

## **My Faith Identity Is More Important Than My Gender Identity**

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I was a champion of diversity and inclusion, an employment attorney working to ensure all employees could reach their full potential in our corporate environment. I worked with all of the Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and served as a leader in the women's group, but I struggled to really identify personally with any of them. As my career progressed, I also felt more and more disenchanted with my work, and I sought more meaning and purpose in my career.

The day I learned that a group of Christian employees was trying to form an ERG based on their faith but running into obstacles, it was as if someone said to me, "Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created" (Esther 4:14). I knew that with my diversity and inclusion experience and employment law expertise, I could help the group overcome those challenges. I had actually drafted the policy which outlined the requirements for being approved!

As I worked toward formal ERG status for the Christian ERG and ultimately became the group's co-chair, I also found the meaning and purpose that had been lacking. I no longer felt my faith and work were separate and distinct parts of my personality. I could see how they fit together and how my faith could have a direct impact on how I perform my job and the type of work I do.

Over the years, the companies I had worked for had recognized my identity as a woman, but my identity in my faith is more important to me than my gender. Once the organization recognized that importance and supported my expression of my faith at work, I felt encouraged to be an integrated, aligned, values-driven leader in the company, allowing me to reach my full potential.

An integration of faith and work allowed me to achieve personal satisfaction and, therefore, increased engagement at work, but it has also provided other benefits to the organization. I now see my workplace as a mission field where my goal is to love my neighbor. That means caring for the other members of the Christian ERG, but also building bridges with employees of other faiths to host an inter-faith panel, to plan the design for a prayer room and to offer messages of hope on the National Day of Prayer. It means providing a forum for our black employees to share their experiences with racial inequality and challenging our white colleagues to live out their faith by speaking out for justice. It means showing love toward a member of the companies' ERG community who recently went through a gender transition.

Many people in our companies will never step foot in a church. We represent the values and compassion of our faith traditions in the corporate environment. We can bring love and light to our colleagues. This is a community of people in desperate need of hope, and we are in the position to serve them. What a mission!