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Inspiring Christians to transform the workplace and the nation

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Why Start A Workplace Group?

Which of the following is not mentioned in the Bible: midwife; civil servant; fashion designer; property developer; carer; musician; teacher; politician; church leader; carpenter? Well of course it's a trick question - all are mentioned.

Work is part of God's Kingdom, not an add-on. God does not have opening hours, or days off. God is present in all situations – that includes the workplace! So if God has called us to the world of work, he calls us too, to give Christian witness in our respective workplaces, living out the values of Christianity. So is God calling you to set up a Christian Group in your place of work? If you find that a bit daunting, don't worry, you are not alone.

Christian Workplace Groups (CWGs) are being established all over the U.K and they are a real help to Christians, other employees and the organisation. They come in all shapes and sizes. Some are small with just a few Christians meeting and praying, others are very large groups in national and international organisations, playing a major part in the policy development and day to day activities in those organisations. It doesn't matter that they are different. They are all part of God's Plan.



First Steps

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Are you on your own?

If you're on your own and feel God is calling you to start a CWG you can start by praying that God will put you in contact with other like minded Christians. Then make sure you keep your eyes open! Look out for opportunities and make use of them when they are presented to you.

If you haven't yet been able to get together with others, you can start by regularly praying for your organisation and for the needs you come across.

Try wearing a fish or cross. You would be surprised how often this can prompt contact and discussion between Christians.



Is there a small group of Christians?

Let's assume that you have managed to make contact with other Christians, even if it is only one or two, and there is a desire amongst you to meet and explore how you might support one another in the workplace.

Start off by coming together informally perhaps for a coffee, probably initially outside the workplace, to share ideas about why you want to meet and what you would like to do as a group.

As relationships develop you can think about how you might go about getting formal recognition from your organisation. The rest of this booklet describes some of the practical steps that you can take.

Don't be frightened to get in touch with Transform Work UK at an early stage. If you contact them either by phone or e-mail, you will find people who will help and support you in getting a CWG off the ground.

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Knowing Your Territory

Before you move forward as a CWG and decide what you might want to do either as an individual or as a group, it's important to understand your work environment. Find out if there are any faith initiatives already existing in your organisation.

Here are one or two things you should check out:

- Are there any more like-minded Christians in the Workplace? If you don't know, try to find out. Initially this might be simply by word of mouth.
- Has the organisation set up a faith prayer room? If there is one, who uses it and how often? Is it available to you?
- Is there a multi-faith forum in the organisation? If you don't know, you may want to check with your human resources department.
- Does your organisation have an appointed chaplain? If there is one, engage him/her in your discussions.
- Does your organisation have staff support networks? If it does, find out which networks exist.



Once you know a bit more about what exists in your workplace, you can begin to plan what you would like your CWG to do.

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Starting a CWG

Building the Team

It is important, right from the beginning, to try and work together as a team. If the CWG takes off, then there will be many things to do and it is important to share the tasks around.

Be positive and encourage people to play their part. Remember that Christians come from different church backgrounds, denominations and traditions. Make sure that people in the group do not feel excluded because of differences in styles of worship. Be as inclusive as possible.

Deciding what you want to do

At some point, if you want to establish a CWG, you will need to seek agreement from your managers. Before you meet with them, decide what you want to do as a group and some of the requests you might want to make to the organisation. Here are some points you might like to consider:

- Can you have access to a room on work premises where you can meet?
- Think about how often you will meet and what you will do at your meetings, perhaps prayer and Bible study.
- Will you want to use notice boards or the intranet? If so, you will need to check this out with your managers.
- Can you use organisational facilities e.g. photocopiers; phones? Will you have to pay for their useage?
- Who will the group be open to: Christians, non-Christians, those simply wanting to find out more about Jesus?
- What benefits will the group bring to Christians?
- What benefits will the group bring to all employees?
- What benefits will the group bring to the organisation?



Aims and Objectives

Most CWG's have gone down the route of establishing some key aims and objectives. It is useful to think about what you want to achieve and what steps are needed to get there. Whilst these may change as the group develops, it is important at the outset to identify what your key aims are. This is helpful when seeking the support of managers and in telling other colleagues what this group is all about. You will need to work these objectives out according to your situation, but there are perhaps three rules of thumb to follow.

- Don't have too many objectives (Maximum of 3-5)
- Keep them simple.
- Near the top of the list have an objective which states the commitment of the group to serve the organisation faithfully.



Good communication is vital for the well-being and development of any CWG. If this is maintained, then many pitfalls and problems can be avoided. There are probably six areas that need to be highlighted.

Within the Group. Make sure that you know what each other is doing. If there appears to be disagreement or confusion within the CWG, then this will seriously affect the credibility of the group with managers and other work colleagues. As a team have regular meetings and review what you are doing and plan for the future.

With Managers. It is important to engage with managers, to have their support for what you are doing. When you have decided what you want to do and what you want to ask from managers, then set up a meeting, probably with someone from the HR department. Make sure as you move forward that you have regular meeting with a manager to report on progress of the group. Periodically, perhaps annually, present a brief review of what the group has done and what it has achieved.

Work Colleagues. It is important to let other work colleagues know what you are up to and to invite them to be involved. There are a number of ways to do this, depending upon the facilities available within your workplace: production of newsletters; good use of notice boards, advertising meetings; use of the organisation's intranet; posters; word of mouth; open days; e-mail; articles on popular work web-sites. Remember to always make sure that managers have agreed use of these facilities.

Other Workplace Staff Networks. It is most important that Christian workplace groups see themselves as part of the overall diversity framework and act in a corporate way. Talk to other diversity groups and whenever possible work together. This strengthens diversity groups as a whole and supports having a combined positive influence in the workplace. Identify both common ground and areas of potential differences with other networks and where there are differences, seek to find a resolution. Where common ground cannot be found, accept that there are differences.

With Transform Work UK (TWUK). Remember TWUK is there to help you. They can give you advice based on the experiences of many CWGs that are part of their network. It is also possible for a member of their team to come and visit you and advise you on how to move forward. When things are moving forward, stay in touch so that we can continue to pray for you and to learn from your experience.

With Churches. CWG's are not meant to be churches and it is important to maintain links with local churches, to seek their support in prayer. Our experience is that the presence of a CWG does bring people along the path to faith, so it is important that if colleagues are seeking to know the Lord Jesus, that we are able to put them in touch with a local church.

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Running Your CWG

Every workplace situation is different, but there are some common strands you should consider in running your CWG:



- **Frequency.** How often will you meet as a group? Most groups tend to meet on a weekly or fortnightly basis, but this is entirely for you to decide. However, make sure that you put them in the diary and stick to them. Even if attendance is low, keep going.
- **Venue and Time.** Hopefully you will have identified a regular venue with your managers. Be aware of its location, for example decide whether singing and music is appropriate to that venue. Make sure the time of meetings is acceptable to most people. It is important to comply with workplace rules, so above all, ensure that the meetings finish on time and that people are not late back to work.
- **Agenda.** Make sure that you have a clear outline of what you are going to do in the meetings. It could be prayer, Bible study, discussion or you might have a speaker. Make sure you make the best use of the time. Plan ahead as far as you are able.
- **Leadership.** It is important to identify a small number of people to take responsibility for leading the CWG forward. Decide how the leadership of your group will operate. This ensures that the success of the group is not dependent on one or two people and will assist the longevity and vibrancy of the group. It is important that the leadership team are committed to developing the group and live out their lives as committed Christians. Remember enthusiasm, maturity and skills aren't always synonymous, so try to give people roles suitable to their skills. Give them small tasks first to see how they manage before you appoint people to a major role.
- **Supporting Members.** The CWG should be a place where members can be strengthened and encouraged. Try to make time to come together to share individual concerns or issues. Pray for each other's needs. You may like to establish a prayer team which can pray for individuals and the organisation as a whole.
- **Awareness Raising Events.** Awareness raising events are a useful way to spread the Good News in the workplace in a gentle way. Other CWGs have held special events such as:
- **Easter events** – serving hot cross buns; giving out Easter eggs; accompanied by a display recounting the Easter events.
- **Christmas Event - Carol services**, sending out advent calendars
- **Christian Awareness weeks** – holding a series of events for a week, telling others about the Christian story.

Tell TWUK what you are doing so we can tell others via our website and newsletter.

Formal Recognition as a Staff Network through Diversity

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Employers are increasingly of the view that if people are able to bring to work all their personal attributes, along with their skills, then the workplace is enriched.

As a result and as a response to legislation, organisations are increasingly encouraging the setting up of staff networks to promote diversity in the workplace. This ought to include faith groups and in particular for us, Christians. You may therefore wish at some stage to seek formal recognition under your organisation's diversity framework. This can be seen as a developmental opportunity for your group and this is outlined below.

Christian Workplace groups can be at several stages of development and knowing where your particular group is can help in the process of achieving employer recognition. The table below will help you assess your current position.

Stage of Development	Characteristics
Early Formation (i)	A number of Christians have made contact with one another within the workplace. There is a desire amongst these Christians to meet within the context of the workplace and explore how they might support one another.
Early Formation (ii)	There is a desire to explore how to bring a positive Christian influence to bear within the organisation's workplaces. At this stage managers do not formally recognise this group.
Organisational Recognition	Managers have accepted that there are a number of Christians within the organisation who would like to meet as a group and have agreed this. This involves making office accommodation available for Christians to meet in.
Organisational Integration	Senior managers have accepted that the Christian Workplace Group can be a positive influence to the organisation. Consequently, the group is now recognised as part of the diversity framework and involved in regular meetings with senior managers and other diversity groups.
Organisational Celebration	Senior managers see the contribution that the CWG makes as a positive opportunity to develop the organisation internally and to also use as an exemplar of good practice with external bodies.

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Engaging With God

When Jesus came walking on the water to the disciples in the boat (Matthew 14: 22-33), some were cowering in the bottom of the boat whilst Peter enthusiastically leapt out.

As Peter moved towards Jesus he began to sink as his faith wavered, but of course Jesus put out his hand and rescued him and held him above the waves. It is a fundamental principle for all Christian workplace groups to rely on God for his strength and guidance. Without engaging consistently with God, your CWG will sink too! Pray, trust and listen to God and grab hold of his outstretched hand.



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