

# I HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY START EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

## A. Charters

Charters provide a specific set of guidelines and regulations for your new groups and existing groups, allowing them to set business-focused goals and have uniform standards and metrics. Research on charters, including sample charters, is [available here](#).

## B. Which Groups First?

Decide which one or two groups are most important to your business needs. Most companies historically have started with women and Blacks because those employees are most readily identifiable. However, these days, based on data submitted to the Top 50 survey, more companies are adding groups for LGBT people, people with disabilities, veterans, and younger or new employees. One important tip: Avoid having a “multicultural” or “people of color” group, because different racial/ethnic demographics have different needs.

## C. What to Call Them?

More than half of companies in the DiversityInc Top 50 now call their groups “business resource groups” to link them directly to business goals, such as [recruitment](#), retention, [promotions](#), [supplier diversity](#) and market share.

Historically, groups were called networks or affinity groups, but these designated more social activity than direct relationships to business goals. In the last decade, the term “employee resource groups” became more prevalent, with the focus on employee participation and use as a business resource. Business resource groups enhance that role to a new and increasingly valuable level.

It’s increasingly important that your groups have clear names that spell out who they are—so cute acronyms like BRIDGE or CARE don’t work. As this story, [Employee Resource Group Names: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly](#), points out, companies with clear names have higher membership numbers as employees understand which groups they are joining—and why.

## Discussion Questions for Staff

### » What challenges have you encountered starting or growing employee resource groups at your company?

Discuss the support of senior management in your organization. Examine how visible that support is throughout your organization and how it is communicated. Is your group’s name clear and simple?

### » Why is it important to have consistent “rules” for groups across your organization?

What happens if different groups have goals or priorities that may not align with the organization’s focus? While it is necessary to recognize various needs and abilities of specific groups, the overall consistency of measurable priorities is important.

### » What components should be included in your charters?

Note in our sample charters the need for structure (assignment of executive sponsor, meeting frequency), goals (recruitment, promotion, community activity) and link to corporate values.

### » How do you measure the success of the groups?

Discuss the validity of tracking retention, engagement and promotions of employee-resource-group members compared with nonmembers.

### » How do you get remote or hourly workers to be included in the groups? And should the groups be just for the people they represent?

Discuss the benefits of virtual meetings. Talk about how retail and manufacturing companies have created solutions to [include union and hourly workers](#) (including off-shift meetings).

For more information, see our [Web Seminar](#) on employee resource groups.