

# How the power of the community can drive business growth

Work can be satisfying and fulfilling, but persistent inequalities prevent many people from achieving their full potential and enjoying the same benefits and opportunities as their peers.

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For example, *it's thought* that 54,000 women a year lose their job simply for getting pregnant – and 390,000 working mums in the UK experience potentially discriminatory treatment at work every year. In the face of such clear injustice, it's easy to see why some employees feel disenfranchised and dissatisfied with the working world.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Workers don't have to settle for unfair practices, and there are opportunities for people to achieve positive change in the workplace, if they harness the power of communities to push for reform.

What's more, companies are realising that the enthusiasm and commitment of active engaged communities can drive business growth and shore up success. When employees feel heard and supported, they are more likely to be motivated, productive and loyal.

We believe it's time for organisations in all sectors to realise that communities who campaign for change aren't a threat to their business – but a powerful

force for good. And importantly, start-ups have a real opportunity to lead the charge on this new way of thinking, without being hampered by the processes and red tape that larger organisations need to navigate.

## The power of many

The charity *Pregnant then Screwed* is a good example of a community rising up to make things better. Last year, 15,000 women marched on Westminster to demand an overhaul of childcare, parental leave policies and flexible working rights – with MPs like Jess Phillips publicly lending their support. Of course, there's still much work to be done to secure the reform this group wants, but the power of thousands of likeminded people publicly standing to secure change is undoubtedly significant.

For many, campaigning begins with ascertaining the level of support for their cause – using platforms like Organise to anonymously poll people within the working community, in specific industries, or amongst particular demographics. But this doesn't have to be done behind closed doors – businesses can actively encourage employees to speak out, and actually help them to ascertain whether there is appetite amongst their peers to explore and facilitate change.

When it comes to campaigning, engagement and motivation is important. Our own members tell us that driving change can be time consuming, slow and frustrating, and businesses have the opportunity to nurture and encourage enthusiasm, even if every change suggested can't be implemented.

## Looking outside of your organisation

But of course, it's not just employees who can be powerful agents of change and drivers of growth. Organise – and companies like us – are only successful because of our powerful community of members who promote the platform, engage with our mission and tell the stories of how we've helped them successfully campaign.

So, it's crucial that businesses look outside of their four walls and build a community of customers or partners who feel valued and listened to. A sense of involvement (and even ownership) can be a powerful motivator, and by involving customers or partners in decision-making and giving them a say in

how an organisation operates can be crucial to long term success.

One way to involve a community is through customer feedback and surveys. By regularly soliciting feedback and acting on it, businesses can show customers that their opinions matter and that you value their input. This can help to build trust and loyalty and can also help businesses to identify areas for improvement and growth.

Another way to involve a community is through co-creation and collaboration. By working with customers or partners to co-create products, services, or initiatives, organisations can tap into their knowledge and expertise and build a sense of shared ownership. This can be a powerful way to drive innovation and growth.

## Look to others for inspiration

Everyone in business knows that collaboration is key to success. And, by looking to others who have shared similar experiences, both companies and workers can build a sense of solidarity that can help them drive change

And the good news is that there's plenty of inspiration to be had. For example, in 2019, staff at the University of Glasgow organised a series of strikes to protest pay inequality and the lack of opportunities for women in leadership positions. The strikes, which were supported by students and community organisations, led to the university agreeing to implement a gender pay gap audit and to address other issues related to pay and working conditions for women. And, in 2020, community action from NHS staff led to the publicly funded organisation agreeing to address pay inequality and to implement a gender pay gap audit.

Both examples clearly demonstrate that, by organising and speaking out, workers can be a powerful force for positive change and help create a better environment for everyone. And, for the start-up community, there's a real opportunity to work hand in hand with changemakers – both inside and outside of an organisation – to create a new paradigm where change is good, and campaigning is encouraged.

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