

Best Practice Playbook: Group Leaders

Benevity Affinity Groups

Overview

Welcome!

We created this playbook for Group Leaders who are looking to create a welcoming, engaging, and valuable place for members to interact.

You may be a team of one or a team of many, but your role likely includes some of the following;

- Creating and sharing group content
- Promoting events, causes, giving opportunities and volunteer opportunities
- Moderating discussions and nurturing relationships with members

This guide is divided into three sections, so you can read the whole thing or jump right to the section you're interested in. Here are some of the topics that are covered:

- [Best Practices for Group Management](#)
 - Bring Them In: Recruitment
 - Have Them Participate: Community Content
 - Get Them to Stay: Member Experience
- [Ongoing Community Tasks](#)
 - Weekly/Ongoing
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 - Quarterly
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- [Best Practices for Engagement](#)
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Best Practices for Group Management

Bring Them In: Recruitment

A key driver of your Group's growth is a consistent recruitment strategy. While organic growth happens over time, you'll need to actively recruit at the start. We've put together a list of simple things you can do to promote and build your Group membership:

New Hire Onboarding

Affinity groups, or employee resource groups (ERGs), are a powerful tool for connection especially for new employees who want to find "their people" and get involved. By showcasing your ERG's focus and accomplishments you can attract new members and help build a sense of community from day one.

Ask your Program Administrator about opportunities during employee onboarding to promote your Group and invite new teammates to join.

Internal Channels

Leverage your organization's tools (ex. Intranet page, Slack channel) to share a link to your Group's homepage on the Affinity Groups platform. Be clear about the purpose of the Affinity Groups Community and the value for members. When possible, look to collaborate on company-wide messaging along with other Groups to streamline communications.

Tools that may be available include:

- An intranet site (i.e., SharePoint)
- A messaging application (i.e., Slack)
- A company email or newsletter

Sometimes simple is best! A poster in the lunchroom can be a great tool for promoting your Group's activities.

Social & Company Events

Take advantage of opportunities to help organize or host company events. This type of exposure is great for increasing awareness with non-member employees.

It is especially important for Groups to be involved in planning and executing awareness days/weeks/months that align to their mission, such as Black History Month or International Women's Day. Supporting fun events like spirit weeks can also boost awareness.

Demonstrate Your Group's Impact

Whenever possible, share the impact your Group is having with internal audiences. Consider requesting time at an upcoming town hall or all-staff meeting to highlight key initiatives, remind employees of upcoming awareness dates, and share results.

Highlighting your Group's impact is an excellent way to engage your current members, while simultaneously generating interest amongst non-members. Sharing the impact your group has had reminds existing and potential members of the value in participating.

Have Them Participate: Community Content

Once members have joined your Group, you want them to take part. Leverage this group space to engage members in your ERG's priorities. You can engage members by ensuring there are things to do in your space, ranging from discussions, to quizzes, to polls and quick questions.

Group Leader Calendar

The Group Leader Calendar provides a timeline view of planned initiatives across your organization. It is designed to facilitate scheduling and collaboration and minimize overlap of key events. We recommend referencing the Calendar frequently to find opportunities to partner with fellow Leaders, or your Program Administrator. Some tips for building your calendar include:

- Map out key events for your ERG as soon as possible. This includes key awareness dates (ex. Black History Month, International Women's Day) as well as meeting, social or professional events you are hosting.
- Try planning your Program Calendar in 90-day windows, ideally with content ready a month in advance.
- Monitor what the other ERGs are planning to identify partnership opportunities.

Variety of Content

Experience shows that members like to participate in different ways. By including multiple options for getting involved, members can choose content that is creative, storytelling or more qualitative focused. Most content should be serious and related to your Group, but there is always room for fun, lighthearted, seasonal content.

Try dividing larger topics into bite-sized quick questions, quizzes, or polls. For example, to explore the implications of a new piece of legislation, you could start with an informational discussion post, followed by a poll or quiz. This approach provides multiple ways for members to participate and reduces your effort in building out content.

Frequency of Content

One of the questions we are frequently asked is “how do I know if I have enough things for my Group members to do?” The goal is to have enough things to bring your group members back regularly but not so many that it is too much work to manage. In the early days, ensure you frequently publish polls, quick questions, quizzes, and articles you find interesting. Ideally you would have at least 1 or 2 content items scheduled per week and adjust based on participation. If your group members post a lot of content, you may be able to post much less frequently.

Over time, the goal is to have members drive the majority of content and conversations, requiring less effort from the Group Leader. As the Group matures, members will start their own discussions, answer each other’s questions, and share content and topics that you didn’t even know were on their radar!

Sources of Content

Leverage the websites you frequent and newsletters you subscribe to for ideas on content to share. Ted Talks, Annual Reports or even LinkedIn are good places to monitor. Pay attention to topics that get you really excited or that make you think. If an article or blog post resonates with you it should likely pique your members’ interest too.

Trends in Frequency & Variety

As you build your Program Calendar, take note of member participation habits from the previous month. What types of content do they like? Mostly polls or quick questions? Open discussions? How often are they logging in? If you notice a topic with a lot of engagement, use that as inspiration to develop a new poll, quick question, or quiz.

A Note on Participation

Participation can come in many forms. Some members will complete every poll, quick question, or quiz you post and participate in every discussion, while others may not “do” anything, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t finding value in what you are providing. Community lurkers often get a bad rap, but they may find great value in reading the content and comments.

Get Them to Stay: Member Experience

A key to keeping members engaged is ensuring they feel valued, important, and heard. Engaged members keep coming back and contribute to your overall community goals. Best practices for creating positive member experiences include:

Ensure Value

To build and grow a successful community, employees need to clearly understand the benefits of membership. What value will they get out of joining your Group? Exclusive access to leaders, programs, or professional development opportunities? A chance to connect with individuals with similar interests? Be clear about why someone would want to be a part of this space and be sure to deliver on it!

Close the Loop

Many companies and ERGs solicit the perspectives and experiences of their members to shape programs and influence decisions. Consolidating findings and insights from surveys and sharing with your members helps everyone understand the value of their efforts and demonstrates collective impact. We recommend creating share-back posts whenever possible to tell the group how their input was used.

Ongoing Community Tasks

As a Group Leader, there are a few simple recurring tasks that will position your Group for optimal engagement, insights, and growth. We've noted some of the best habits to get into on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

Weekly/Ongoing Tasks

Review & Respond to New Submissions

Each time you log in, check for new submissions in your Group and respond with a comment or a like. Encourage other leaders or tenured members to jump into any discussions where they have experience or can add value.

Publishing, Editing, Scheduling, and Inactivating Content

Be sure to review the leader Calendar and schedule, publish or inactivate any quizzes, quick questions, or polls for the week. Prior to publishing, review the questions and confirm who you want to be able to see it. Your options include just members of your group, all group leaders or everyone in the company.

There may be conversation topics that align to a key calendar date. Make note of dates of interest for your group or a seasonal trend. Be sure to post activities on those dates or collaborate with your Program Administrator to coordinate.

Welcome New Members

Depending on how your Group is set up, you may want to acknowledge and welcome new members. If your Group is private, or if members can join anonymously, this may not be appropriate. Connecting with new members early can lead to faster and deeper participation. It's also a great opportunity to share helpful onboarding materials and provide an overview of how things work.

Community Newsletter

Your Program Administrator may send out weekly/monthly newsletters to community members to promote successes, upcoming events, etc. Talk to your Program Administrator about ways you can participate in the newsletter to promote and share your ERG's content. The newsletter is a great way to promote upcoming events, important blogs or activities that are open to the whole community.

Monthly Tasks

Review Trending and Organic Content

Have a look at what your group members are discussing and make notes for future inspiration. Key areas to review include discussion topics, comment threads on activities and blogs, and member questions and answers.

Shareback Blogs

Consider writing a shareback blog to summarize the results of a key activity.

Member Features or “Ask the Experts”

Consider highlighting a community member in a post as a regular feature. We’ve seen success from sending members a list of questions about themselves and requesting some personal photos. Similarly, you can do the same to highlight an expert within your company, providing insight into their role or background.

Schedule events for the upcoming months

We recommend reviewing the Community Events Calendar on a monthly basis and doing your best to plan months ahead. By planning Events in advance, you can build awareness early to ensure maximum attendance. If you’re not sure what to post one week, promoting an upcoming Event and sharing your thoughts on why it’s important or relevant to your Group could be a lightweight way to start a discussion!

Quarterly Tasks

Group Health & Trends Assessment

At the end of each quarter, it’s a good idea to review elements of your Group and adjust for the upcoming quarter. The best place to review trends is your Group Leader Dashboard. Using the Dashboard, note key stats including: Member count (total and new), logins (average and unique), submissions, member engagement and participation. Be sure to compare your key stats to the same period last year or the quarter before. Note any significant changes.

Have you met your recruitment and participation targets? If not, consider adjusting your recruitment approach. Are members participating in your activities? If not, consider changing the mix or frequency.

Upcoming Content Build

After reviewing your community health metrics it's time to start planning your next quarter within the Group Leader calendar. We generally recommend planning your next series of content about a month in advance. Be sure to note any key awareness dates or important company events.

Annual Tasks

Member Satisfaction Survey

We recommend running a member satisfaction survey at regular intervals to monitor how members feel about your group. Using Quick Questions or a poll, you can ask members how satisfied they are with the type of content found in the group, the resources available, the discussions, the frequency and more. This is your chance to ask questions that will help shape the future of your Group.

Best Practices for Engagement

When you launch your group, you may find that members have a lot to talk about and are keen to engage and participate. But what if you have a quiet crowd? How can you get them talking?

An easy first step to fostering a thriving group is to validate and acknowledge member comments. By encouraging and recognizing participation, you can make sure no one is talking into a void. A rapid response/comment from anyone will support the return of new members. As a Group Leader, you are the face of your ERG and are positioned to create a lively, engaging, and relevant experience for members. Here are some guiding principles to create a collaborative environment:

Guiding Principles

Be the host of the party

Sometimes it takes a while for members who don't know each other to start talking and engaging. Be sure to introduce members to one another (you can tag them into relevant conversations). If no one responds to a member's question or post, jump in so they aren't left hanging. Model the behavior and manner you expect/hope for in your group.

Welcome new members early

Research shows that the sooner a new member's comment or post is acknowledged/responded to, the more likely they are to become an engaged long-term member. Check regularly for new members and be sure to jump on their posts with a comment or a like.

Ask probing questions

Some members are chatty while others are very brief. Don't hesitate to ask questions to get a member to expand on their idea or question. For those who have written detailed entries, try to find something to ask them more about. Effective questions include:

- "Why do you think that?"
- "Have you also found..."
- "Can you tell us a bit about your experience?"
- "How did you solve that particular problem?"
- "Do you have any examples of that experience that you can share with us?"
- "I hadn't considered that perspective before – thanks for your thoughts."

Share your own experience

Be sure to jump into conversations with your own stories and learnings. Have a relevant example or idea? Share it!

Highlight member contributions

Almost certainly your superstar members will appear over time. These are the members that offer to help, never fail to like, or comment, share their experiences. Create a discussion post to highlight their impact and thank them for their involvement. It reinforces their commitment to the group and highlights valuable member examples to others.

Find your team/experts

Most Group Leaders have full-time jobs so be sure to tap others within your group to answer member questions and to find and share relevant content.