THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PLAYBOOK

How To Keep Your Best Employees For The Long Haul



ProService HAWAII

When it comes to developing an employee engagement plan, the importance and necessity of it is enthusiastically agreed upon by most business owners—regardless of the industry or company size. Whether you own a restaurant, lead a team, or run a corporate division, managers understand that disengaged employees can affect morale, productivity, and ultimately, the bottom line. Which is why engaged employees are the gold standard when it comes to employee retention and performance.

In fact, according to Gallup, a global performance-management consulting company, "Companies with highly engaged workforces outperform their peers by 147% in earnings per share."

There is no shortcut to making your company the perfect place to work, but our leading industry experts, research and analysis, and years of experience allow us to share what we know with business owners—big or small. The team at ProService has developed a step-by-step playbook on creating a powerfully positive employee experience that will keep more of your best employees on your team for the long haul.

In this eBook, we share six steps you can take to build an employee engagement program:

1. Creating relationships with your employees
2. Listening and understanding what's happening around you
3. Showing appreciation to keep employees engaged
4. Recognizing talent and rewarding excellence
5. Investing in each other and the business
6. Setting up an employee coaching program to continue development

Creating that kind of environment involves a lot of commitment. We're here to help you get started.



STEP

01

Create Positive Relationships

Whether you run a restaurant, manage a business, or own a shop, you can sense when there is tension in the air amongst co-workers. Answers are curt; service is affected; the days are long.

On the flip-side, when employees are getting along, you can hear laughter during work hours and even plans to meet outside of the workplace. Moods are lifted; smiles are present; people are happy to help each other.

You're not just imagining the drastic difference between friendly and toxic work environments. In fact, according to **Gallup**, friendships in the workplace can increase productivity, retention, and job satisfaction.



"51% of employees who strongly agree that their organization encourages close friendships at work are extremely satisfied with their place of employment."

- Gallup

It makes sense that the first step in building a lasting employee engagement program begins with creating positive relationships at the workplace. Let's dive into how you can foster stronger bonds amongst your teams.



Communicate (About Non-Work Items)

Relationships are built on open and honest communication, and workplace relationships are no different.

You can help create the environment for friendships to grow by setting "down time" and providing opportunities for employees to chat freely with each other about non-work topics. Encourage your team leaders to kick off meetings by asking employees how they're doing or about their upcoming weekend plans. Help employees get to know each other by celebrating personal events. On birthdays, cut a cake or give a card signed by the whole team; throw wedding or baby showers; treat employees to a team lunch for milestone work anniversaries. Celebrating with each other can encourage discussion amongst the team that is not centered around tasks and deadlines.



Provide a Comfortable Space

Having a fun, comfortable place where employees can let their guard down and relax during work hours is important for mental well-being; it's also away to boost friendly spirits.

While we don't recommend shipping in a ping-pong table tomorrow, having a living-area style conference room or simply a pop of color in the break room can be enough for employees to relax and start to form bonds. In fact, **studies show more than a 25% increase in employee morale and productivity for simple things like larger lunch tables**. A relatively easy change in the office space that enables conversations over lunch can lead to fostering friendships while ultimately, getting more work done.



Rally Around Company Culture

Defining the shared values and beliefs of your company is the first step in building a culture your employees can get behind.

Activities that align with your company culture, like end-of-the-workday pau hanas, peer-to-peer employee coaching programs, or potluck lunches, can help co-workers take a break, form a bond, and feel more relaxed around each other. Whether you work in an office building or the service industry, the workplace is where we spend a large amount of our time. You can encourage all employees to take part in building a cohesive team by establishing an open door policy, crowdsourcing ideas and using them to establish new traditions.

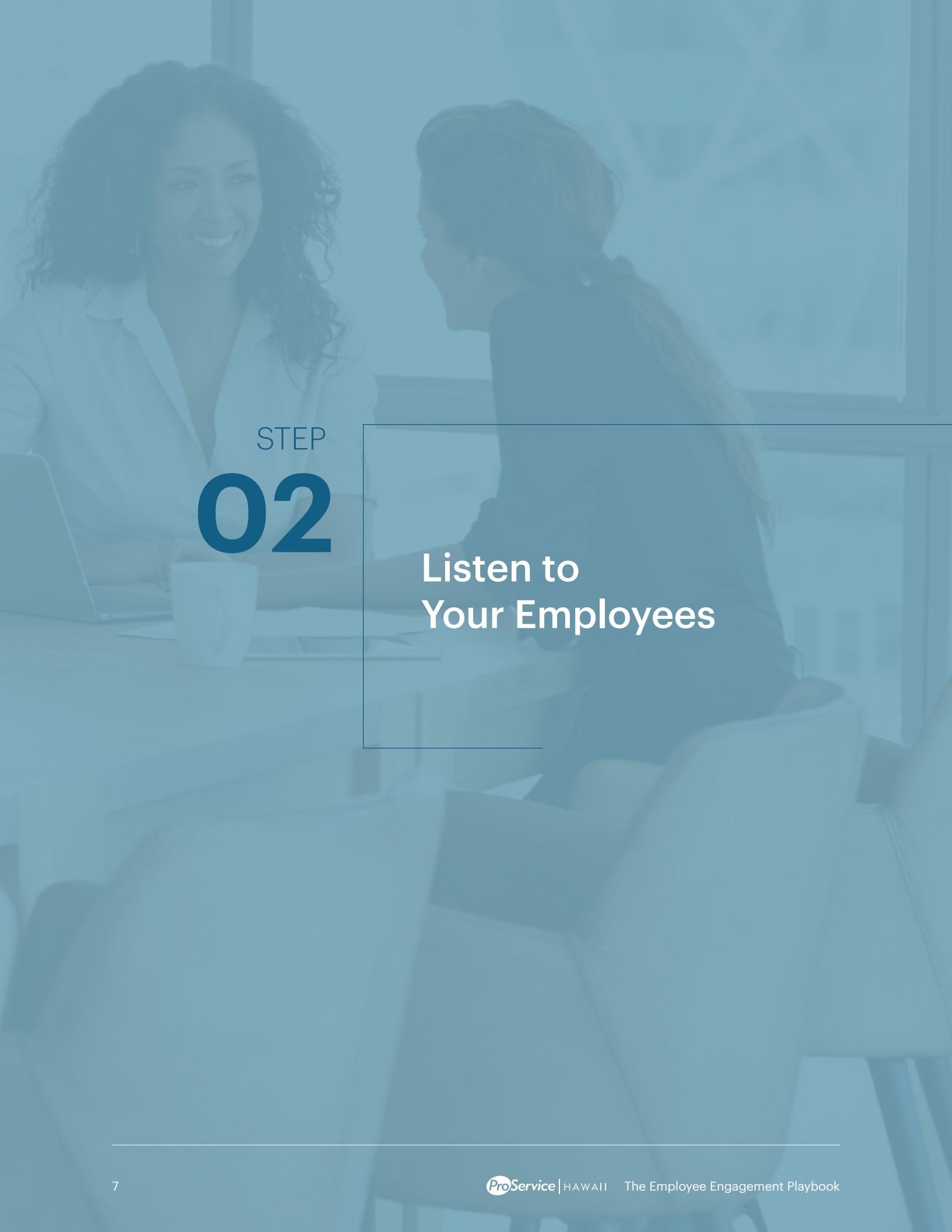


Involve Remote Employees

With video conferencing and online messaging systems like Slack and Google Hangouts being the norm, telecommuters in the workforce have increased 115% in a decade, according to **a report** from Global Workplace Analytics and FlexJobs.

It's important to make sure these employees feel like a part of the team, and that can be done through simple ways like mailing them company swag, sending birthday and work anniversary cards, planning activities that they can take part in, and ensuring they have a voice in planning and decisions. Flying employees in from neighboring islands for special events and meetings is also a great way to strengthen those connections.

Leaders need to understand the direct link between office friendships, engagement, and productivity. At the end of the workday, employee well-being is crucial to company success. Which is why creating an environment for your employees to communicate, feel comfortable, and embrace company culture will help you achieve your business objectives.



STEP

02

Listen to Your Employees

It can be challenging to keep a consistent pulse and tune into what your employees are thinking (instead of what you think they are thinking.) Getting their feedback is important and responding to their needs, their ideas, and their suggestions goes a long way toward building a positive work environment and positive relationships.

Formal surveys can be a great tool to gauge what your employees thoughts are of the workplace, but instead of waiting for feedback that comes around once a year, how can you create an environment that is built on ongoing, informal, open and honest conversations?



"To be really great at feedback you have to get it, give it, and encourage it," says Kim Scott, author of *Radical Candor*. "All of those things feel weird to do at first, but there are some easy things you can do to make them feel much more natural."

So, how can you take a natural approach to facilitating open two-way conversations? Check out these four ways to foster healthy communication in the workplace:



Ask for Candid Feedback

While it may seem obvious, one of the best ways to receive honest criticism is to simply ask for it. It may seem daunting to do, and many employees will shy away from sharing their true feelings, but asking for feedback is a great place to start when it comes to creating a safe environment for active communication. Encourage constructive conversations by asking questions like, "How can I support you?" or "What's one thing I can improve on next quarter?" By taking the lead and asking for feedback, you will encourage others to start doing the same and asking candid questions about their performance, opening the door for employees to examine their mistakes and leverage opportunities. It's also important to be conscious of how you respond to this feedback. Which brings us to our next point...



Talk Less, Listen More

The age-old wisdom still rings true, even in today's modern workplace. By talking less and listening more, you pay more attention to what is being said and start to actively listen to your employees. What does active listening look like in practice? It means giving the person speaking your undivided attention — making eye contact, closing your laptop screen, turning over your phone screen, and most importantly, listening to *understand*, not to respond.



Share "The Why"

Instantly engage others by sharing "the why" behind "the what" when it comes to initiatives in the workplace. From business goals to updated logos, explain the reasoning behind these critical decisions to keep employees feeling involved in changes, and giving them a solid reason for the hours of dedication a new project requires. By taking note of and/or accepting employee feedback, people are more likely to continue sharing their thoughts.

And this transparency isn't just for large-scale organizational changes. Even simple visibility can make a world of difference when it comes to two-way communication. For example, provide an agenda 24 hours prior to meetings to give people a chance to process and anticipate what is coming, and be clear with your expectations and how they should prepare. This will lead to more thoughtful and productive conversations.



Encourage Off-Premise Meetings

Whether you have an employee coaching program in place or not (we'll get to more on that later!), a great way to create a safe environment for honest feedback is to encourage peer-to-peer conversations. And don't limit these talks to the break room. Encourage team members to grab coffee together, talk story, turn their weekly tag-up into a walk, or plan a quarterly off-site to revitalize the team. For example, ask your team to do a meeting while on a run or hike at Koko Head — Getting out of the office and being active helps take the pressure off and allows for honest feedback and conversation to flow.

Open and active communication must happen across the organization, from top to bottom, and throughout. All employees, leaders, and stakeholders have to understand the importance of creating a safe environment for honest conversations to happen and the best way to leverage the constructive feedback given. Only then will business leaders be able to take full advantage of engaged and transparent communication.

By now you're probably thinking, "Okay, okay, I get it! Open, honest communication is important in the workplace." But how exactly can you as a business leader put that in place? We're here to help with a little Mad Libs activity in the next chapter!



STEP

03

Show Appreciation & Acknowledge Engaged Employees

No matter the forum, when HR professionals and business owners get together, it's not uncommon to hear similar questions float to the top of the discussion: How can I motivate my employees? What tips do you have to encourage and show my team I appreciate them? What's the best way to tell employees how much I value them and their contribution any day of the year?

While it can be hard to find the perfect words, sometimes a simple thank you or pause to take the time to step back to appreciate their great work goes a long way to having a happy and motivated team.



The answer to these tough questions boils down to one simple notion: engaged employees are motivated, less likely to quit, and tend to be culture drivers. So how do you, as a manager, cultivate engaged employees?

A simple employee engagement strategy that you can start implementing today is to acknowledge employees for a job well done. The most important thing about acknowledging employees is to effectively communicate it with the individual, as well as the larger organization.

This can sometimes be a daunting task, so we've created five Mad Lib-esque templates below to get you started!

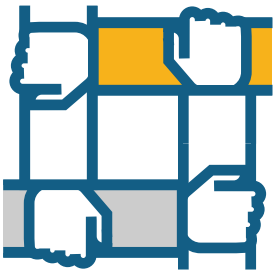


Mad Lib #1:
Motivate Your Employees

From holding a friendly sales competition to taking the team out for drinks after completing a big project, there are many ways to motivate employees, including reinforcing good traits when you want your employees to repeat these same behaviors. Here's a motivating mad lib:

"Since you [good trait], I wanted to give you the opportunity to [leadership activity]. I see you really want to make a difference here and want to give you a chance to grow."

Example
"Since you have come in early every day this month, I wanted to give you the opportunity to lead our team meeting. I see you really want to make a difference here and want to give you a chance to grow."



Mad Lib #2:
Encourage the Team

As a leader, it's not only your responsibility to motivate the individual employee who reports to you, but also the entire team. Encouraging team building by working together to reach a shared goal is great, but it's also important to tell your team you believe in them and value their expertise. Here's a way to talk to the team:

"In order to meet the [external goal], we all need to work together to [how to achieve this goal]. If we can [success metric] through [expertise X, Y, and Z], we'll be able to [reward]. Let's do this!"

Example
"In order to meet the objectives set by the client, we all need to work together to create a strategy that we can implement. If we can increase website conversions through social media, SEO, and landing pages, we'll be able to renew the client contract and go out to dinner to celebrate. Let's do this!"



Mad Lib #3:
Show Appreciation

Appreciating your employees is extremely important when it comes to creating an engaged company culture. Perks like free bagels or recognizing employees with rewards are great ways to show appreciation, but how can you tell someone you appreciate them? Try this mad lib:

"That [project/task] you just completed was [compliment]. You were [trait] and [why that trait is important]. Great job!"

Example
"That sales call you just completed was phenomenal. You were really prepared and knew the right questions to answer in order to close the deal. Great job!"



Mad Lib #4:
Share Feedback

No one only wants to hear feedback when they've dropped the ball; people also want to be acknowledged for a job well done. Add positive reinforcement to your feedback cycle by incorporating it into your 1-on-1's or during performance reviews. Take this mad lib out for a spin:

"The way you manage [task] is [characteristic] and shows your [leadership quality]."

Example
"The way you manage the restaurant staff during happy hour is really positive and energetic and shows your ability lead successful team."



Mad Lib #5:
Recognize Achievements

Whether it's closing the most deals in a month or making the most tips on your busiest night, employees who perform a job better than expected deserve to be recognized. When people feel appreciated and recognized for going above and beyond, they typically continue to work hard. Here's a mad lib to try:

"The leadership team noted your [achievement] and I wanted to make sure you knew it didn't go unnoticed. We're really proud of your work here."

Example
"The leadership team noted the record high number of resolved customer support tickets last month and I wanted to make sure you knew it didn't go unnoticed. We're really proud of your work here."

Whether you use these mad libs verbatim or as a starting point, communication is key when it comes to showing a genuine interest in your engaged employees. From recognition in a company-wide email to thanking your team privately, we'll leave it up to you on when and how you show your gratitude!

In the next section, if you're looking for something to pair with your verbal recognition, we have a few ideas for rewards that will fit any budget.



STEP

04

Recognize and Reward Excellence

Just like your people, rewards are not all created equal. But the undertone of all rewards is the same: A job well done. Great work. We appreciate you.



Recognizing excellence can make a world of difference in the workplace. From encouraging outstanding performance to creating healthy competition, rewards are a proven way to impact both employee engagement and company culture.

We've seen firsthand the impact of employee reward programs and one of the biggest misconceptions we come across is cost. But you don't have to break the bank to reward your employees' hard work.

Here is a list of 10 ways to recognize employees for under $30:



1. Free Lunch (with the Boss)

There IS such thing as a free lunch - for those who perform a job well done. And this is a great way for management to get to know their employees in a low-pressure, one-on-one setting. It's natural for employees to be a bit nervous before lunch with the boss, so try out these conversation starters to start the lunch on the right (relaxed) foot:

- Start by discussing why you set the lunch up and why you appreciate the employees efforts. This can lead to additional conversations about projects they are working on and their feelings about it.
- Be open to their feedback to you on improving company practices, events, communication, etc.
- Show an interest in the employee's outside interests/volunteer efforts.
- Start a conversation related to local events, restaurants, places of interest, etc.

Business Insider has a great list you can reference for more topics **here**.

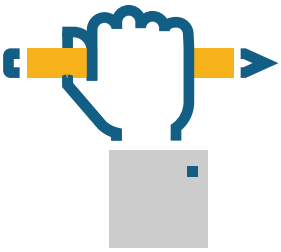
Cost: Up to $30



2. VIP Parking

Reserve front row parking for the month's top performer. If you want to take it up a notch, create a custom parking sign for the spot.

Cost: Free (An added $15-20 for a sign)



3. A Handwritten Card

There is something very touching and personal about receiving a handwritten note - especially in the mail. The great part about this reward is it can be used not only for performance, but also for birthdays, milestones, and anniversaries.

Cost: Up to $5



4. Uber or Lyft Credits

A ride from point A to point B that's covered is always a nice gesture. Whether your employee uses it towards their work commute or to cover their weekend plans, you can bet they'll be thanking you for saving them gas money. Both Uber and Lyft have corporate plans as well. If your employee isn't a fan of ride sharing, offer a gas card.

Cost: Up to $30



5. Books & Gift Cards

Learning never ends and with the gift of books, you can pass along knowledge and expertise from industry leaders and renowned authors. Whether it is a job-specific read or a gift card to a bookstore, iBook or Kindle Unlimited, this reward can either be focused on personal development and growth, or the simple pleasure of relaxation.

Reading not your thing? Give the gift of audio books with an Audible account — it's a great treat for work commutes.

Cost: $10-20 (Free bonus: Include a handwritten inscription in the inside cover of the book.)

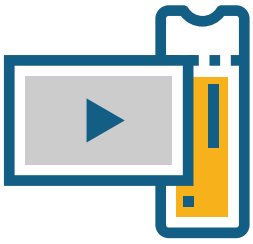


6. Coffee

Whether its specialty beans from North Shore's Green World Coffee farm or a simple Starbucks gift card, the gift of caffeine is usually a welcome one. Take it up a level with a nice thermos or mug.

Not a coffee drinker? Offer unique teas or a trip to a juice bar instead, and accessories (like a tea cup) to match.

Cost: $15-30



7. Movie Tickets

What's not to like about a night out? A movie night can be enjoyed by all and most local theaters even offer a package deal with popcorn and snacks.

Cost: $20-30



8. Custom Gifts

From coffee mugs to mouse pads to phone cases, you can customize almost anything these days! Sites like Vistaprint make it easy to upload an image, pick an object, and customize to your heart's content. Or, offer employees a credit to your company store.

Cost: Up to $30



9. Charitable Donation

Knowing your employees is key for this reward to be personal. Donating funds to a cause important to your team can build bonds between employer and employee while also helping those in need.

Cost: Up to $30



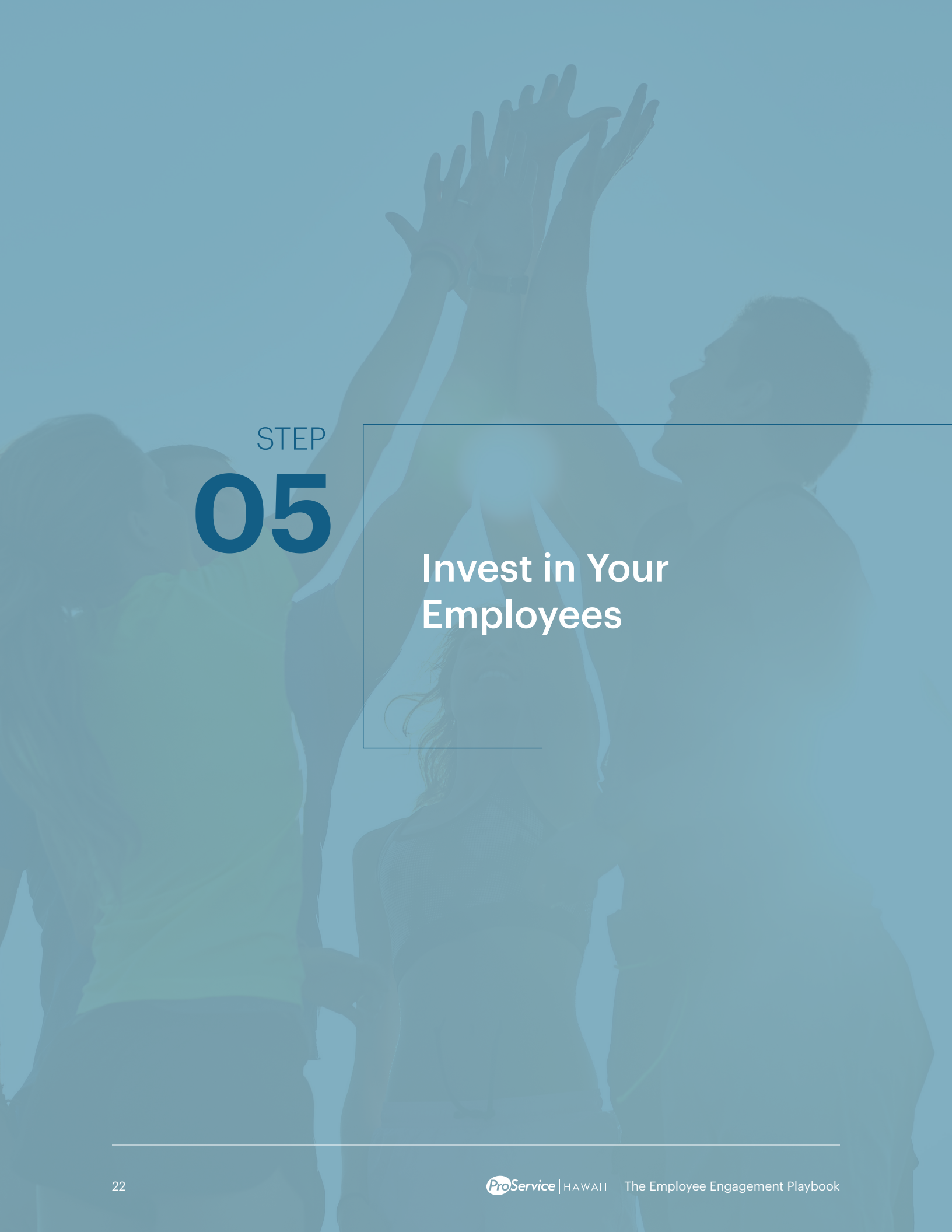
10. Extra PTO Hours or Flex Time

Handing out extra time-off that can be bundled and used for a half-day or full-day is a reward that we can promise will be in high demand, for employees who you know put in the extra hours for a major project. Give them those hours back to show you noticed, and care about their well-being and the necessity of reconnecting to themselves, their family and their friends outside of their job.

Cost: Basically Free

Recognition is a crucial part of creating an engaged culture. So important, in fact, that according to a **study by Gallup**, "Employees who do not feel adequately recognized are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year."

What else can you do to make a difference in the lives of those who dedicate the majority of their time to your business? Take a genuine interest (and invest) in employee well-being.



STEP

05

Invest in Your Employees

When you feel good, you perform well. Whether that's physically, emotionally, or mentally, wellness plays a critical role in overall performance. And while this is commonly known amongst athletes, taking care of your well-being actually positively impacts most jobs. In fact, Gallup **states that the two major factors influencing employee performance are engagement and well-being**.

Check out these 8 simple ways you can invest in the well-being of your employees:



1. Get Outdoors

Plan a team outing to a park or beach, set up a short weekend hike, or simply move your 4PM staff meeting outside. Changing up the environment can do wonders for your attitude and mood, so take advantage of what our beautiful island has to offer.



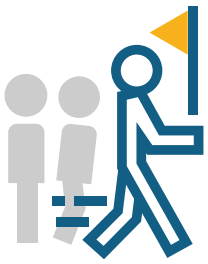
2. Create a Sense of Community

Encourage your employees to eat lunch together or if possible, create a comfortable communal area with snacks, coffee/tea, and water. The more support your employees feel from each other, the better they will work together.



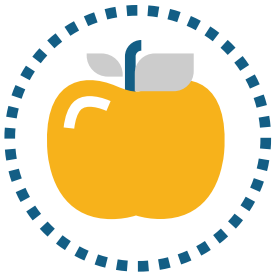
3. Huddle Up

Take a few minutes once a day to have a "team huddle" to share stories, recognize employees, and get to know each other on a more personal level. This is also a great time to ask for feedback and insight from your employees.



4. Sponsor Team Sports

Competition and teamwork are best learned on the c ourt — or on the field, a yoga mat, a baseball diamond, etc. Get your employees involved in a team sport so they can bring the skills learned from being on a team back to the workplace.



5. Eat Healthy

If you have an employee pantry, stock up on healthy snacks for the team. Quick, on-the-go snacks, like nuts, granola bars, fruit, and crackers, encourage employees to stay on-site during their breaks and offer a better alternative to typical vending machine snacks. If you don't have the budget for providing snacks, treat your employees to a healthy lunch once a month. Another option: ask your employees to provide their favorite healthy homemade dishes to compile into a company cookbook.



6. Encourage Using PTO

The best way to recharge is to take time off. While giving all your employees a week off during your busy season is not realistic, encourage your staff to take a "mental health day" when they need it. Create a culture where teammates support each other when the other is out. Employees shouldn't feel guilty about using PTO; they've earned it!



7. Offer Personal and Professional Development

Besides financial compensation, **growth is one of the biggest driving factors of successful employees**. Give your team the opportunity to grow by offering seminars, trainings, book clubs, and more. If there is a crossover between an employee's personal interests and company needs, think outside the box to get them involved. For example, your Finance Manager's local band could be the feature talent at your annual company picnic.



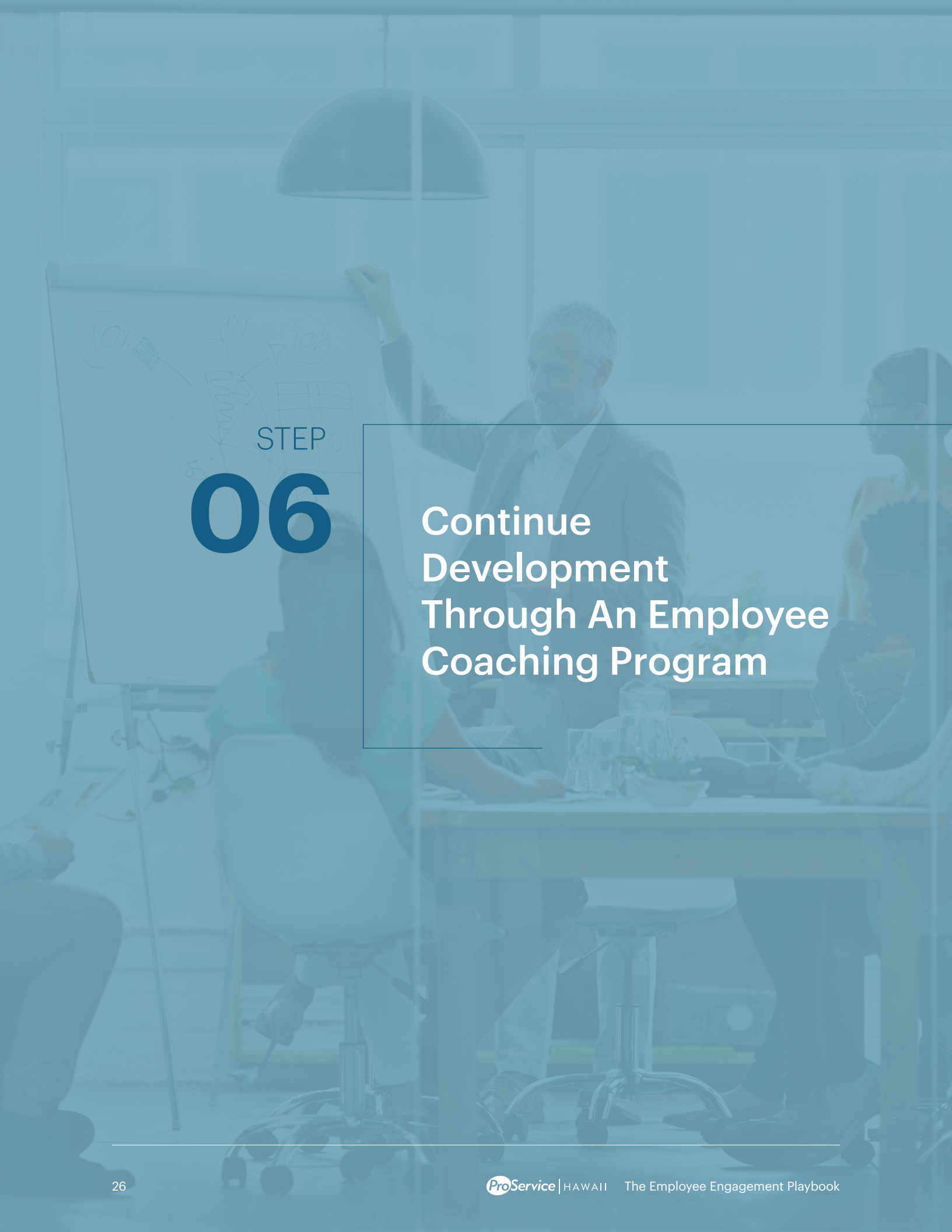
8. Challenge the Team

This is one of the best ways to get the entire team on board with healthy choices. Whether it is a 30-day exercise challenge, a new diet that everyone tries together, or a weight-loss competition, incentivizing your employees to keep with the challenge to earn a reward is a great way to encourage healthy living.

A happy workforce is a productive workforce, and it doesn't take much to invest in the well-being of your employees. Use these tips to get started on the path to well-being and you'll notice the positive impact it can have on employee engagement.

As we've mentioned before, engaged employees are more productive, motivated, and stay with their employer for longer. So in addition to employee engagement and recognition, nurturing growth and development are also must-haves when it comes to employee retention.

What if your company could teach employees new skills, develop leadership skills, and improve overall satisfaction...for free? We're willing to bet you would jump at the chance to get this in place. Well, with an employee coaching program, you can.



STEP

06

Continue Development Through An Employee Coaching Program

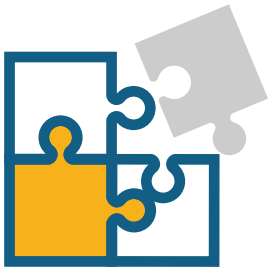
According to **Harvard Business Review**, "Work groups in which employees report that their supervisor (or someone else at work) cares about them as a person, talks to them about their career progress, encourages their development, and provides opportunities to learn and grow have lower turnover, higher sales growth, better productivity, and better customer loyalty than work groups in which employees report that these developmental elements are scarce."

Sounds pretty ideal. So, let's dive in on how to get started. Here are 5 steps to launching an employee coaching program using the resources your company already has:



1. Define the Objective

What's the goal of your employee coaching program? By defining your objective, you can structure your program to best meet those goals. If your goal is to improve retention rates, your program will be set up differently than a program designed to increase employee engagement, shorten new employee ramp time, or bring more diversity to the management team. On the other hand, employee coaching programs can also be used to train managers on leadership skills such as providing praise, giving positive feedback, delivering constructive criticism, or coaching a struggling employee.



2. Align with Your Culture

If your organization is formal, have formal applications, process, structure, and requirements in place to join the coaching program. If your workplace tends to be more relaxed, let your employees give input on what they would like to gain from this program. When addressing your team, come prepared with conversation starters like "what do you hope to gain from this program?" and "what skills would you like to learn to move up in your career?" By embedding an employee coaching program into your company culture, your team will genuinely adopt and want to actively participate in the new program.



3. Structure Your Program

Having a process in place for your program is crucial to its success. Whether you create a formal pairing program between coach and employee or decide to match employees with their peers, giving your program a structure will help relationships flourish. Having open lines of communication is crucial to success. Which is why having a leader in place is necessary for program management, feedback analysis, as well as mediating any issues that may arise.



4. Set Expectations

In order for your employee coaching program to succeed, set clear expectations from the start. That means laying out ground rules for participation, having open lines of communication, buy in from employees and leadership, as well as, expected outcomes. This is also a good time to set how often and what the process for measuring success will be. For example, if your program is focused on leadership training, how many employees have received promotions in the past year?



5. Learn and Evaluate

Continuous improvement and development applies not only to your employees but to your overall employee coaching program as well. As you measure the impact of your program on overall employee satisfaction and culture, it's also important to ask for feedback and learnings from the team. How is their experience at work different with the program in place? What have they learned or applied to their daily role? Are you as an organization closer to meeting your objective? You can continuously improve the program by receiving intel from program participants while giving them the opportunity to develop their leadership and communication skills.

Providing the opportunity to grow and develop through an employee coaching program requires having a plan in place. Companies of all sizes can start empowering their employees and grooming them for success, without a large budget or expensive initiative in place.

While there is no proven method to follow for creating the perfect employee engagement plan to suit your unique business, this step-by-step playbook should guarantee you a head start as you start developing what works best for you.

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From payroll to benefits and everything in between, if you need an HR expert, ProService is here to partner with your company every step of the way. And if you want to outsource your HR department, like **Honolulu Coffee Company** or **Atlas Construction**, we can help with that too.

Whatever your needs, one of our experts will be in touch with you shortly. If you have questions that just can't wait, contact us at **808-394-8878** or **info@proservice.com** with your business needs, and we'll be in touch shortly.