


**Women@Wade Trim**  
How an Employee Resource Group Helped Us Connect and Grow our Culture in a Hybrid Environment

Presented to Michigan Society of Professional Engineers  
May 6, 2023



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**Agenda**

- About Wade Trim and the Presenters
- What is an ERG
- Women@Wade Trim History and Purpose
- ERG Function in a Hybrid Environment
- How ERG Helps Connect and Grow Culture
- Other Benefits of Women@Wade Trim
- Considerations for Starting an ERG

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**Purpose and Learning Objectives**

After this session, attendees will know:

1. What an Employee Resource Group (ERG) is and its importance.
2. How an ERG can function in a hybrid environment to help employees connect and support one another, resulting in a stronger culture.
3. How to start an ERG in a hybrid work model.

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### Today's Presenters



Breanna Anderson, PE      Jamie Kanners, PE

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### About Wade Trim

*Our Mission*



Trusted partners that deliver innovative solutions built on a foundation of excellence.

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### About Wade Trim


*Firm Resources*



- In-house subject matter experts
- National reach, local expertise and understanding



**+ 600** EMPLOYEES    **19** OFFICES    **9** STATES



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### Employee Resource Group (ERG)

- Volunteer
- Employee-Led
- Foster Inclusivity and Build Community
- Employees Share Common Backgrounds or Life Experiences



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### ERG Benefits

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Employer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal and professional growth opportunities</li><li>• Work connections, support, resources</li><li>• Create a sense of belonging</li><li>• Raise common concerns or issues for meaningful change</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cost-effective way to improve the employee experience</li><li>• Demonstrates commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion</li><li>• Increases employee retention and helps recruiting</li><li>• Fosters professional growth</li></ul>



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### Our Considerations for Starting an ERG

- Establish bylaws
- Maintain transparency
- Demonstrate inclusivity
- Foster networking between different ERGs
- Provide leadership opportunities



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### Women@Wade Trim

- Established Women@Wade Trim Committee in 2018 to start up ERG
- Mission is to empower women who work at Wade Trim to identify and achieve their aspirations



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### Pilot In-Person Groups

- Emailed all employees for volunteers to participate
- Piloted in-person meetings in two larger offices (Taylor and Flint, MI) for face-to-face interaction
- Meetings facilitated by Committee members
- Focused on getting to know each other and topical discussions

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### Pilot Virtual Group

- Piloted virtual group to connect employees in smaller offices across four states (NYC; Asheville, NC; Traverse City, MI; Fort Worth, TX)
- Used new Teams technology to meet virtually
- Meetings facilitated by Committee member



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### Preparing for Company-wide Rollout

- Surveyed participants to understand their expectations and prioritize interest in themes/topics
- Requested facilitator volunteers and provided training
- Customized approach based on research of other groups, like Lean In Circles, and to fit our culture (mix of structure and spontaneity)
- Recruited new members through emails and open house event with trivia game about famous women in history

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### Company-wide Launch during COVID

- Decided to meet virtually to connect members across all offices
- Established internal website to share resources and help new members join
- Developed facilitator training materials
- Held company-wide presentations from female Board of Directors member and ERG members
- Mix up groups annually to promote new connections
- 58 members



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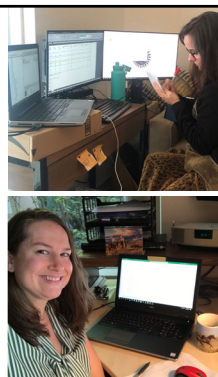
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### ERG Function in a Hybrid Work Environment

- Combat isolation and stress
- Share concerns and challenges
- Support personally and professionally
- Continue to learn and grow
- Laugh!



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**Future Activities**

- Meeting featuring panel of women including clients
- Meeting featuring panel of female Board member and her women mentees
- Local stewardship activities focused on girls and women
- Calendar of women-related celebrations and activities

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**How ERG Helps Connect and Grow Culture**

**Strengthen Employee Network**

- Grow professional connections
- Build personal support, trust and social connections



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**How ERG Helps Connect and Grow Culture**



- Support Professional Growth
- Help women employees discuss challenges, identify opportunities, and take action
- Encourage mentoring among women
- Dedicated time for education and discussion about topics related to professional women

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### Improve Relationships with Clients



- Improve understanding of leadership issues women face
- Promote open communications and emotional intelligence
- Foster more diverse project teams and outcomes
- Seek subconsultant and mentoring relationships with woman-owned companies

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### Enhance Recruiting Efforts

- Demonstrate we have an ERG that connects women employees
- Encourage women to be more involved in recruiting process



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### Inform Wade Trim Communications and Activities

- Events
- DEI
- Stewardship
- Recruiting
- Wellness Program



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### Allyship Benefits for Male Participants

- Work with female clients/team members more effectively
- Improve emotional intelligence
- Open eyes to bias and other issues
- Encourage inclusive language
- Representatives for whole company



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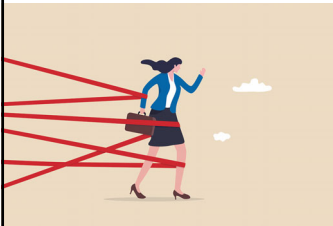
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### DEI Consultant Engagement



- Employee Engagement Survey completed by 53% (237) of employees
- Three concerns identified more by women than men:
  - Encountering barriers at work
  - Being ignored or discounted
  - DEI Program is just a box to check with no real change

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### Women@Wade Trim Group Response

- Held a panel discussion organized by members
- Groups members vetted and discussed survey results
- Expanded discussion to experiences within industry and previous employers
- Facilitators provided resources to learn more about issues
- Prioritized issues that feel more within an individual employee's control to change (confidence, mentoring other women, taking more risks)

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### Connecting to Leadership

- Helped leadership recognize importance of employee training and integrating efforts into Strategic Plan
- Company-wide inclusive workplace training
- Established strategic goal
- Measuring percentage increase of female employees
- DEI Committee measuring employee turnover and promotions

**Welcoming and Diverse Environment:**  
Foster a working environment where everyone feels welcome and able to do their best work.

INCREASE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES **33%**  
2023 Q1 ACTUAL

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### Resources

- Valued for relevance to topics of interest and ability to spark group discussion
- Videos, podcasts, books, or articles shared on internal company website

Inspirational Women	Inspirational Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🎧 Annie Downs That Sounds Fun Podcast</li> <li>🎧 Brené Brown Courage Videos</li> <li>🎧 Brené Brown Unlocking Us Podcasts</li> <li>🎧 Oprah Winfrey Super Soul Sunday Videos</li> <li>🎧 Mel Robbins Practical Daily Audible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🎧 Even Better: Workplace Equality 2.0</li> <li>🎧 Council Post: How To Speak Up In Male-Dominated Meetings And Get The Visibility You...</li> <li>🎧 The cure for burnout (but it isn't self-care) - TED</li> <li>🎧 Think Done Instead of Perfect - Thrice Global</li> <li>🎧 Women Engineers Pioneered Across the Globe</li> <li>🎧 The Happy Secret to Better Work</li> <li>🎧 3 Ways to Win Working from Home</li> </ul>
Interpersonal Challenges	General Women Topics of Interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🎧 REAL POD   Victoria Garick</li> <li>🎧 Brave on Strong Backs, Soft Fronts, and Wild Hearts</li> <li>🎧 The Likability Dilemma for Women Leaders   Robin Hauser   TED</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🎧 Mel Robbins   One of the Best Talks Ever on Self-Motivation</li> </ul>

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### ERG Best Practices



- 1. Communicate by listening, learning and sharing.
- 2. Gain crucial buy-in and support from the top.
- 3. Don't get stuck in ideation—get into action.
- 4. Drive awareness and engagement through communication channels.
- 5. Measure success and adjust accordingly.

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