



# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

THE MULTIPLIER

**PROXXY**

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## THIS WHITEPAPER WILL PROVIDE A FULL ROADMAP OF THE FOLLOWING:

- XX An overview of the most popular special interest groups
- XX The history of the development of special interest groups
- XX Determining the need for special interest groups
- XX Variables that impact your choice of special interest groups
- XX Steps for implementing a special interest group
- XX Case studies on the effective use of special interest groups



# OVERVIEW OF POPULAR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Not only does allowing employees to bring their outside interests into the workplace create community and foster a sense of belonging, but it can also spark entrepreneurial opportunities. The first step is to hold an open meeting to identify employees' various passions and interests. Popular strategies include:

## **Google's 80-20 Rule**

### **Uncover employee strengths and choice**

Google's 80-20 rule policy lets employees spend 80% of their time working and 20% investing in a side project. This innovative way of thinking has sealed Google's reputation as one of the world's most innovative companies. Gmail, Google Maps, Twitter, Slack, and Groupon all began as side projects.

And while most companies aren't in the same enviable position as Google, even a young company can incorporate exciting and inspiring strategies that help uncover employee strengths and choice.

**Hackathons:** A popular initiative on company retreats, Hackathons involve dividing a company into 4 groups, giving them a week to come up with a concept and then develop and present it.

This approach builds camaraderie and creativity amongst team members and often gives rise to a new company product or system.

**Side projects:** While developing side projects is always energizing for employees, results aren't always realistic for SMB's to incorporate into the workplace. A more achievable objective might be to call for an open pitch to create an Employee Resource Group.

**Cross-functional collaboration:** This strategy

fosters innovation and trust. The majority of employees say that side projects are game-changers. Not only do they facilitate inter-office connections, but they're an opportunity for employees to show each other their various skill sets.

## **Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In" Circles**

### **Allow women to connect**

Women can feel particularly alienated in the workplace. Facebook CEO and author Sheryl Sandberg's "Lean In" circles allow women to gather and connect on important issues like workplace bias and other barriers. Any sized company can start a circle. And circles have the added benefit of encouraging women to develop and flex leadership muscles and join Lean in's global network of 50,000 circles in over 184 different countries.

## **Everis Foundation**

### **Let employees explore initiatives**

The Everis Foundation lets employees explore initiatives without having to leave the company. Their website squarely lists its employees as the company's most valuable resource. Nurturing the passions and outside interests of their employees is a given for Everis because the success of the company relies on the health and well-being of its people.

Exerelia, a company that specializes in the design, implementation, and management of integral and technological solutions in the field of energy efficiency, is just one example of this company's forward-thinking and inclusive approach to fostering workplace interests.







# RETURN ON INVESTMENT

With these points in mind, how can we ensure that your choice of special interest groups offers a substantial ROI?

A classic calculation of ROI simply compares the original investment with the return on investment. Equations vary by industry. Six Sigma's formula for determining ROI is based on the dollar-to-value rate of efficiency increases. It is calculated as follows:

$$ROI = [Net\ Return\ on\ Investment / Cost\ of\ Investment] \times 100$$

Companies and organizations have to merge to work together on mutual interests.

By giving employees the freedom to explore their multiple identities and interests, employers will see a boost in innovative ideas.

Encouraging SIG's results in profitable new initiatives and business opportunities for SMB in the following ways:

- An engaged employee who feels connected to their company can help design new products and services and distribute them.
- Forming SIGs can help facilitate overdue agenda-setting in a workplace. For example, by promoting diversity and inclusivity and banning a toxic workplace, companies see a boost in engagement and higher retention rates.
- Interest groups can benefit workers that they represent and effect change.



## ***Investment***

### **Cultivating Curiosity**

Management has to notice a lack of engagement and make an exerted effort to learn more about the outside interests of employees.

### **Loss of Productivity**

Management needs to put SIGs on the company agenda and find the time and space to devote to listening and learning. Employees will need to be granted the time to draw up a business plan for possible SIGs. Management has to listen to multiple initiatives and then choose the strongest.

### **Coaching**

Management will need to Invest in coaching sessions to help with the development process.

### **Openness to New Ideas**

SMB owners have to remain open to differing perspectives about what's important and ensure that all employees feel they can safely express themselves.

### **Potential Loss of Focus**

By putting energy into a new initiative, employees risk losing focus on their everyday responsibilities.







## ***How to Determine the Right Special Interest Group***

At Proxy, we use a process to determine the right special interest groups for our clients. Our methodology revolves around gaining a comprehensive understanding of your organization through assessment, goal setting, SIG selection, and implementation.

### **Quick Overview:**

#### **Phase 1: Culture Assessment**

Surveys/focus groups/brainstorming sessions.

#### **Phase 2: Work On Existing Systems**

Align systems with the new SIG mandate.

#### **Phase 3: Leadership And Business Initiative Development.**

Programs/communications/coaching to develop initiatives.

#### **Phase 5: Full ROI**

Measure data as it comes available.

#### **Phase 6: Set Career Departmental Goals.**

#### **Phase 7: Promote Goals of the Organization.**







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