

**Preparing for a Heritage Month**

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Has your organization had a heritage month celebration before?

Some of these recognitions can include, Hispanic/Latine/Latinx Heritage Month, Asian Pacific-Islander American Heritage Month, Black History Month, Native American Heritage Month, Pride Month, and so much more. Organizations often prepare for a heritage month by planning a summit, hiring a keynote speaker, hosting a workshop, and more. But have you ever stopped to wonder how to plan a holistic and non-performative event? Have you ever gotten stuck on deciding what to do?

We have the guide to preparing and planning a heritage month right here!

In this post, you’ll see our step-by-step guide on preparing for a heritage month, receive tips and best practices on how to mindfully plan a celebration, and learn about the different ways that ERG Dynamics™ can support you in the process.

**Why should we recognize heritage months and other special monthly recognitions?**

When organizations take time to elevate special recognitions each month, doing so helps to:

1. Foster an inclusive environment and invites people to show up as their authentic selves. These celebrations are also an excellent opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
2. Create space for all identities to feel welcome and valued, allowing belonging and safety in the workplace to flourish.
3. Regarding the business case, boost loyalty and productivity. Statistically speaking, when employees feel a sense of belonging and value, they are more likely to remain in the company and be productive in an organization’s working environment.
4. Promote understanding and empathy by spotlighting various cultures and creating opportunities for people to gain exposure and education around identities different from their own.

It is through these moments that people can gain a deeper awareness of the experiences of others and adapt a different lens when navigating an environment with a variety of backgrounds. When workplaces take the time to celebrate heritage months and special monthly recognitions, it can encourage individuals without this lived experience to reflect and build understanding with new groups.

**How to prepare for a heritage month:**

When it comes to planning and organizing a heritage month celebration, the most important factor is to ***give yourself enough time***. Organizing a speaker, putting together a workshop, arranging a celebration, getting event sign-ups, organizing catering — all of this takes time. Additionally, the goal is to not be performative with your actions. When you rush to put together an event, or multiple events, it starts to look like we are just checking off a box on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion To-Do list, which can be a major deterrent for employees.

* ***What is the ideal time frame for organizing an event?***

We suggest giving yourself 2-3 months in advance so that you have time to be intentional: shop around when it comes to working with third-party companies, get feedback on previous events and use that to create data benchmarks, plan multiple events throughout the month, and secure your budget. The business case for DEI often calls for proving your ROI, so it is best to ensure you are gathering data along the way.

* ***Speaking of budget…***

Ensuring you have a realistic amount of funds for your events is crucial. Oftentimes, you would need to make a request for funding, so ensure you give yourself time to communicate through the appropriate channels, collaborate, or secure sponsorship.

* ***Do you have Employee Resource Groups?***

Consider tapping them for feedback or event support. Keep in mind that the workload of educating and planning for a heritage month should not solely fall on these groups, however, letting people volunteer to be involved without pressure is a great idea. This is an excellent way to foster cross-collaboration and relationship building.

* ***How do you know what to organize?***

This is an excellent opportunity to see what people have responded to in the past. Utilize surveys from past events, talk to employees who have experienced various heritage month events, and even reach out to new employees to see what their old companies did. You can also tap your existing networks and see if anyone has any great ideas or feedback from their own experiences.

* ***What do I do about people who aren’t interested in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?***

When it comes to business, we have to know our market. The reality is not everyone is going to be bought in on DEI. Traditional workplace models have not prioritized belonging and care in the workplace. We know this is frustrating and defeating, however, this percentage of people tends to be on the smaller side, so focus your attention on those who are bought in and open to these experiences and conversations.

* ***Where do I even start looking for a DEI speaker?***

Tapping your networks is a great place to start. See who others have worked with. You can also do a LinkedIn search for DEI speakers and start reaching out. Additionally, if you have read any books by DEI authors, consider reaching out to them as well. **(Did you know that ERG Dynamics™ offers many services including keynote speakers? Consider working with us to craft your next experience!)**

**What are some best practices and tips to keep in mind?**

Here are some additional tips to keep in mind as you are organizing and planning your programing.

* *Celebrate diversity all year ‘round.*

Oftentimes, we see organizations recognize a group solely during the heritage month, then they aren’t even acknowledged again until the next year comes. This comes off as performative and inauthentic. Uplift diverse identities all year ‘round by recognizing various special holidays, sharing different types of holiday celebrations in December, remaining conscious of the news and current social landscape, and revisit your existing company policies to ensure they are inclusive.

* *Be mindful that the burden of organizing, educating, and bearing the sole responsibility of an event should not fall on people of marginalized identities.*

People of marginalized identities are often already dealing with daily microaggressions, collective trauma, and fear on top of their workload. Let’s not add to this stress and anxiety.

* *Provide healing and wellness for people of marginalized identities.*

Healing and wellness can take on many forms. Whether it’s a meditation session, mental health access, journaling exercises, wellness workshops, or anything else, do not be afraid to explore this realm of offerings. Providing healing spaces has proven to help employees learn to manage and process their stress and anxiety. This can also help address burnout and promote psychological safety as well.

* *Set Community Guidelines and Agreements.*

Setting intentional guidelines for behavior can help promote safety and trust during an event. It also serves as an agreement between participants to be conscious and mindful of their actions.