

Engaging Employees in the Summer



By Kristen Zierau, Director, [Clarke Caniff Strategic Search](#)

It starts some time in early March, all the chatter about the warm weather is on the horizon and the thought of endless sunshine is hard to shake. Everyone is talking about traveling for graduation parties, cruises, trips to see family, and where they are taking their kids for the “big trip.”

And while your [leadership](#) has the same thoughts, they are also wondering how to keep production up during the summer months. Maintaining business in these fast-paced markets, let alone trying to maintain growth in the summer, can be daunting. You don't want to use summer as an excuse for poor company performance and you certainly don't want to under-serve customers, so what can you do?

Our goal for the summer months is to maintain the same trajectory that we had starting out at the first of the year. Many companies have momentum coming out of the gate on a new year only to lose that cadence in the summer months and then they spend the fall and early winter trying to recover.

Hard-driving management can push for the same hours and same pace but that can be met with a lot of resistance from your team. If your group is one that is heavily focused on work-life-balance, this can become even more difficult. As a company that is on high-growth mode where we also have a lot

of new hires that require mentoring and training non-stop, it is hard for us to just slow down in the summer.

To mitigate some of these issues, every spring we come up with a summer plan that allows us to keep hitting our goals without upsetting the team:

- When it's a rainy day out, work longer, work harder. On the days that ruin outside activities, push the pace and try to get ahead.
- When the business had good day \ good week and it's nice out, send the team home early without warning. Just say "get out of here" and it's always a welcomed surprise. While some will still stick around if they are on a deadline-driven project, others will flee.
- Host more lunches outside or at the park. Let your team get some sunshine, play a couple games, and eat their lunch in the fresh air. While they may not get out early, letting them enjoy an extended lunch period in the sunshine can quell negativity.
- Set up a summer challenge earlier in the year and/or create two, one for the spring and one for the summer. These challenges are designed to raise the bar and it can be in sales, customer satisfaction, project completions, etc. The main purpose here is to get people to go above and beyond to earn something extra such as more time off or even a bonus.

To keep your customers happy and drive growth while maintaining a work environment where people want to work and do amazing things, you need to be creative. You don't have to slow down in the summer. In fact, your business can grow while also creating an environment that your employees embrace and believe in.

About the Author: Kristen Zierau currently leads a group of management consultants as a Director at [Clarke Caniff](#)

Strategic Search. After completing her Bachelor's of Science in Marketing at Michigan State University's Eli Broad School of Business, she was recruited by Target as part of their fast track executive program. After growing rapidly with Target, she made the transition to a position with Clarke Caniff that allowed her creativity and leadership style to be highlighted.