

The Business Case

Religious diversity is a workplace issue:

- Worldwide, **84% of people identify with a religious group**.¹
- In the United States, **77% of people identify with a religious group**² (and those who don't identify with a religious group may still believe in God, pray during the workday, or have other spiritual practices that need accommodations).
- **65% of Americans say that religion is an important part of daily life**.³ Religion is a core part of how many people identify and this identifier will emerge in many aspects of daily life, including the workplace.
- In the United States, religious discrimination complaints made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) rose by **67%** between 2001 and 2014 - **and religious discrimination is the second fastest growing category**,⁴ behind discrimination based on disability. It is therefore important for companies to proactively take steps to prevent costly and brand-damaging lawsuits based on religion.
- Tanenbaum's 2013 Survey of American Workers and Religion⁵ found that **22% of American workers share their own religious beliefs or views about religion with coworkers at least once or twice a month**. Since conversations about religion are taking place at work, companies should be proactive to make sure employees have a constructive space, like an employee resource group, to have these conversations in inclusive and respectful ways.

Proactively addressing religion through a faith-based ERG can positively impact your bottom line:

- **Education:** Tanenbaum's 2013 Survey of American Workers and Religion⁶ found that workers whose companies offer **education programs** about religious diversity and **flexibility** for religious **practice report higher job satisfaction** than workers in companies that do not. Faith-based ERGs can help a company by coordinating and/or sponsoring these educational programs around religious diversity.
- **Reducing risk:** Increased awareness around religious diversity issues will decrease the likelihood of misunderstandings, conflicts and litigation. Furthermore, faith-based ERGs can

¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>

² <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

³ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx#1>

⁴ <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/statistics/enforcement/religion.cfm>

⁵ <https://tanenbaum.org/publications/2013-survey/>

⁶ <https://tanenbaum.org/publications/2013-survey/>

help companies identify innovative accommodations and institutionalize those practices.

- **Professional development:** Faith-based ERGs, like all other ERGs, can establish mentoring programs, provide educational programs, and connect employees with role models.
- **Improving team-based work, morale and productivity:** Companies and employees often lack the resources and skills they need to communicate sensitively and effectively about religion, negatively impacting teamwork, morale and productivity. Faith-based ERGs can create and manage resources like Quiet Rooms (designated spaces for prayer or reflection), information on upcoming holidays and interfaith calendars, to help the company meet these needs.
- **Improving recruitment and retention:** Having a faith-based Employee Resource Group helps companies stay competitive as employers of choice: **28%** of the DiversityInc Top 50 companies had religion-based employee-resource groups in 2012, versus just **5%** in 2004.⁷
- **Customer and Client Relations:** ERGs can help companies gain insights into new and emerging markets, thereby positively impacting the bottom line.
 - In 2003, Ford was able to utilize the power of its Interfaith Network when the group reached out to various houses of worship to promote the company's new Friends and Neighbors discount program. These discounts led to more than **\$260 million in sales**.⁸
 - A pharmaceutical company used its interfaith ERG to provide insights into creating kosher and halal medications.
 - A large financial services company asked its religion-specific ERGs to help design gift cards for lesser-known holidays.
 - An airline asked its faith-based ERGs to review in-flight holiday music.

⁷ <http://www.diversityinc.com/resource-groups-2/ask-diversityinc-how-does-your-company-handle-religious-holidays/>

⁸ <http://orgchanger.com/2010/06/11/driving-the-roi-%E2%80%93-where-to-start-your-projects-metrics/>