

ERGs and Veterans: A Formula for Professional Fulfillment

Employee resource groups (ERGs) serve as a platform for employees to connect, network and collaborate based on shared attributes such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. For veteran employees, ERGs provide a supportive community for individuals who have served in the military.

Southern Company (No. 24 on the Fair360 2023 Top 50 Companies list and No. 3 on the Top Companies for Veterans) has three veteran-specific ERGs that provide “a sense of familiarity with like-minded employees, a sense of belonging and an additional purpose within the organization,” said Chris Collier, Senior Director of Talent and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

“Our veteran-specific ERGs focus on integrating employee veterans into the company, providing encouragement, mentoring and career development workshops,” he said. “In addition, these ERGs support local and national military veteran organizations as well as their surrounding communities. Veteran employees can participate as much or as little as they like, providing flexibility in their commitment to the ERGs.”

The Positive Outcomes of Forming ERGs for Veterans

ERGs can offer a wide range of benefits for veterans and the organizations that establish them.

1 Camaraderie and Peer Support

One of the most significant advantages of ERGs for veterans is the camaraderie and peer support they offer. Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be challenging, as veterans often face unique issues and uncertainties. ERGs provide a safe space for veterans to share their experiences, challenges and successes, which can be instrumental in easing this transition.

“Teamwork is ingrained in military veterans from the first day of their military service,” Collier said. “Military veterans spend their entire military careers supporting a team and relying on that team to safely complete assigned tasks. Veteran employees know that teamwork grows from a sense of shared responsibility for the betterment of the organization. Based on their unique experiences while serving in the military, veterans understand how diverse individuals can work together to accomplish a mission.”





2 Networking and Professional Development

ERGs create opportunities for veterans to network with their peers and build meaningful professional connections. These connections can lead to mentorship opportunities, career advice and even job referrals. Additionally, ERGs often organize events, workshops and training sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of their members, contributing to their professional development.

3 Employee Engagement and Retention

Establishing ERGs demonstrates a commitment to fairness and inclusion, which can significantly improve employee engagement and retention. Employees who feel their organization values their unique backgrounds and experiences are more likely to be loyal and committed. For veterans, knowing that their employer supports them through an ERG can make them more likely to stay with the company long-term.

4 Enhanced Employee Well-Being

ERGs contribute to the overall well-being of veteran employees by addressing their specific needs. Whether it's offering resources for mental health support, facilitating discussions about post-military life challenges or organizing community service initiatives, ERGs help veterans feel supported in their personal and professional lives.

5 Recruitment and Branding

Companies with well-established ERGs for veterans often become more attractive to job seekers with military backgrounds. Veterans are more likely to consider employers who actively support their community. ERGs also positively impact a company's reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible organization, which can help attract top talent and customers.