

GUIDE

Engaging Frontline Workers in ERGs

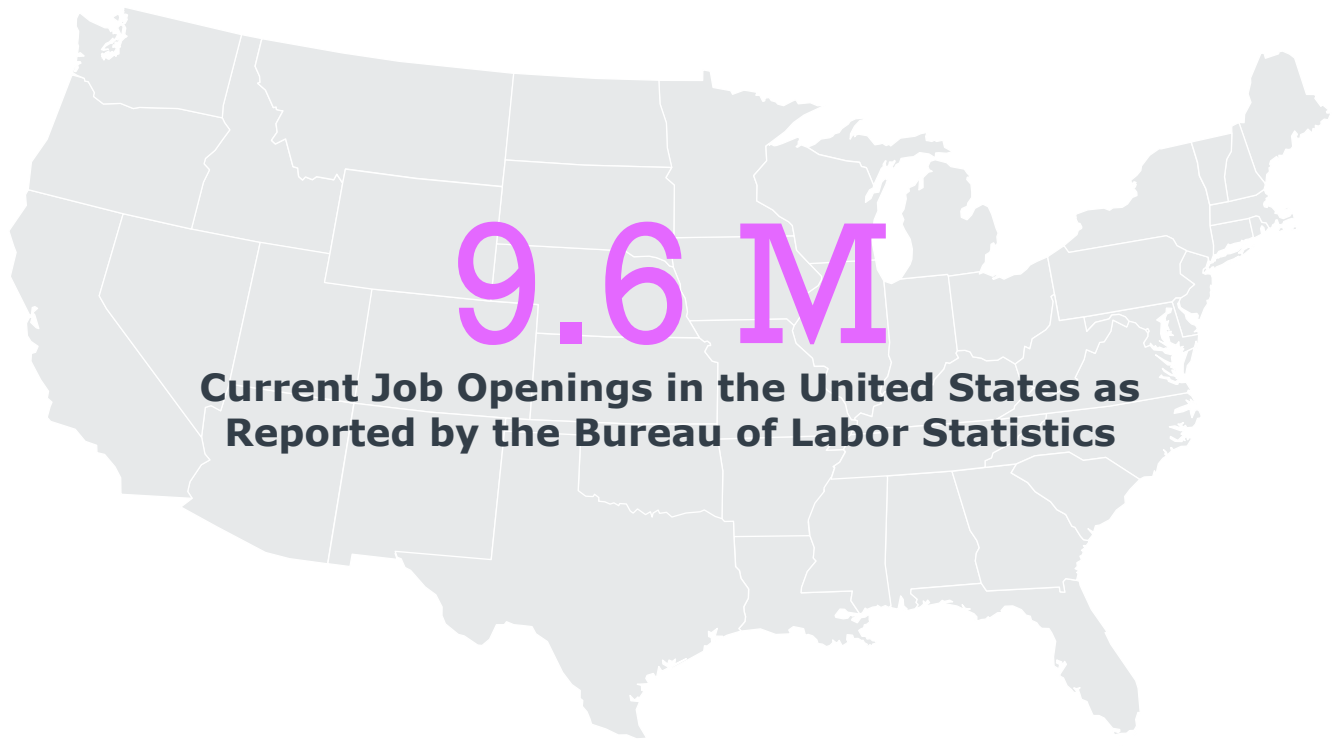
How ERGs Can Be a Gateway to Engagement and Career Advancement for Frontline Talent

The Business Case for Engaging Frontline Workers in ERGs

In a nation grappling with [9.6 million job openings](#), the race to attract, retain, and develop talent has reached unprecedented levels. This urgency is particularly felt among frontline workers—those unsung heroes who tirelessly interact with the public, from health care to retail, utilities to manufacturing.

Traditionally, limited pay, inflexible schedules, and a scarcity of growth opportunities have hindered the options available to frontline workers, leading many to seek alternative career paths.

But here's the game-changer: [Employee Resource Groups \(ERGs\)](#) have proven to be catalysts for engagement, trust, and leadership development. Surprisingly, companies have often overlooked the potential of including frontline workers in ERGs, fearing the cost of overtime, scheduling conflicts, or high turnover rates.



Five Strategies to Improve Frontline Worker Engagement

Now, more than ever, retaining frontline employees is paramount, and ERGs hold the key to unlocking their full potential. In this DEI best practices resource, we delve into the concerns surrounding involving these invaluable employees in ERGs, offering innovative and tactful solutions, exploring:

1

Involving union members in ERGs

- Collaborate with unions to emphasize ERG benefits and address concerns over payment.
- Advocate for individual workers' participation, addressing concerns with union leaders.

2

Creating a successful communications strategy to accommodate frontline workers

- Develop a communications plan for all employees to access the corporate intranet, regardless of official company emails.
- Implement inclusive online content and technology to keep frontline workers informed

3

Allowing frontline workers to hold ERG leadership positions

- Educate managers about the organizational value of ERGs, emphasizing their role in employee development, engagement, and retention.
- Highlight ERG leadership as a positive factor in performance evaluations, shifting focus from compensation or benefits that may be perceived as unfair.

4

Engaging a transitory workforce in ERGs

- Provide access to in-store computers and virtual links, enabling frontline employees to engage and view ERG content during their available "down" time at work.
- Incorporate frontline employees into the organization's employee engagement surveys, which may currently be excluding them.

5

Utilizing ERGs for recruitment, retention, and leadership development

- Find new talent through ERG referrals.
- Use ERGs to communicate with and survey frontline workers about their specific needs and ideas for the company.



Involving Union Members in ERGs

Payment and union compliance are key concerns. One manufacturer highlights union rules on compensation hindering frontline workers' ERG involvement, while another faces challenges in union negotiations due to workplace issues. These include inadequate breaks, uncomfortable temperatures, and penalties for late arrival due to unreliable transportation.

Solution

Continuously collaborate with the union, highlighting how ERGs can facilitate improved benefits and policies comprehension within companies. For instance, emphasize the advocacy of LGBTQ+ employees for partner benefits or the instrumental role of Black employees in fostering trust after the tragic event involving George Floyd.

Explore methods for workers to engage in ERGs during their workday or personal time virtually, without triggering overtime. The objective is to ensure both unions and managers perceive this as mutually beneficial for employees and the organization. Once hourly workers are integrated into ERGs, present a compelling business case by showcasing frontline workers who have experienced increased engagement, retention, or promotion through ERG involvement.



Building Support for ERG Participation Through Individual Conversations with Shop Stewards

According to another DEI leader at a manufacturing company, it is advisable to engage in individual conversations with shop stewards, presenting a case for granting specific individuals extra time and flexibility to participate. The DEI leader shared an example in which an employee expressed aspirations for leadership, demonstrating their long-standing dedication to the organization. By demonstrating the deserving nature of this opportunity to the union leader, an agreement was reached. Additionally, the employee's team lead was willing to provide coverage whenever necessary.



Creating a Successful Communications Strategy to Accommodate Frontline Workers

Strict communication guidelines can pose challenges for engaging frontline workers in ERGs. Limited by a lack of company email addresses, they face difficulty participating or becoming official members. Plans are being developed to enable their event engagement or access to recordings, though without full membership privileges.

Solution

Implement a comprehensive communications plan that enables all employees to access the corporate intranet, regardless of whether they possess official company emails, and direct them toward ERG-related content. Additionally, establish inclusion and diversity (I&D) workstations at facilities, allowing employees to log in and view ERG activities during breaks or lunch.

To foster inclusion and enhance ERG support, a hospitality company showcases different employees—particularly frontline workers—on their intranet during heritage and celebratory months. Furthermore, the company records ERG events, granting employees who couldn't attend the opportunity to access them later.

Innovatively, some companies have developed mobile apps exclusively for frontline workers, enabling them to engage in ERGs by using their personal phones, without the need for company email accounts.



3 Allowing Frontline Workers to Hold ERG Leadership Positions

Allowing frontline workers, including those who are unionized, to assume leadership positions in ERGs can significantly enhance their engagement. While a manufacturer/distributor permits frontline workers to join ERGs, the exclusion from leadership roles, which demand additional time and commitment, limits their full involvement.

Solution

Empower managers to prioritize and allocate time for employees to actively engage in ERG events and tasks, including leadership positions, while ensuring frontline job responsibilities are prioritized. Educate managers about the organizational value of ERGs, emphasizing their role in fostering employee development, engagement, and retention. Recognize ERG leadership as a positive factor in performance evaluations rather than relying solely on compensation or other potentially unfair benefits.

To encourage greater frontline participation, a hospitality company ensures that each ERG includes both a corporate leader and a leader from one of its properties. According to a DEI leader at the company, having representation at the leadership level increases frontline engagement as employees feel understood and supported in addressing their concerns.



4 Engaging a Transitory Workforce in ERGs

Companies can face the challenge of engaging and including its predominantly lower-wage, short-tenured workforce in ERG activities to develop and retain front-line talent effectively. This requires innovative approaches and tailored strategies to ensure that these employees feel valued, supported, and included in the organization's DEI initiatives.

Solution

Create opportunities for employees to actively participate in ERG activities and access ERG content during their downtime at work, utilizing in-store computers and virtual links with the full support and encouragement of managers. Additionally, it is crucial to include frontline employees, who often comprise a transitory workforce with shorter job tenures, in employee engagement surveys. By gathering their feedback, organizations can gain valuable insights into the specific factors influencing their decision to leave and identify strategies to enhance their experience, retention, and growth within the company.

► What is a transitory workforce?

A transitory workforce refers to a group of employees who have a high turnover rate or shorter job tenures within an organization. These individuals may be characterized by frequent job changes, temporary or seasonal employment, or a higher likelihood of transitioning between different companies or industries. The transitory nature of their employment can present unique challenges for organizations in terms of engagement, retention, and understanding their specific needs and preferences.

5

Utilizing ERGs for recruitment, Retention and Leadership Development

In the quest for talent, particularly underrepresented individuals who champion DEI in the workplace, companies are facing unprecedented challenges. Compounded by various manifestations of [employee disengagement](#), such as communication breakdowns, lack of teamwork, inconsistent punctuality, and limited career aspirations, organizations are seeking effective solutions. Leveraging the power of ERGs can serve as a dual strategy: scouting and attracting new talent while also nurturing and retaining existing talent, thus fostering a thriving and inclusive work environment.

Solution

Recruitment: Engaging and integrating a predominantly lower-wage and short-tenured workforce into ERG activities to foster the development and retention of frontline talent can pose a challenge for companies. To address this significant challenge, organizations need to adopt innovative approaches and customized strategies that prioritize the inclusion, support, and recognition of these employees within their broader diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Retention and Leadership Development: Frontline workers often experience disengagement due to their limited access to modern employee communication channels such as email, e-newsletters, and social intranets. This disconnection contributes to high turnover rates in industries employing frontline workers. However, ERG membership can play a vital role in enhancing their engagement.

Organizations can use ERGs as a means to effectively communicate with and survey frontline workers, allowing them to express their specific needs and ideas for the company. This approach provides them with exposure to corporate and senior leaders, granting them a voice within the organization. By [valuing and considering their opinions](#), companies can strengthen retention and foster a sense of involvement. It is important for management to provide transparent explanations when ideas are not implemented, creating a feedback loop that encourages further contributions from employees.

► An example of empowering frontline workers

An exemplary retailer and DBP member has established a DEI council consisting of 18 employees, with 9 of them being frontline workers. These individuals convene monthly during company hours to address DEI challenges and propose solutions observed within stores and across the company, serving as Inclusion Ambassadors. As this council involves only 9 employees, managers have been supportive in freeing up their time, recognizing their participation as leadership development. Notably, among the initial 9 frontline workers serving in these roles, 4 have been promoted.

How Seramount Can Help Engage Frontline Workers in ERGs

Our DEI Research Partnership Offers Evolving Research and Advisory Services to Support Rapidly Changing DEI Needs and Priorities



| Three Pillars of Service to Help DEI Leaders Effect Change | | |
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| Rigorous Research with a Global Reach | The Collective Experience of DEI Leaders at the Center | A Commitment to Applying Lessons Learned |
| <p>Deploying a proven research methodology to identify how CDOs at any company, anywhere in the world are making change happen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Annual Research Initiative✓ Resources to Educate Stakeholders and Accelerate Impact✓ Custom Research to Answer Your Up-at-Night Questions | <p>DEI leaders guide and shape our search for breakthrough ideas, then pressure-test what we find</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ CDO Roundtables and Experience Labs✓ DEI Practitioner Roundtables and Hot-Topic Webinars✓ Regular Convenings to Build Global DEI Leader Community | <p>Supporting You In Getting Buy in For Change And Customizing Implementation Of Lessons Learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Access to Expert Advisors to Increase Your Capacity✓ Partner Intensives Bring Insights to Your Broader Team✓ Proactive Planning to Drive Progress on Your Priorities |

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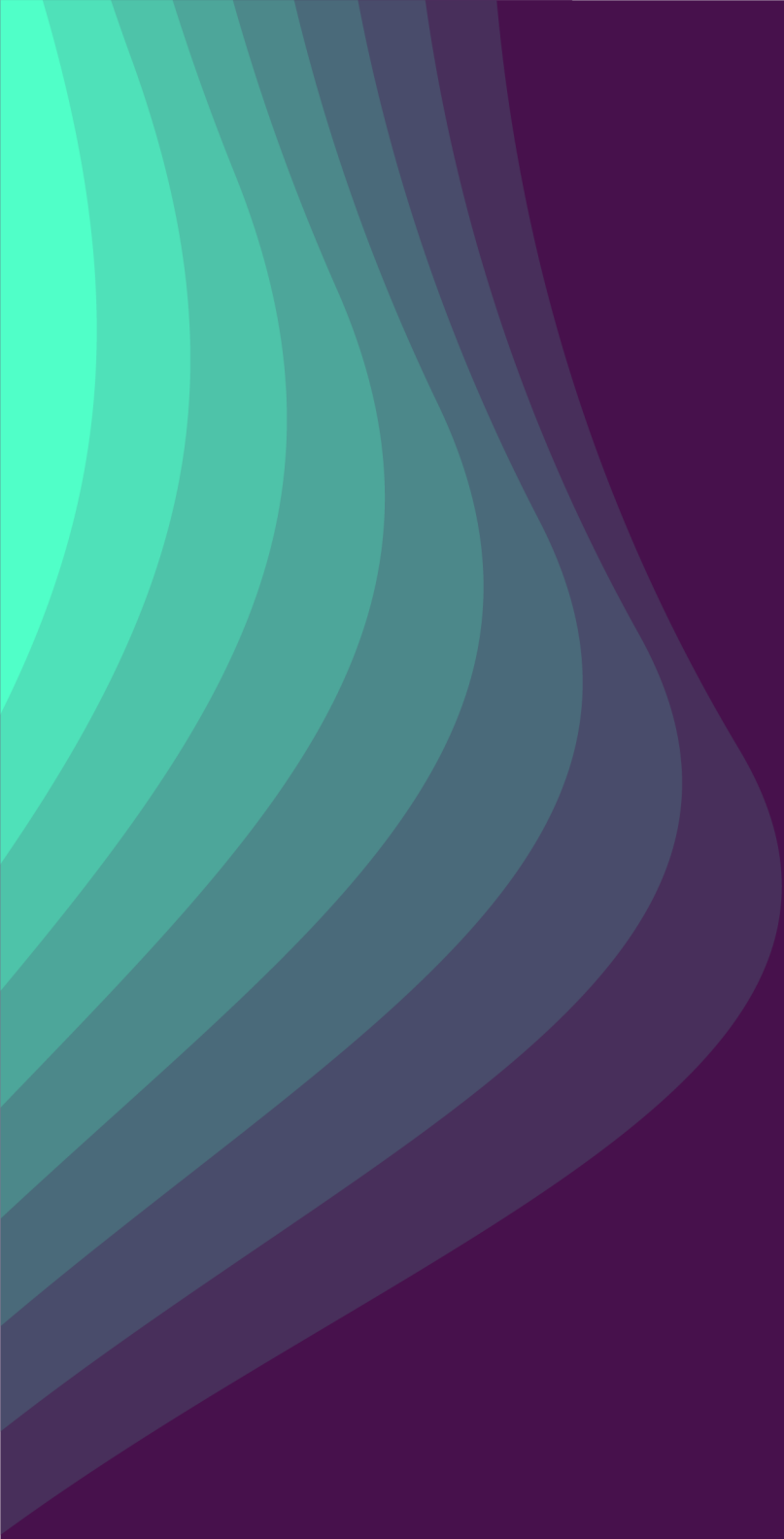
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