the impact of inequities and injustice, and push for progress within the business and across society as a whole.

With a commitment to 'advance social equity and inclusive growth', EY has long supported Employee Networks. Its first Network was set up over 20 years ago, and today EY in the UK has seven Networks in which 33 Communities sit. These Networks and Communities span multiple strands of diversity and provide a sense of belonging for approximately 25,000 employees in the UK.

"Our employee Networks and Communities are a great resource for our people and business."



Matt Horne-Lynn, EY



Shape the future
with confidence



The EY approach to employee Networks is deeply embedded in the business's core and Networks are central to its DEI strategy and play a key role in 'creating a sense of belonging' - one of the strategy's three pillars. DE&I practitioner, Matt Horne-Lynn explains why this is so important.

"When people feel a sense of belonging, they are more motivated and engaged, and this improves their performance and wellbeing. Our employee Networks provide a safe space where people can be their authentic selves. They're open to allies too, so everyone is welcome."

For Matt Horne-Lynn, the experience of being part of an employee Network has been powerful on a personal level. "One of the first things I did when I started at EY was to join an employee Network, which supported me to bring my true self to work", he explains. "EY was the first place where I ever disclosed being dyslexic. Networks are integral to EY's recruitment strategy, because they help people to feel welcome from day one."



This sense of belonging has far-reaching impact, and EY's commitment to employee Networks benefits not just employees – but the business as a whole. "Our employee Networks and Communities are a great resource for our people and business", says Matt. "We want to reflect the society we serve, and our Networks and Communities provide diverse insights and perspectives that we can harness for the benefit of clients too."

EY also leverages its employee Networks as 'knowledge experts' to help clients address their inclusion challenges and the groups often contribute to client-facing events. Recently, the firm's EY Life Network (EY's life stages Network), hosted a roundtable to explore how businesses can move inclusion beyond the traditional boundaries of legally protected diversity characteristics. "At a time when the conversation around diversity is becoming ever more nuanced, it was great to see one of our Networks bring organisations together, to discuss this important topic", says Matt.

In the UK, EY has seven DE&I employee Networks in which 33 Communities are housed:

- ▷ **AbilityEY Network** – EY's diverse abilities Network
- ▷ **EY Embrace Network** – EY's faith and belief network
- ▷ **EY-EYF Social Mobility Network** – in partnership with the EY Foundation
- ▷ **EY Life Network** – EY's life stages network
- ▷ **EY Race and Ethnicity Network**
- ▷ **EY Unity** – EY's LGBT+ network, celebrating all sexual orientations and gender identities
- ▷ **EY Women's Network**



Shape the future
with confidence



"At EY, our employee networks are helping to build a workplace where everyone can progress and belong."



Lorna Culpin, EY

A key focus area for each of these Networks is supporting the firm's commitment to social mobility. Lorna Culpin, Co-Chair of the EY – EYF Social Mobility Network describes this as giving everyone "access to the resources and opportunities they need, given different starting points and different needs, removing barriers to opportunities and inclusive experiences that may lead to unequal outcomes."

EY's dedicated Social Mobility Network was established in partnership with independent charity the EY Foundation. Supporting individuals from low-income backgrounds, the collaboration allows EY to leverage its expertise to drive social mobility both within the business and beyond. From supporting young people into paid work experience to delivering skills training and career guidance to existing EY employees, this impressive Network is committed to removing barriers to opportunity and nurturing diverse future talent.

"For our employees, the Social Mobility Network plays an important role in building belonging" explains Network Co-Chair Lorna Culpin. "It creates a space where people can talk about the challenges they face and promotes the ethos that everyone should have access to the same career progression opportunities, regardless of their background. We tell our employees, 'It's your career to grow', which is such an empowering and positive message."

Recognising that social mobility often intersects with other protected characteristics, the Network works closely with all EY's Communities, to ensure that every employee group is heard. "Exploring the intersection of different identities is a key focus for our Network in the coming year", explains Lorna. "It will help us to unlock important conversations. We'll be collaborating closely with EY Women's Network and the EY Race and Ethnicity Network too."

EY's EY-EYF Social Mobility Network is just one-year old, but is already making considerable strides. Network member Natalie Stuart was recently nominated as a Rising Star at the Social Mobility Awards and Network

Co-Chair Lorna Culpin is excited about the Network's future and what it might achieve. "I feel a real momentum in the air at the moment when it comes to Social Mobility. It's exciting to see change unfolding around us, and our Network is playing a key role by supporting our DE&I team in driving this."



Shape the future
with confidence



For Matt Horne-Lynn, the impact of EY's Networks and Communities can't be overstated. "Our DE&I employee Networks are fundamental to changing the narrative in our firm. Through the educational, networking events and support they provide, they are building awareness across our business of different personal experiences and supporting meaningful culture change, to create a sense of belonging that is so important to our people. When we feel free to be our truest selves at work, it's good for everyone. At EY, our employee Networks are helping to build a workplace where everyone can progress and belong."

"I feel a real momentum in the air at the moment when it comes to Social Mobility. It's exciting to see change unfolding around us, and our Network is playing a key role by supporting our DE&I team in driving this."



FROM GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL - CONNECTING EMPLOYEE NETWORKS FOR IMPACT

Employee networks can play a vital role in connecting global workforces. And when organisations bring their networks together under a global framework, they can elevate ERG impact even further. **Emma Finlay** and **Nichole Watts** from Mars explain how the company's new global approach to its Associate Resource Groups (ARGs), is driving change from the ground up.

As a global, family owned business operating in over 80 countries, Mars is committed to creating a working environment where its more than 150,000 Associates feel valued and respected, regardless of any visible or invisible differences. The company has a long history of Associate Resource Groups (ARGs) and today there are more than 100 ARG chapters around the world, creating spaces and communities for Associates of all backgrounds and identities.

"In a complex, diverse business like Mars, ARGs are a key driver of our Inclusion and Diversity strategy."

MARS

Over the last few years, the company has matured from a grassroots ARG movement to a more strategic and impactful approach, bringing its 100 ARG chapters together under 5 Global Pillars - Women and Allies, PRIDE+, Embracing Origins, Generations and Thrive Collaboration.

Emma Finlay, Mars Inclusion and Diversity Network Director, explains how the initiative began.

"In a complex, diverse business like Mars, ARGs are a key driver of our Inclusion and Diversity strategy. We started to look at how we could harness their potential, to make an even bigger impact on the ground. With so many local ARGs at different stages of maturity, it was clear that we needed to bring consistency to their operations, and one of the first things we looked at was brand and identity."

Supported by Mars Global Inclusion & Diversity Project Manager, Nichole Watts, Emma, for the first time ever, held a virtual conference for all the ARGs, and proposed the idea of bringing the networks together under new global ARGs with unified identities. Emma and Nichole decided to create new identities for the 5 Global ARGs, based on the Mars Brand Identity. "We recognised that our new global framework needed a common sense of purpose, something to get our arms around. And the Mars brand element was key to this. Many of our ARGs had logos which didn't feel like part of the Mars family. We saw this project as a powerful opportunity to give our ARGs a bigger and united voice", says Emma.

Bringing together volunteers from several ARGs, Emma and Nichole worked with the Mars brand agency, to create individual logos for their new Global ARGs. The process was collaborative and involved workshops to explore how each identity might spring to life visually. "We tried to reflect the uniqueness of each identity, while seeing the Mars Brand Identity as our north star", says Nichole. While some ARGs found the transition to the new identities challenging, they could also see the benefits of uniting. "It was clear that there was an appetite for closer connection", says Emma. "The ARGs wanted to learn from one another and work more closely together."



The new ARG identities were launched in 2023 and today are used consistently across the business. Centred on the famous M icon and with a speech mark to show the amplification of the unique employee voice, and of course in the Mars brand colours, the identities are instantly recognisable. This was highlighted on International Women's Day, when the Mars' Women and Allies ARG's logo was shared on social media posts around the world. "We saw pictures of people in Thailand, France and Africa all standing in front of the same logo", says Nichole. "In all corners of the world, people were standing in front of the same colours, the same words. We've given our ARGs a shared voice."

The benefits of this global approach to ARG governance are already being felt at Mars, and Nichole and Emma are keen to see what comes next. "Our ARGs are run by volunteers with so much passion and energy. The next step is to help them harness that commitment to drive even deeper impact", says Emma. She explains how one of the drivers for creating global umbrella ARGs was to connect networks to amplify their voices, while cultivating better shared practices to drive impact. The company also wanted to enable collaborative ways of working with senior leaders to influence business-wide changes that could not be achieved by an ARG working alone.

A powerful example of this enhanced reach can be found in the Mars Generations ARG, which works to break down generational stereotypes. With 150,000 Associates spanning 5 generations, this work feels especially important. "One of the biggest challenges for companies that have many generations working together is the generational stereotypes that make it harder for employees to understand the different, unique ways that we can work together to build successful workplace relationships", says Nichole. "Our Generations ARG is leading some really important conversations to open up learning, connections and support across the generations."

"ARGs will keep I&D moving forward. I'm not sure they realise how powerful they are, but collectively, they are very powerful."

MARS



Emma cites one of the main achievements of ARGs, as creating a safe space in the workplace. "I have so many examples of Associates who felt safe to come out at work, once they joined our PRIDE+ ARG. People who saw a poster on the office wall, had the courage to go along to a meeting and are now helping others on that same journey. I think that's magical", she says. This important work is also supported by a group of senior Sponsors, who "turn up and give a little bit of themselves by sharing their stories, to inspire others. The impact when senior leaders do this is amazing." Mars' Global ARG Model ensures that each Global ARG has an ExCo level sponsor, increasing their ability to drive real change for thousands of Associates.



With a new, shared identity to represent their work, Mars Global ARGs are increasingly visible across the organisation and play a key role in driving the company's I&D Strategy. "In many ways, they are the face of Inclusion and Diversity", says Emma. "The biggest impact they can make is on the ground. And today, they can do this far more effectively, under a global, common purpose."

At a time when I&D efforts in organisations around the world are coming under increased scrutiny, Nichole says that employee networks, ERGs and Associate Resource Groups will be more important than ever.

"ARGs will keep I&D moving forward. I'm not sure they realise how powerful they are, but collectively, they are very powerful. Employee networks will be the change. They will be the voice. They will be the future of every organisation."





ERGs SPARK INNOVATION



EMPLOYEE NETWORKS BUILD BELONGING IN LARGE GLOBAL ORGANISATIONS

Employee networks help large global organisations to embed DEI everywhere. By creating an environment where employees feel valued and included, they build belonging across different territories, as senior leaders at **EPAM** have discovered. **Alex Chudner, Head of ESG, Social Impact & Inclusion**, and **Alena Dashkevich, EPAM Employee Groups (EEG) Manager**, explain why EPAM's Employee Groups are integral to the company's DEI strategy.

One of the world's largest software engineering and product development companies, EPAM has 52,000+ employees in more than 55 countries worldwide. The innovative global technology business has long supported EPAM Employee Groups (EEGs) and has a strong commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace.

"Our EEGs are integral to delivering our DEI strategy. They provide valuable insights into the needs of diverse employee groups, enabling us to tailor our DEI initiatives more effectively"



Alena Dashkevich, EPAM



EPAM's EEGs cover a wide range of diversity strands including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and more. Globally, these are structured to ensure local relevance while aligning with EPAM's overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy.

Based in San Diego, California, Alex Chudner is EPAM's Head of ESG - Social Impact and Inclusion. Alex says that EPAM's EEGs are fundamental to helping the company achieve its DEI ambitions.

"Our EEGs are integral to delivering our DEI strategy. They provide valuable insights into the needs of diverse employee groups, enabling us to tailor our DEI initiatives more effectively. By fostering a culture of inclusion and participation, EEGs ensure that our DEI strategy is not just a top-down mandate but a grassroots movement within EPAM."

This bottom-up approach to DEI has delivered significant impact for EPAM, as Alex further explains. "Internally, EEGs improve morale, enhance employee engagement, and bring diverse perspectives that drive innovation. Externally, they strengthen EPAM's reputation as an inclusive employer and a responsible corporate citizen. The impact of EEGs at EPAM is profound, contributing to a culture of authenticity, innovation, and continuous improvement."

As a world-leading technology firm, innovation is a key driver for EPAM, and employees from various backgrounds help the business to innovate, by bringing diverse perspectives to problem solving and product development.



Alex Chudner, EPAM



EEGs play an important role in helping employees to innovate, by encouraging them to bring their authentic selves to work. A powerful example can be found in EPAM's ParentSmart EEG, which supports parents and caregivers across the organisation. EEG Leader, Alena Dashkevich, explains more.

"The motto of ParentSmart is: 'Parenting is the best school of management.' Our strategy is to help working parents excel in both their professional and parental roles by leveraging skills from each area to enhance the other. We believe that parenting can make individuals better managers, even if they are managing themselves, and that professional expertise can bring innovative approaches to parenting."

Operating across multiple territories, EPAM's regional ParentSmart EEGs are driving many important initiatives around the world. ParentSmart's goal is to support parents to thrive in the workplace and at home, while making an impact for the future. Recently, the Vietnam EEG partnered with a company that produces recycled bags to host an Environmental Protection workshop for employees and their kids.

"ParentSmart is an incredibly active community within our organisation, partnering with other EEGs and participating in global projects to support employees and the communities we operate in", says Alena. "We run a number of educational programmes such as a summer camp to help kids learn while parents work. Other signature programmes such as E-Kids and Pathway to Tech Future see ParentSmart members volunteer their time to educate kids worldwide, focusing on tech and soft skills."

ParentSmart community members also contribute to the development of digital solutions for kids with special needs. "With the reach and opportunity to engage with over 52,000+ employees globally, ParentSmart is making a significant impact not only within our community but also in the broader communities in which we operate. This includes providing essential support to kids in need and those from underrepresented communities", says Alena.

EPAM's EEGs regularly partner with community organisations to support underrepresented groups, underlining EPAM's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement. The company has won multiple awards for its achievements in this space, and EEGs play a key role in making this happen.

Looking ahead, Alex Chudner is excited about EPAM's EEG potential. "As we continue to grow, I see our EEGs evolving to address emerging DEI challenges and opportunities. They will increasingly focus on intersectionality and global collaboration, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and represented at all levels of the organisation."

Celebrating their impact to date, Alex says that they are integral to EPAM's DEI efforts. "EEGs are at the heart of EPAM's culture, driving meaningful change by fostering an inclusive environment where every employee can thrive. They amplify diverse voices, promote allyship, and encourage authentic self-expression, which enhances employee engagement and innovation. By bridging the gap between business needs and community values, EEGs ensure that EPAM remains a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking organisation."



"EEGs are at the heart of EPAM's culture, driving meaningful change by fostering an inclusive environment where every employee can thrive."

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS DRIVE CULTURE & INNOVATION CHANGE

In some industries, Employee Resource Groups can be a key driver for product innovation. At **Lloyd's**, they contribute to a range of Lloyd's activities including the 'Lloyd's Lab,' a space dedicated to accelerating innovation and creating new insurance solutions. They are also integral to driving the corporation's culture strategy through staff engagement on new initiatives. **Mark Lomas, Head of Culture at Lloyd's**, explains their importance to the business.

Steeped in a history dating back more than three centuries, Lloyd's is the largest specialist insurance and reinsurance marketplace in the world. The market, comprised of over 50 of the world's leading insurers, operates in 200 countries and has a global network of more than 4000 cover holders. Mark Lomas, Head of Culture joined the company in 2022, with the aim of building a diverse and inclusive environment that reflects the global markets they work in. He says that he relished the opportunity that

came with working at Lloyd's due to their long history and modern approach to Diversity and Inclusion.

One of the corporation's strategic priorities is transforming its culture. Mark is responsible for delivering all elements of the culture, engagement and wellbeing strategies. This includes embedding inclusive practices that enable high performance and attract



Mark Lomas, Lloyd's

LLOYD'S



"These communities help engage individuals in the culture work we do through the medium of sharing personal stories and experiences. They also help consult with us on various policies and act as a sounding board for activities developed by the culture team."

global talent. He says that employee resource groups have an integral role to play as "they are connected to everything that goes on in Lloyd's and are a source of information in and out of the business." Mark explains that working with them creates an effective feedback cycle which informs decision making. He says "We share our diversity data and the goals and holes we're trying to fix so they can align their work to our strategic aims."

There are currently 7 employee communities or resource groups in Lloyd's which sit under 'Lloyd's Together,' an umbrella Diversity and Inclusion network for the corporation. These include Disability, Families, Military, Gender, PA, Multicultural and Pride & Allies. Mark says approximately a quarter of staff are members and that they are crucial to transforming the culture at Lloyd's. "These communities help engage individuals in the culture work we do through the medium of sharing personal stories and experiences. They also help consult with us on various policies and act as a sounding board for activities developed by the culture team. Ultimately, they help to ensure that everyone in the organisation, through their communities, has a really good understanding of the work we're doing, whether that's through diversity data or the makeup of the company. This creates a greater alignment to the culture strategy."

Mark cites the high level of engagement in Lloyd's recent culture survey as a measure of the Networks' success. He is proud of the response rate of 87%, explaining that the Lloyd's Together network helped to drive that figure by encouraging participation.



Mark explains how D&I is important to the Lloyd's market. He says over its 300 year history, it has always had to change and create new insurance solutions based on emerging customer and societal changes. "Lloyd's has always been a leader in creating new products - from motor insurance to cyber coverage and we need to find new opportunities to stay relevant. He says: "Lloyd's is a global market and as it has become more diverse, we need to make sure that we continue to grow. Innovation is the key to keeping up with the changes."

One powerful way that the company pro-actively stays ahead in the market is through the Lloyd's Lab, an in house insurance innovation hub. This space is dedicated to creating and launching new insurance products by collaboration between InsurTechs and industry experts. The Lloyd's Together Network contributes to this area too, with various communities helping to promote application opportunities via their diverse networks.

Employee resource groups have also played a significant role in shaping culture change initiatives. A prominent recent example is the acknowledgement and research that Lloyd's published for the role it played in the 18th and 19th Century Transatlantic slave trade. Mark says " Black and ethnically diverse colleagues from our multicultural community were involved in every single stage of our response so we could contextualise the history and learn from the past. This included conversations on the historical significance of artefacts, curating displays in our buildings and having conversations with white allies and employees." He adds "This work is ongoing so we can continue to increase diversity and make meaningful change towards a more inclusive marketplace."

Mark stresses the crucial role that Lloyd's Together played in the development of initiatives to improve diverse recruitment. One such example is the Inclusive Futures Programme, launched in 2023 which offers a range of interventions from the classroom to the boardroom



LLOYD'S

to improve ethnic diversity. He says: "We consulted with our Lloyd's Together Network and market-wide networks rigorously, advertising for members to give their feedback on the kind of things that would improve our ethnic diversity. Over 200 ethnically diverse employees gave their feedback through a series of focus groups." Mark says consulting with ethnically diverse colleagues and publishing data relating to our Culture ambitions and the diverse make-up of the Corporation has had a positive impact on recruitment with the corporation achieving its ambition of one in three new hires being ethnically diverse..

"When you're introducing new culture and diversity policies, they need to reach everyone. Employee Resource Groups are an important part of that landscape."



The Lloyd's Together Network has also played an important role in inclusive recruitment practices. Mark adds "part of the way that our networks are involved is through our diverse panels group where we train people from our Lloyd's Together Network who then become the second interviewers in interview panels and so each panel has a range of perspectives and diversity from across the business."

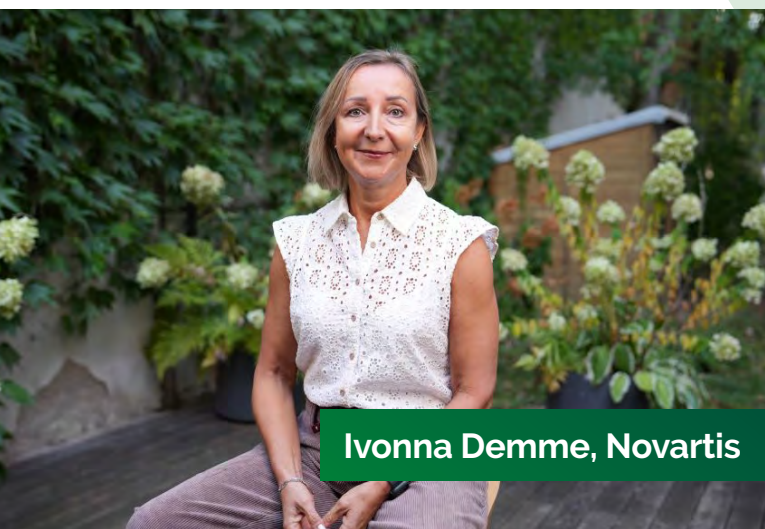
Mark concludes that employee resource groups play a key role in effective decision making across the organisation. He says "When you're introducing new culture and diversity policies, they need to reach everyone. Employee Resource Groups are an important part of that landscape. They are a key conduit for our practices and a key sounding board for any change. If they are in alignment with the business strategy, they can make a real impact."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER.

HARNESSING LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR GLOBAL IMPACT AT NOVARTIS

Globally, more than 90 Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are dedicated to cultivating a strong sense of belonging within the organisation, while also participating in shaping the global inclusion and belonging strategies at **Novartis**.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) at Novartis are voluntary networks, open to all employees regardless of their background. These groups for business related and cultural topics create a sense of belonging while offering members an opportunity for personal growth and development. They provide means to support each other, achieve collective impact, counsel on career progression, and support personal development in the work environment. In doing so, these communities also help to drive the success of Novartis at a global level. Created by employees for employees, with participation entirely voluntary, these local communities ultimately offer the opportunity to be part of an impactful network that promotes belonging and psychological trust!



Ivonna Demme, Novartis

“One of the main purposes of our ERGs is to activate the knowledge and energy of our employees to foster a sentiment of belonging.”

NOVARTIS



Novartis has over 78,000 employees and in 2024 its medicines reached more than 296 million patients globally. The organisation's purpose is to reimagine medicine to improve and extend peoples' lives, together. And belonging lies at its heart – as Ivonna Demme, Head of Communities & Engagement and Agnieszka Gembarska, Associate Director of Talent and LGBTQI+ (a.i.) are explaining. “One of the main purposes of our ERGs is to activate the knowledge and energy of our employees to foster a sentiment of belonging”, explains Ivonna “and to enable everyone to have their voice heard.” She adds that the experience of being part of an ERG gives employees the opportunity to develop leadership and influencing skills across geographical borders. Building a sense of belonging in an organisation with global reach is a constant journey. But at Novartis, ERGs provide invaluable cultural insights, specific to their regions and countries, which helps the business to build an inclusive workplace, where everyone feels like they belong.

Agnieszka explains how this approach works. “From Japan to Switzerland, USA to India, our colleagues all have their own unique reality. So, we tap into the voice of our ERGs to build a narrative that resonates for each audience. As a global company, our ERGs are central to develop and sustain a sense of belonging. They are incredible in terms of driving cultural topics and helping us to execute the global piece locally, while considering individual nuances, cultures and needs.”

A powerful example of this is the recently launched “PRIDE Ambassador Program”, which originated from the work of PRIDE ERG Switzerland, and is now being rolled out globally. The program is equipping Novartis employees at all levels to become LGBTQI+ ambassadors and allies





NOVARTIS

across the business and will be adapted for delivery across many different countries. "What started as a local initiative, has been elevated to something much bigger. This shows the impact that ERGs can make globally. They can grow a local project and make it meaningful for an entire company, and eventually for the entire world through the innovation Novartis is bringing into the world", says Agnieszka.

Creating a narrative that resonates locally is vital when it comes to reaching global audiences and helping more patients. One of the key pillars of Novartis's commitment to patients and caregivers is 'respecting and understanding the patient community perspective', and ERGs contribute to this significantly, as Agnieszka explains. "We are a Healthcare company; our North Star is to help patients, and their families live fuller lives. This can only happen when they are represented in the entire development cycle."

Agnieszka also says that ERGs boost innovation across the company, which ultimately benefits patients. "Innovation comes from being able to truly be yourself. If you can come to work and show up for who you are, you can channel all your energy into creative thinking and collaboration. Our ERGs make innovation happen."

To empower the ERGs, Novartis has a well-established network of executive sponsors, operating at both a local and global level. Local sponsors support ERGs at grassroots while global sponsors advocate at the executive level. ERGs are encouraged and invited to provide policy feedback, such as Novartis Global Parental Leave policy, which provides benefits to all parents, with a minimum of 14 weeks paid parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child.



"At Novartis our ERGs are catalysers of change developing and sustaining a strong sense of belonging. They're true game changers."

Reflecting on the global reach of Novartis ERGs, Agnieszka sums up their impact with great enthusiasm. "What I love about our ERGs is their passion. They are like a factory of ideas. When businesses harness that energy, they can create amazing things. That's been our experience. At Novartis our ERGs are catalysers of change developing and sustaining a strong sense of belonging. They're true game changers."

ERGs INSPIRE & EMPOWER A GLOBAL WORKFORCE

While many organisations utilise ERGs to drive change at a local level, the potential for global ERGs is even more profound. On the worldwide stage, ERGs can support a diverse workforce across continents and position businesses for future success. **Natalia Farfan Santos, Head of Succession Management at Ericsson** and former Head of Diversity & Inclusion Programs at Ericsson, explains why ERGs are central to the company's D&I mission and highlights the organization's global neurodiversity network as a powerful example.

At Ericsson, a commitment to diversity and inclusion is woven into the fabric of the organisation, with a legacy of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) spanning over three decades. From the pioneering Ericsson group in Sweden to today's flourishing network of over 52 ERGs, these employee-led communities are the heart of Ericsson's DEI initiatives, fostering a sense of belonging and driving meaningful change.

"We love to say that ERGs are the beating heart of D&I at Ericsson, by helping our employees to reach their full potential and increasing a sense of belonging", explains Natalia Farfan Santos. "For more than 140 years, Ericsson has been building a more connected world. And our ERGs are vital to this because they provide a platform for underrepresented groups to voice their experiences, connect with allies, and build a more inclusive workplace."

Internally, ERGs drive employee engagement at Ericsson and help cultivate a culture of belonging. The organisation uses its annual employee engagement survey to track this, and know how much ERGs contribute to an increase in their Belonging score. Ericsson's ERGs also provide personal and professional development opportunities by hosting

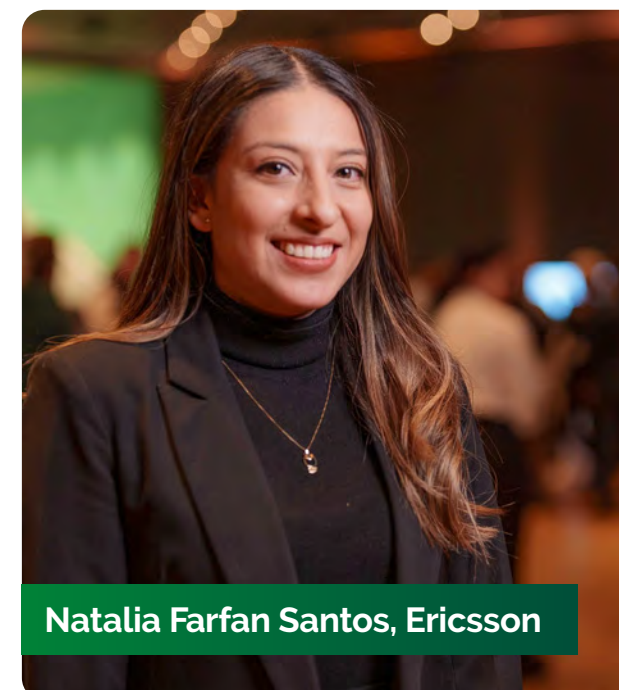
ERICSSON



learning and development sessions and play a key role in retaining and nurturing talent, through pioneering groups such as the GenNext ERG- which elevates diversity through early career progression.

"Our ERGs provide a supportive community to increase belonging to our new joiners and existing colleagues", says Natalia. "In some countries like Sweden, they meet with our new joiners to share and increase awareness as part of their onboarding agenda. And beyond building communities, ERGs support a workplace where people want to stay. The mentorship and networking opportunities offered by our ERGs all contribute to employee retention and satisfaction."

With more than 97,000 employees around the world, Ericsson looks to its ERGs to foster a sense of community across different territories. And one of its newest employee networks is a powerful example of how this can be achieved on a global scale. Founded in 2023, the Neurodiversity and Allies ERG was set up to increase awareness, acceptance and implement improvements for neurodivergent employees at Ericsson. The network has already made significant strides in creating a more inclusive working environment.



Natalia Farfan Santos, Ericsson

"We love to say that ERGs are the beating heart of D&I at Ericsson, by helping our employees to reach their full potential and increasing a sense of belonging"



ERICSSON

"The Neurodiversity & Allies ERG has been instrumental in raising awareness among our worldwide community of colleagues", says Natalia. "We have two brave and supportive chairs who have given it their all in making sure more people are aware of Neurodiversity. You can clearly see the difference before and after the ERG in terms of Neurodiversity being a topic discussed among colleagues."

Co-chairs Marianne Rimbark and Darren Avery, are passionate about raising the voices of neurodivergent employees. Their ERG does great work to highlight the unique experiences and skill sets that neurodiverse employees bring to an organisation like Ericsson. "One in seven people are neurodiverse, and this number is often higher in industries like ours", says Marianne. "That means that every day at Ericsson, you're likely to work with someone who is neurodivergent, so it feels like the work of our ERG is especially important here. We have so many fantastic colleagues with fantastic brains."

"One in seven people are neurodiverse, and this number is often higher in industries like ours"



After being diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, Marianne founded the Neurodiversity & Allies ERG with Darren. "When I met Darren, we just connected. We have a lot of project managers with ADHD. It's something that people with ADHD are generally good at, because they feel they need to be in control. We started the ERG, and today it's one of Ericsson's largest employee networks."

The Neurodiversity & Allies ERG is Ericsson's first global employee network and is making an impact across many areas of the business. "Diverse minds contribute to innovation, creativity and problem solving", says Co-Chair Darren Avery. "If we look at how our industry is moving, technologies such as AI will require strong skill sets that are often accentuated among neurodivergent populations. By creating environments where managers understand how to harness these skills and attributes for technology innovation, our ERG helps our business get ready for tomorrow."

The ERG operates a network for colleagues with neurodivergent children in Sweden and Brazil - a powerful example of how businesses can utilise networks for the benefit of every employee. "We have many parents with neurodivergent children and they need extra support. We talk about the challenges they face and share strategies to help them e.g how to get your child into school each morning. This is a challenge for many working parents and they can learn from each other across the miles."





ERICSSON

Marianne says that for her personally, the network has been a valuable and inspirational space. "Since joining the parents network, I no longer feel alone with the challenges of parenting neurodivergent children".

Another impactful example includes the work of the ePride ERG, which paved the way for Ericsson's first participation in the Stockholm Pride Parade, and the Black Employee Network (BEN) in North America, which is actively working to encourage young Black students to pursue STEM careers.

At a corporate level, Ericsson's ERGs are also instrumental in driving the organisation's D&I strategy. "They give us valuable insights into the experiences of underrepresented groups and input into things that we might not see from a central/global perspective. Their voices guide our activities and we always try to leverage their perspectives when designing new things. A major contribution of ERGs is the cross-functional connections they foster. ERGs play a crucial role in breaking down silos and sparking innovative ideas", says Natalia Farfan Santos.

Standout examples of this include a project to introduce pronouns across Ericsson's communication platforms, and collaborative work on the business's NextGen strategy and Rewards Communications Plan. Ericsson even sees its ERGs as crucial to how its brand is perceived. "Our ERGs play a vital role in supporting Ericsson's commitment to diversity and inclusion, helping us strengthen this message for our customers, partners, and potential talent," says Natalia.



"At Ericsson, ERGs not only amplify the voices of diverse groups but also actively shape our ways of working"

As one of the world's leading information and communication technology companies, Ericsson is powered by the skills and ideas of its global team, made up of countless different voices, perspectives and experiences. And it's clear that ERGs play a pivotal role in amplifying these unique voices and talents.

"At Ericsson, ERGs not only amplify the voices of underrepresented groups but also actively shape our ways of working", says Natalia. "By building a sense of belonging, driving awareness, and holding the organisation accountable to our D&I ambitions, ERGs are powerful agents of change. They inspire us to continuously strive for a more inclusive and equitable workplace, making Ericsson not just a place to work, but a place where everyone, regardless of their identities want to stay because they feel welcome in a workplace that shares their values."

BELONGING EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS SPOTLIGHT - DISNEY EMEA

Disney EMEA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team explain how Disney's Belonging Employee Resource Groups help to build a sense of employee belonging, visibility and cultural understanding.

Disney has supported Belonging Employee Resource Groups across EMEA for more than 7 years. Disney's first Belonging Employee Resource Group in EMEA - Disney PRIDE UK&I – was launched in 2017. Today the company has 25 Belonging Employee Resource Groups (BERGs) across the EMEA region, covering dimensions including Gender, LGBTQIA+, Mental Health, Disability & Neurodiversity and Ethnicity. These groups support a culture of belonging that welcomes all voices, fosters community and empowers employees, as Disney EMEA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Team explain.



"Our Belonging Employee Resource Groups are voluntary, employee-led, company-sponsored groups that amplify the employee experience at The Walt Disney Company through our DEI strategic pillars. They also build community amongst colleagues with a shared identity, interest or pursuits."

Adding value across the business, Disney's EMEA BERGs help to deliver the company's DEI strategic pillars, with far reaching impact. "Our Belonging Employee Resource Groups in EMEA support with stakeholder outreach, leadership development and allyship education. They also raise awareness to employees about our inclusive content, products and guest experiences, and participate in volunteer opportunities."



"Our Belonging Employee Resource Groups build community amongst colleagues from historically marginalised groups and their allies."

Disney EMEA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team



One of the key ways in which BERGs deliver impact at Disney in EMEA, is by amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups. This in turn encourages greater understanding and support across the business through the amplification of different perspectives and experiences.

Disney's DEI EMEA team is committed to supporting BERGs in several ways. The team gives operational advice to BERG leaders to encourage best practices and assists in the selection process of appointing Executive Sponsors and other BERG Leadership Team members. The DEI team also partners with BERG Advisory Groups to align their goals and vision with central DEI strategy, processes, and procedures. And finally, it connects BERGs to internal stakeholders, external key partners, and other resources that can foster cross-business collaboration.

Thanks to this support, Disney's Belonging Employee Resource Groups are empowered to deliver impact across the business. Recently, its UK&I Belonging Employee Resource Groups collaborated with Disney's Consumer Products team (DCP) to develop the 2024 Holiday Marketplace, and local Belonging Employee Resource Groups also work closely with the EMEA Sourcing team to ensure supplier diversity.

"Our local Belonging Employee Resource Groups have curated a selection of diverse businesses in the market and have shared these findings with the DCP team. This year, DCP has engaged with all five UK&I Belonging Employee Resource Group chapters, each offering valuable insights into diverse vendors for Women, Mental Health, LGBTQIA+, Ethnicity and Disability. They have introduced these vendors to employees and the business community, facilitating access for both parties to a rich array of vendors. And in the past, the ethnicity and culture Belonging Employee Resource Group, Disney DIVERSITY UK&I, collaborated with DCP to highlight Black-owned businesses during UK Black History Month."

Summing up the role of Disney's BERGs, Disney's EMEA DEI team say that they are pivotal in building employee belonging across EMEA. "They provide cultural insights, celebrate and acknowledge various cultures and identities and cultivate an inclusive climate in which members feel that all respectful viewpoints and experiences are welcomed."

"Our BERGs are pivotal in building employee belonging across EMEA."

Disney EMEA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team



ERGS FOSTER INCLUSION THROUGH STORYTELLING

Employee networks and resource groups create a powerful forum for storytelling, which fosters inclusion and shapes organisational culture. At **Nestlé**, the world's largest food and drink company, ERGs play a vital role in driving this impact across all areas of the business, as **Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Manager Rachel Haynes** explains.

Globally, Nestlé efforts are centred in four focus areas within diversity, equity & inclusion: gender balance, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ community and race & ethnicity. The company has long supported Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) across its markets. These ERGs, which span a wide range of diversity strands, are instrumental in fostering inclusion at Nestlé, and are locally implemented.

"ERGs play a really important part in creating a culture of inclusion at Nestlé", says Global DE&I Manager Rachel Haynes. "They hold the organisation accountable and provide a larger collective voice for minority groups. They also positively impact business objectives as more diverse and inclusive teams deliver better outcomes."

"They hold the organisation accountable and provide a larger collective voice for minority groups."



Good food, Good life



Nestlé's ERGs help the organisation to deliver its DE&I strategy in a number of ways. By providing a safe space for communities, they enable the company to better understand key issues facing minoritised groups. They also bring innovative ideas and cultural change initiatives to the table, which in turn can drive policy changes.

In the UK and Ireland, ERGs have been instrumental in implementing multiple policies such as bank holiday exchange and transgender inclusion policies. They are also a channel for listening and feedback on existing policies that could be more inclusive.

Another example of this can be found in Nestlé's Disability ERGs, which have helped the company to develop its recently published disability inclusion guidance and toolkit. "Their input gave us confidence that the guidance reflected the needs and aspirations of people with disabilities", says Rachel. As a member of the ILO Global Business and Disability network, Nestlé is committed to promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities right across its global workforce.

ERGs at Nestlé increasingly play a key role in helping the business to attract, retain and develop talent. Many markets use ERGs as part of the induction process to encourage new employees to feel welcome to bring their authentic selves to work. And in the UK and Ireland, Nestlé's Eradicating Racism Network is closely involved in talent attraction initiatives, providing advice to the HR team and featuring in recruitment campaigns.



Rachel Haynes, Nestlé



Good food, Good life



The ERN has also helped the company to increase the diversity of interviewers for its early career programmes, making the application process more inclusive. Rachel says that this has had a direct impact on recruitment. "Through ERGs making our workplace more diverse, referrals into the organisation are also increasingly diverse." As well as attracting a more diverse talent pool, ERGs also play an important role in creating opportunities for their members. "We find that they are an excellent development opportunity for individuals who have historically been underrepresented in leadership positions", she says.

Nestlé is committed to helping accelerate equality and inclusion for LGBTQI+ people in the workplace - and its ERGs play a vital role in delivering this. From a UK and Ireland perspective, Proud@Nestlé is focused on impact at a local level.

As well as hosting the biggest Pride Month ever, with activities that engaged allies and LGBTQI+ people, the network encouraged Nestlé to march in local community Pride parades in places such as York, Crawley and Dublin instead of the traditional large parades. Having previously invited a drag queen to perform, they also consciously chose a drag king, to shine a light on the diversity of drag performances and challenge perceptions.

Proud@Nestlé is achieving great things through intersectional working, by collaborating with other employee networks such as the Gender Equity Network to create educational communications. The network also helps Nestlé to meet its goal of prioritising diversity and inclusion in its supplier selection process. Nestlé is proud that all of the suppliers used during Pride Month were with LGBTQI+ owned businesses through a partnership with OutBritain, ensuring that the spend is putting economic power into the hands of the LGBTQI+ community.



"We find that they are an excellent development opportunity for individuals who have historically been underrepresented in leadership positions."



Summarising the impact of ERGs at Nestlé, Rachel says that they play a powerful role in driving meaningful culture change across the business, from the grassroots up.

"Our ERGs all do amazing work which is tailored to their local environment.

They shine light on important topics, normalise talking about sometimes very sensitive topics, and advocate for meaningful change in a challenging, but constructive way. The storytelling which is central to how they operate gives access to what it's like to be someone else which drives empathy and understanding."

THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF SMALL ACTIONS

HOW EMPLOYEE NETWORKS BUILD A CULTURE OF BELONGING

At Nationwide Building Society, having an inclusive culture where everyone thrives is central to their mission. The Working Families Network plays a key role in creating a workplace where people are fulfilled in both their personal and professional life. **Wybren den Breejen, Co-Chair of the Families Network** explains how the small things that the network does create a greater sense of belonging.

Nationwide Building Society is a British financial Institution and the largest building society in the world with over 16 million members. Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of the organisation which has 11 Employee Network Groups and 4 Support Groups. They provide a space for employees to be themselves, share similar characteristics or life experiences and connect with others.



Wybren den Breejen, Nationwide

"The network started just before Covid and was a way of getting groups of parents and people with parenting responsibility in a space to connect."



Wybren den Breejen became Co-Chair of the Working Families Network in 2021. He says, "The network started just before Covid and was a way of getting groups of parents and people with parenting responsibility in a space to connect."

Since then the network has grown rapidly to more than 1000 members and they now have many active and engaged subgroups. He adds, "We've got groups covering different stages of school lives: a group for parents with special educational needs, a support group for single parents which is smaller but very active. We also have a fertility and baby loss group which people join to ask questions, share experiences and support one another. The support from these in some cases, is life-changing," he says.

As Co-Chair, Wybren says part of his role is about making little changes which have a positive impact on employees. This may include organising a speaker on a commonly raised theme or doing intersectional working to have a wider reach. He describes a recent powerful example where Nationwide sponsored Swindon Pride with support from the Employee Networks. He explains, "The event was a great family day out for network members to connect with the wider community."





In 2023 the Network won the Working Families Employee Network Award in the Pathways to Parenthood category. They were commended for creating a supportive and inclusive culture which met individuals' needs. However, Wybren says that isn't really what he sees as their biggest achievement. "We are not a network trying to do massive things," he says. "For us it is really about the little things that are super important." He highlights an event for Baby Loss Awareness Week where the network created a quiet space with a memory tree in which people could hang ribbons to remember lost loved ones.

Wybren also explains the value of the 'formally informal' support that the network offers when it comes to policy. He says, "We have direct escalation routes with HR and can help individuals figure out solutions." He adds, "during the teacher strikes, we worked closely with HR to communicate to staff about how emergency dependent leave could be applied."

Wybren says that he hopes that the cumulative effect of these little actions will foster a workplace culture where people feel a greater sense of belonging. He goes on to explain, "Our mission is to enable people to have fulfilling home and professional lives. It is not about increasing the number of parents into leadership roles, it is about providing the support so people can achieve whatever it is they want, whether at home or at work." He anticipates this will also have an impact internally, such as encouraging a parent to take a career change, or take a promotion.

The Families Network has two senior sponsors, one of whom is linked into the HR People function of Nationwide. Wybren says this puts the network in a strong position and adds, "We are not a network that has to fight for the benefit of our members. We work actively with the D & I team already,



"Our mission is to enable people to have fulfilling home and professional lives."

supporting people taking career breaks or working part time to get that work / life balance right." He adds, "Our sponsors are both senior women in the organisation and have lovely family lives too. Many of our members are mums and it is great to have two leaders who have been on a career journey and have an understanding of the barriers some of our members face."

Looking ahead for the next few years, Wybren says that the network is looking to consolidate the work they have done to date. He says "For us, it is very much a case of providing support, and making sure people and their managers get the right education, so we can implement the strong family friendly policies which support what colleagues might be going through. "



INVEST IN YOUR ERGS

radius

PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

At Radius we put employee networks, ERGs and communities at the heart of your organisation and unlock their potential as a powerful resource for change.

We offer a complete range of services and programmes for everyone involved in ERG success.

From bespoke Network Audits, Playbooks, Maturity Reports, In-House Training, Summits and Workshops to our online Network Development Programmes, Coaching and Global Networking, we support EDI teams all around the world to invest in their employee networks and people.

Tailored to your needs, we'll work with you to develop your ERGs into your greatest asset – wherever you are in your journey. From talent acquisition and retention to product innovation and performance, we'll help you unlock your networks' potential as a powerful strategic resource.

When you partner with us, we'll also certify your Network Leads and organisation, in recognition of your commitment to building belonging.

IMPACT REPORT WORKSHOPS

Our NEW ERG Impact Report workshops and keynotes help organisations to leverage the power of their ERGs to build belonging, using this report's unique insights. Whether you're looking to explore ERG trends in your industry or want to take a deeper dive into our data, we'll create a bespoke session that works for you.

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