



# ENABLING EFFECTIVE ERGS: THE 2025 GUIDE FOR SPONSORS AND LEADERS

ERG Leader Summit in Partnership with Harper Fox Search Partners



# THE EVOLUTION OF ERGS

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) have evolved since the first ERG, sponsored by CEO Joe Wilson at Xerox, started in the late 1960s. Often called Affinity Groups or Employee Led Networks, the initial focus was equality and opportunity for historically under-represented groups, starting with race and ethnicity and evolving to include women's networks, LGBTQ+, Veterans and Disability.

Fast forward sixty years and ERGs are evolving to include different elements of identity and communities of interest - Faith-based groups, Early careers, Ex-pats and Sustainability. In the UK we are increasingly seeing Men's networks, some focusing specifically on physical or mental health.



# WORDS FROM FOUNDER

## Sheryl Miller - Reboot global

Sheryl is a Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Consultant with a deep background in Transformation Programmes and Change Management. A public speaker, she also delivers workshops and training to Managers, C-suite and ERG leaders. Sheryl is passionate about empowering Employee Resource Groups to create inclusion and Belonging.



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This time last year, we were organising the first ERG Leader Summit. When we invited network leaders to get involved, some replied that they had stepped down "due to burnout".

Fast forward to the September 2024 Summit. Just as we were about to start a main stage panel, we announced that a breakout session on ERG Leader Wellbeing was also starting. Almost half the room left to join the wellbeing session.

That moment felt like real-life data in action. It reinforced the need for more data on how ERGs are led, how we set them up for success and how to ensure ERG leaders get the support they need.

The data on employee networks is few and far between, which is why we decided to collect our own.

We hope this report drives great conversations, better ways of working and effective, engaging networks.

# ABOUT THE 2025 ERG LEADER SURVEY

The Employee Resource Group (ERG) Leadership 2025 Survey, conducted by the ERG Leader Summit team at Reboot Global, gathered insights from 117 respondents, mainly in the UK but with participants across the globe, between December 27, 2024, and January 24, 2025. The purpose of the survey was to understand the factors that contribute to ERG Effectiveness in relation to the set-up and support for employee-led networks and their Leaders.

## Four key themes have emerged:

**Pages 4-7:** Wellbeing and workload: ERG Leaders are stretched thin

**Pages 8-11:** Strength in numbers: A strong committee is essential

**Pages 12-15:** Beyond Awareness Days: Networks must focus on sustainable change

**Pages 16-19:** Executive Sponsors: The key to strategic impact



# ERG LEADER WELLBEING AND WORKLOAD

People raise their hand to lead employee networks for a variety of reasons. They are driven by a passion and desire to improve workplace culture for the greater good.

To improve the sense of belonging for colleagues and celebrate the rich diversity of experiences in their organisation.

Being an ERG leader can be an incredibly rewarding experience, however it can also be challenging due to the time commitment needed and the emotional labour that comes with supporting others.





# KEY FINDINGS

## ERG LEADER WELLBEING AND WORKLOAD

More than three quarters of respondents feel that their ERG responsibilities enhance performance in their day job

Q22. My ERG responsibilities enhance my performance in my day job

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree



### ERG LEADERSHIP ENHANCES PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

More than three-quarters of ERG leaders (76%) either agree or strongly agree that their ERG responsibilities positively impact their day job performance.

### BALANCING ERG RESPONSIBILITIES WITH BIG DAY JOBS REQUIRES CAREFUL PLANNING

54% of respondents are Senior level, e.g. Manager and above and 54% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had adequate time for ERG responsibilities without it affecting their primary role.

More than half of ERG Leaders are struggling to juggle network responsibilities alongside the day job

Q21 I have adequate time to dedicate to my ERG responsibilities without it adversely affecting my day job

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



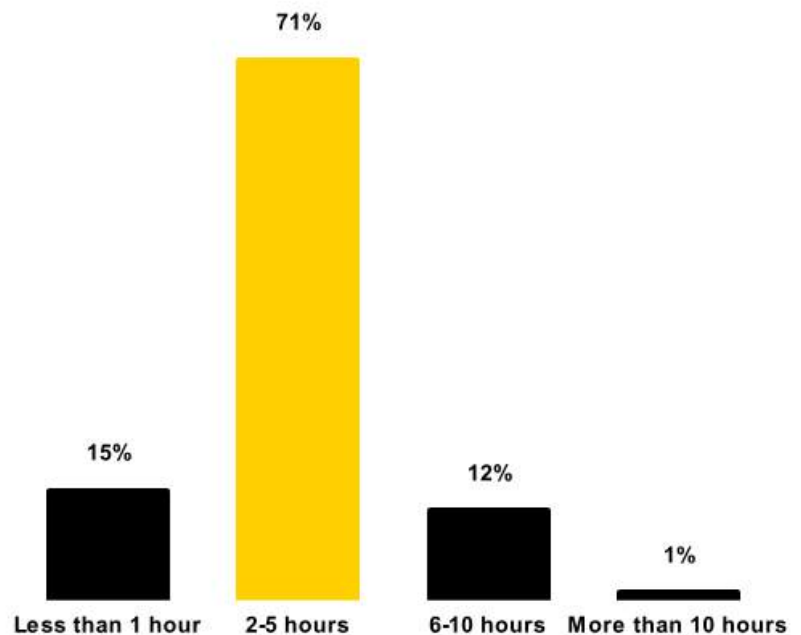
## ERG LEADER WELLBEING AND WORKLOAD

### ERG LEADERS INVEST TIME IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

71% dedicate 2-5 hours per week, while 12% spend 6-10 hours, or the best part of a whole working day.

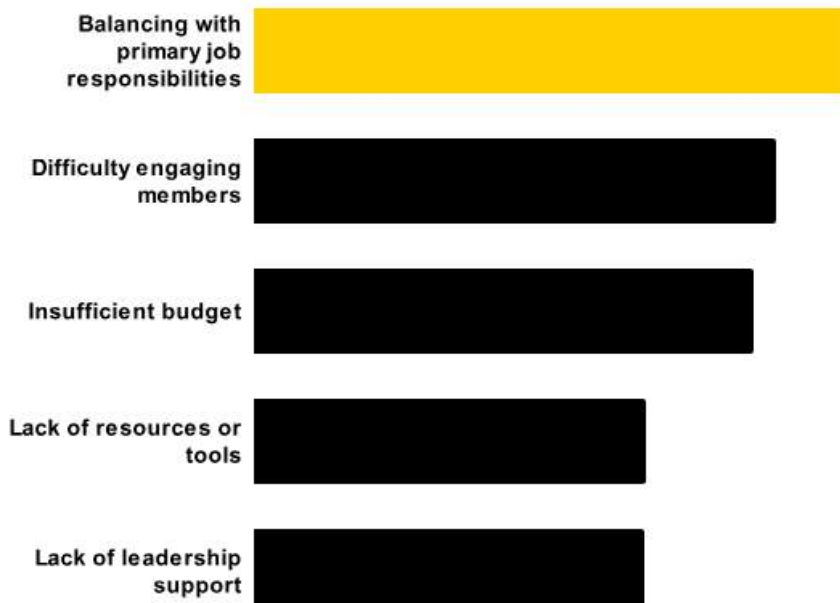
**Most ERG Leaders spend 2-5 hours per week on ERG-related activities.**

Q14. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on ERG-related



**Balancing ERG work with the day job is the number one obstacle for nearly 40% of respondents**

Q18. What are the biggest obstacles you face? (rank these 5)



### RECOGNITION FOR ERG EFFORTS IS STILL EVOLVING

48% stated that ERG work does not contribute to performance reviews, and only 13% are financially compensated.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For ERG Leaders:

Less is more! Focus on high-impact activities that drive meaningful change. Set clear boundaries, use data to focus on the right priorities. Build a strong planning committee, delegate tasks and collaborate widely to share the workload. Talk to your line manager and sponsor about workload - use them as a sounding board to help find balance.



## For HR & DEI Leads:

Recognise the leadership development ERG work provides and advocate for its inclusion in performance reviews. Advocate for support from Internal Comms and Events to support one major annual event for each ERG.

## For Sponsors:

Be vocal and advocate for the business value of ERGs. Speak to peers about the skills and strategic contributions ERG leaders bring to the organisation. Look out for signs of stress and burnout in your ERG leaders.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A STRONG COMMITTEE OR ERG PLANNING TEAM

The saying, “It takes a village” can surely be applied to employee networks. Maintaining a thriving, engaged community of network members takes a lot of time and effort - far more work than one or two people could manage.

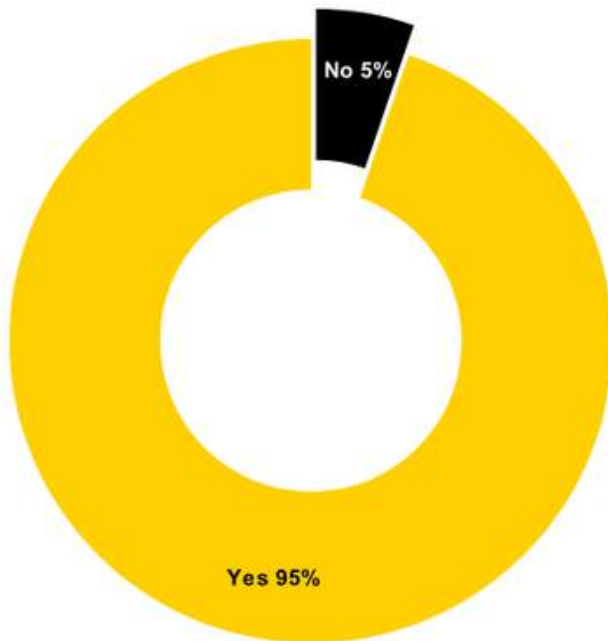
ERGs with committees, planning or leadership teams who share the workload are a vital part of network success.



# KEY FINDINGS

## A Leadership Team or planning committee is a core feature of most ERGs

Q12. Does your ERG have a leadership team or planning committee?



## THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A STRONG COMMITTEE OR ERG PLANNING TEAM

### STRONG COMMITTEES LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL ERGS

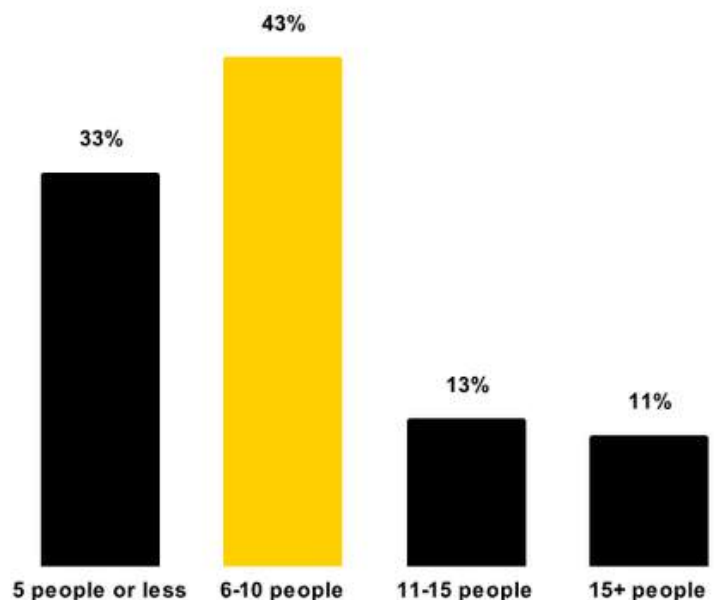
A whopping 95% of ERGs have a leadership team or planning committee.

### COMMITTEES ARE OFTEN SMALL

A third of ERGs have fewer than five committee members (including the ERG leader), which increases the burden on individual leaders and Co-Chairs.

## ERG Planning Committees are a key success factor. 6-10 people is the most common size of ERG Leadership team.

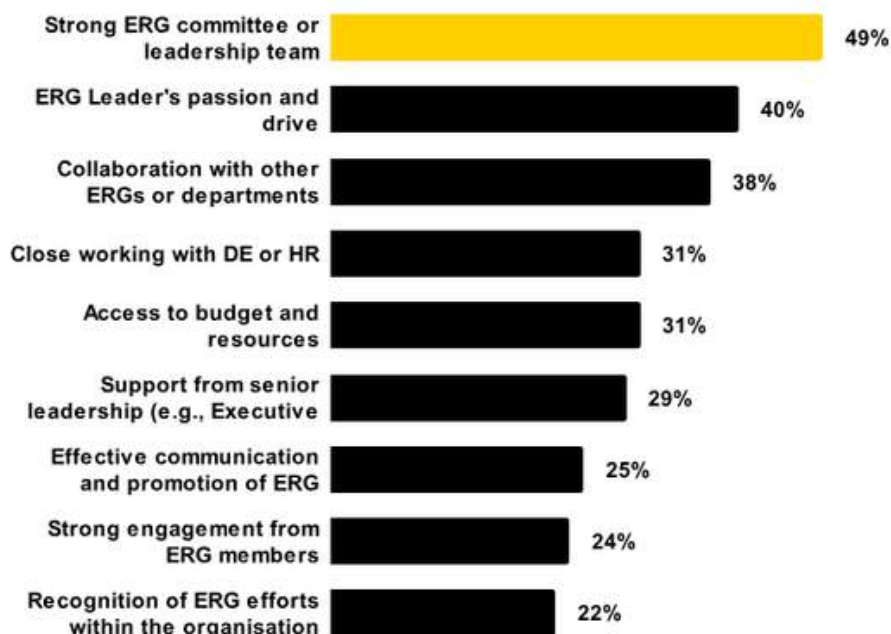
Q13. How many people (including you) are on your lead team or planning



# THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A STRONG COMMITTEE OR ERG PLANNING TEAM

## More than passion, ERG Leaders need a strong committee to enable success

Q17. What factors have contributed most to your success? (select up to three)



## COMMITTEES ARE CRITICAL TO ERG SUCCESS

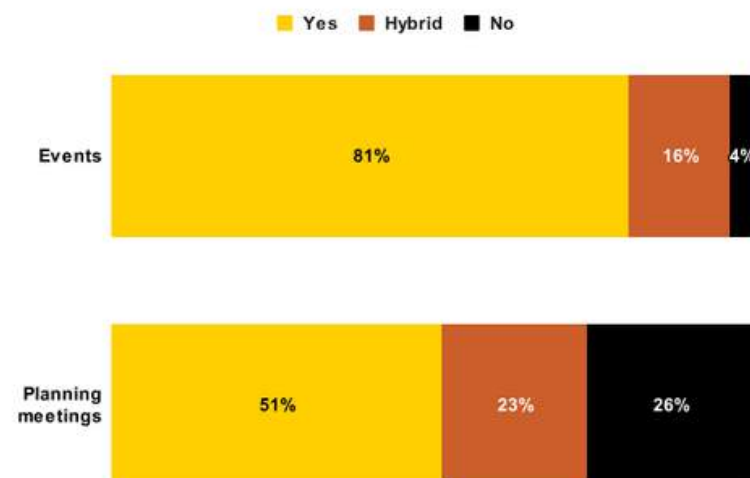
Nearly half of all respondents (49%) cited a strong ERG leadership team as the single biggest factor in ERG success.

## ERGS ARE TORN ON INVOLVING ALLIES:

For 51% of respondents, all planning meetings are open to allies. For 49% of respondents, planning meetings are either fully or partly closed to allies.

### While events are mainly open to all, ERGs are split on allies attending committee meetings

Q9. Are your ERG events and/or planning meetings open to allies?



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **For ERG Leaders:**

Recruit committee members with a range of skills and perspectives. Give them opportunities to shine by sharing responsibilities and plan for leadership succession by always looking out for new talent. Open planning meetings to allies who can bring new perspectives and champion engagement across the organisation.



## **For HR & DEI Leads:**

Offer ERG leadership training and mentorship to strengthen committee effectiveness. Define a clear framework for network reporting and approvals so there is complete transparency and buy-in for ERG plans.

## **For Sponsors:**

Champion the benefits to the organisation and employees of being involved in leading employee networks.

# EVENTS DOMINATE THE ERG AGENDA

Events are the building blocks of most networks. Awareness days, networking events and social events dominate the activities. This can be a sign of a thriving ERG community, however over-reliance on events can also lead to fatigue on all fronts - the organisers, the network members and the wider organisation.

Events can also have a limited impact when it comes to embedding change that lasts. They may bring the feel-good factor momentarily but without changes in policy, process or ways of working, the impact on culture is not sustained and what appears like progress can easily be undone with a change in ERG leader, or if senior leadership backing wanes.



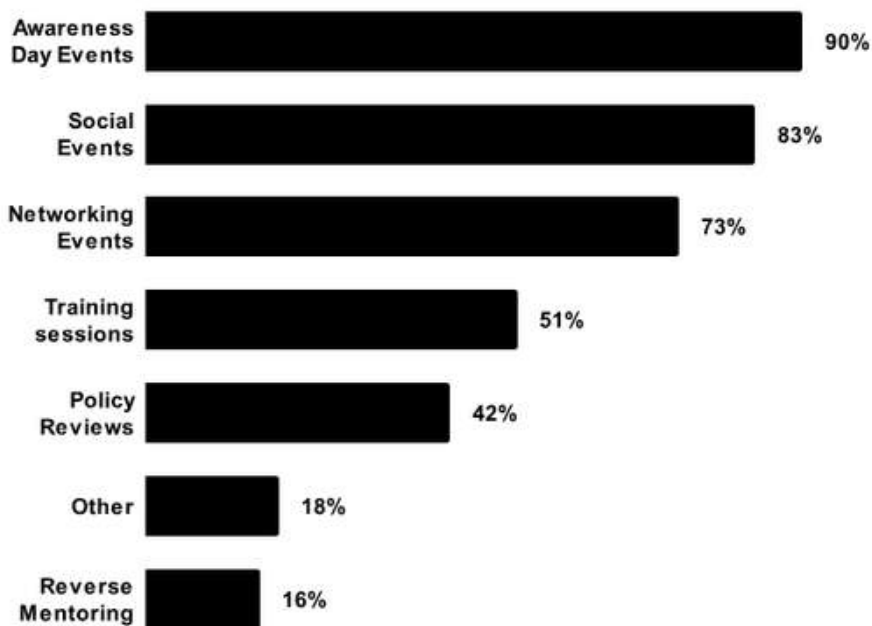


# KEY FINDINGS

## EVENTS DOMINATE THE ERG AGENDA

### Awareness Days and other events dominate ERG activities

Q8. What types of activities or initiatives does your ERG lead? (select all that apply)



### FEW ERGS FOCUS ON POLICY AND PROCESS

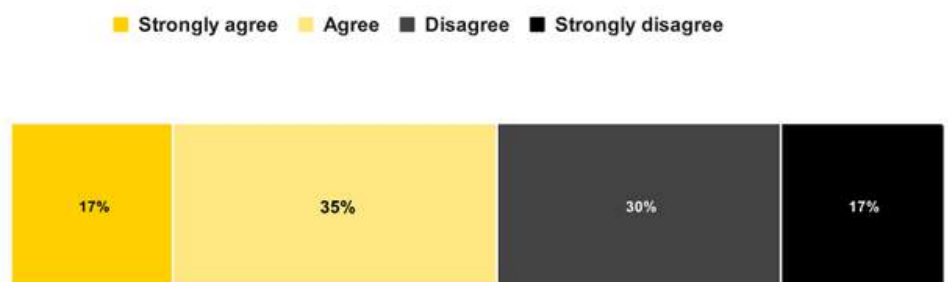
51% of ERG respondents are leading training initiatives, 42% contributed to policy reviews and 16% have reverse mentoring programmes.

### MANY ERGS HAVE HAD NO TRAINING

47% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had been given adequate training.

### Nearly half of ERG leaders feel they have not been given sufficient training or guidance for their ERG leadership role

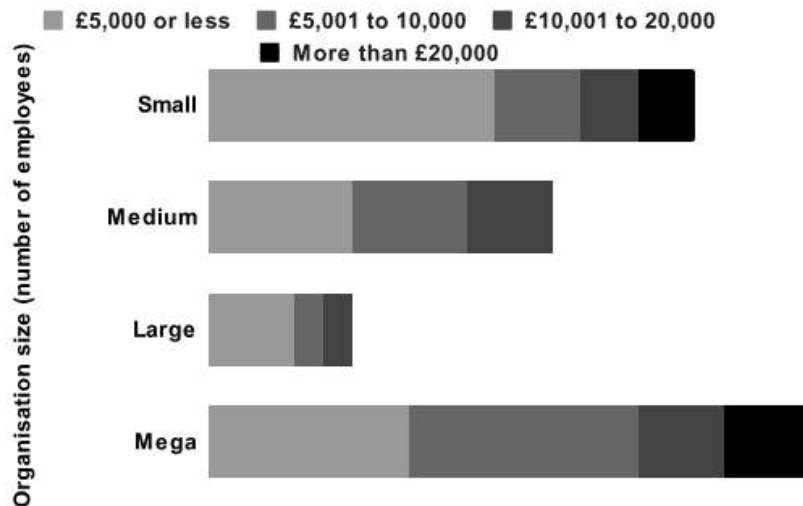
Q20 I have been given sufficient guidance or training for my ERG leadership role



## EVENTS DOMINATE THE ERG AGENDA

Most ERG Leaders have a budget of up to £5,000. The average budget is between £5,000 - £10,000.

Q19. How much budget has your ERG been allocated or has access to in 2025?



### ERG LEADERS WANT MORE BUDGET

The average ERG budget is between £5k and £10k.

When asked what type of support would make the network more successful, the top theme across the open-ended responses was budget and funding.

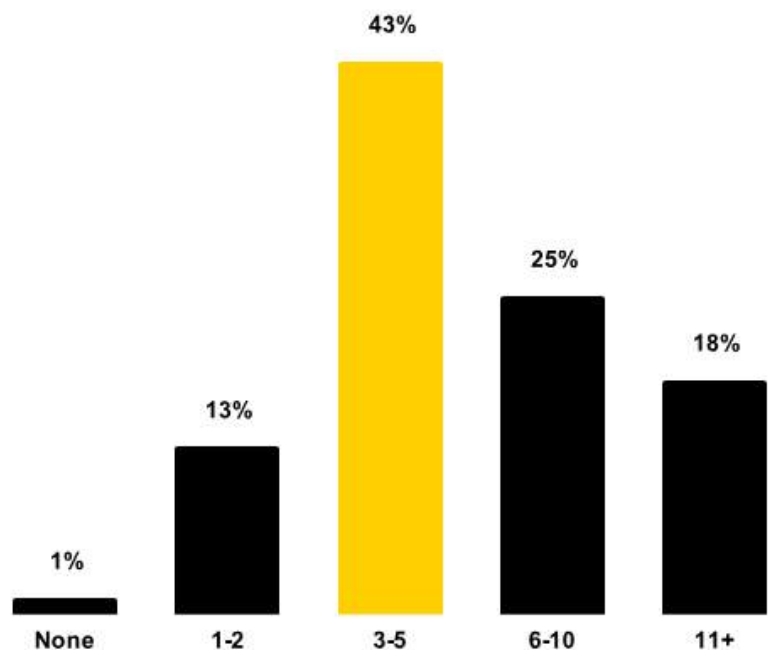
### ERG ACTIVITIES ARE HEAVILY EVENT-FOCUSED

90% of ERGs run awareness day events, 73% organise networking events, and 83% host social events.

43% of ERGs run 3-5 events per year, with 18% hosting 11+ events or roughly one each month.

The most common number of ERG events run by respondents in 2024 was between 3 and 5

Q7. How many events did your ERG run in 2024?



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **For ERG Leaders:**

Measure the feedback from every event to make sure there is a clear ROI (Return on Investment) and members are engaged. Balance events with sustainable change initiatives such as policy and process review.

Collaborate with other networks, departments and organisations to reduce the events workload and get new ideas.



## **For HR & DEI Leads:**

Support ERGs with training and coaching so they can shift from an event-driven model to one that includes broader strategic impact. Define a clear RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) that enables networks to get involved in policy and process without overreaching or duplicating effort.

## **For Sponsors:**

Encourage ERGs to think strategically. Look for ways that the network can align their work with organisational, industry and community objectives, beyond events.

# THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

Executive Sponsors can be the difference between a good network and a great network. They are the link between the strategic aims of the organisation and the grass-roots goals of the network.

Projects and programmes often have sponsors, and the role of the ERG Executive Sponsor is no different - providing strategic direction, securing resources, securing buy-in from other senior leaders, monitoring and oversight.

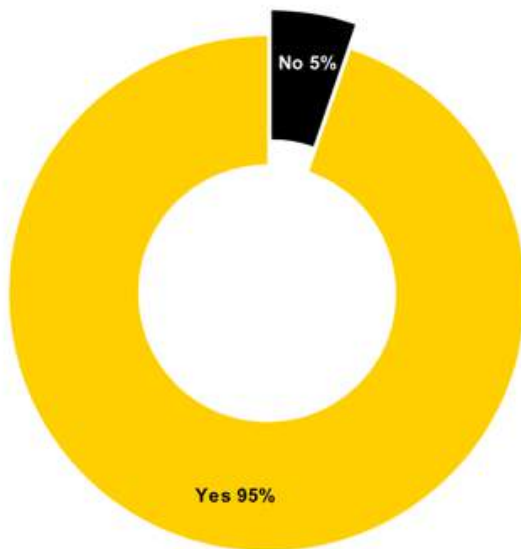


# KEY FINDINGS

## THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

The vast majority of ERGs have an Executive Sponsor.

Q10. Does your ERG currently have an Executive Sponsor?



### SUPPORT FROM SENIOR LEADERSHIP IS INCONSISTENT:

While 50% of ERG leaders feel adequately supported, 27% were neutral and 22% do not feel they have enough backing from senior leaders.

### MOST ERGS HAVE AN EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

95% of ERGs report having a sponsor, but their level of engagement varies.

Respondents are split over whether they feel adequately supported by senior leadership

Q23. I feel adequately supported by senior leadership in my ERG efforts

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree





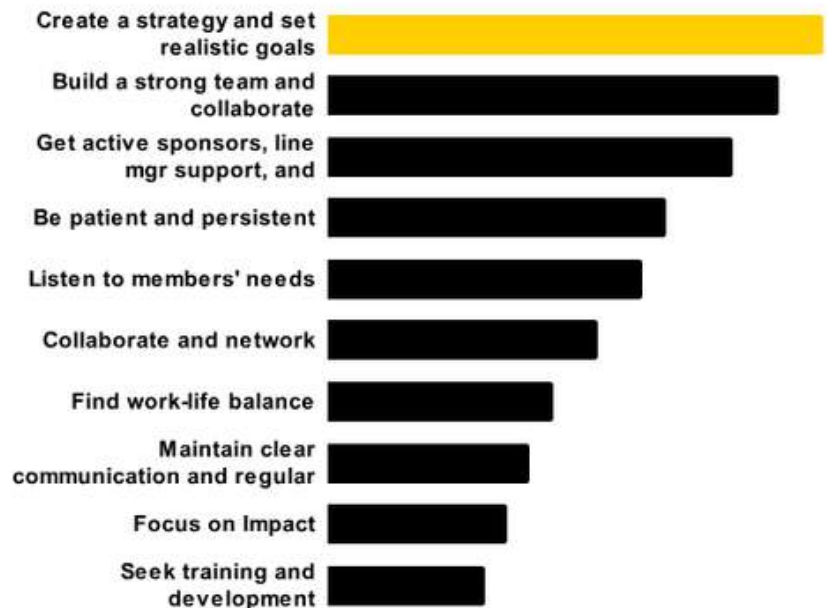
## THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

### ERGS BENEFIT FROM FORMAL SUPPORT

83% of ERGs have support from HR and DEI which makes sure networks are aligned to HR strategy and not duplicating effort. 49% have assigned individuals from Internal Comms or Events which helps to reduce workload. Executive Sponsors can help in securing this support.

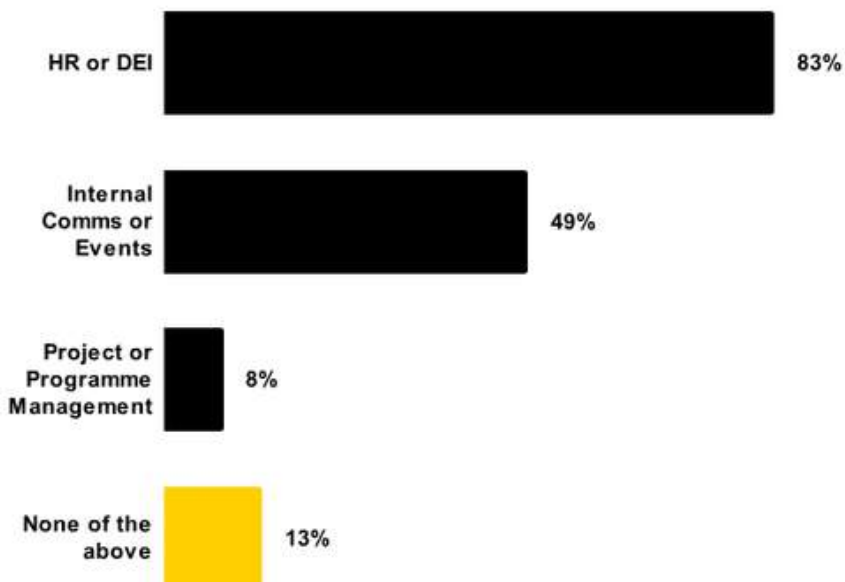
Setting clear goals and achievable objectives is the number one advice respondents would give to new ERG Leaders

Q25. What advice would you give to a new ERG leader starting now?



Most ERGs have designated support from other functions, however 13% of respondents have no-one assigned from HR or DEI, Internal Comms or Programme Mgmt

Q11. Do you have an individual assigned to support your ERG from the



### ERG LEADERS WANT MORE ADVOCACY FROM SPONSORS

Open-ended responses highlight a need for active executive sponsors to advocate for ERGs at senior leadership meetings.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **For ERG Leaders:**

Clearly define what you need from sponsors and engage them in ERG planning so they can bring a strategic perspective.

## **For HR & DEI Leads:**

Consider training and coaching for executive sponsors to ensure they can deliver their role in a way that is authentic and effective.

## **For Sponsors:**

Make time for a monthly 1-2-1 with your ERG Leader so you are fully plugged in. Advocate for ERGs at senior leadership team meetings and encourage peers to leverage the power and perspective of networks in operational and strategic challenges.



# EXECUTIVE INSIGHT ON ERGS

## Scarlett Allen-Horton - Founding Director of Harper Fox Partners

Scarlett Allen-Horton is a highly accomplished recruitment leader, BBC Apprentice Finalist, innovative entrepreneur and founder of the multi-award winning executive search firm, Harper Fox Partners. Scarlett is also a keynote speaker, business mentor, business partner to Lord Sugar, RFC board advisor and voluntary ambassador for numerous charitable and purpose driven organisations.



“ The 2025 ERG Leader Survey highlights a critical but often overlooked reality—ERG leaders are not just community builders; they are change agents. From an executive search and leadership perspective, the skills required to successfully lead an ERG mirror those of senior executives: strategic thinking, stakeholder management, resilience, and the ability to drive cultural transformation. However, without the right sponsorship and structural support, ERG leaders risk burnout, and organisations miss out on an invaluable leadership pipeline.

# THE EXECUTIVE SPONSOR AS A LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR

“ —

One of the most striking findings of this report is the pivotal role of executive sponsors. A truly effective sponsor is not just a figurehead but a strategic enabler—advocating for ERGs at the highest levels, securing resources, and ensuring that ERG initiatives align with business objectives.

The data underscores the potential of ERGs as incubators for future senior leaders, yet organisations may be failing to capitalise on this. If 76% of ERG leaders say their work enhances their day job performance, more ERG leadership roles should be formally recognised as leadership development opportunities.

At Harper Fox Partners, we understand that leadership goes beyond the title, it's about impact. ERG leaders and sponsors have a shared responsibility to ensure these networks aren't just social communities but engines for sustainable change. The organisations that recognise ERG leadership as a strategic asset, rather than an extracurricular activity, will not only build stronger workplace cultures but also develop the next generation of diverse, high-performing executives.

Scarlett Allen-Horton,  
Founding Director  
Harper Fox Partners

[harperfoxpartners.com](https://harperfoxpartners.com)





# FINAL THOUGHTS

## SHERYL MILLER - REBOOT GLOBAL & THE ERG LEADER SUMMIT

This survey confirmed many of the conversations I have with leaders and organisations on a daily basis. There is so much time, effort and resource going into employee networks that we need to get them right.

We tend to think of ERGs as a way to make people feel like they belong - like they're not the only \_\_\_\_\_ in the room. However, networks can deliver more than this. When they are well-led, with the right senior support, ERGs are a vehicle for strategic change.

The organisations that set them up for success create engaged communities that contribute positively towards a healthier, happier workplace culture.

### About the ERG Leader Summit:

The summit creates a space where ERG leaders can come together with like-minded individuals who understand what they are facing. It is a space for creating community, learning, being inspired by others and refuelling.

Learn more: [www.ergleader.com](http://www.ergleader.com)

