

# How to Keep Your Team Engaged Now That Summer (Finally) Is Here



By *Karen Bouchard*, Chief Human Resources Officer, EVP Administrative Operations, *Racepoint Global*

In the depths of winter, employees begrudgingly sludge to work in their countless layers and heavy snow boots. Dark days and long nights leave little time for personal activities outside of employee's work life but after a seemingly endless season, spring arrives, and with it comes excitement for the summer months ahead.

From an [HR](#) perspective, summer brings extra hours of daylight and increased productivity among employees... that is, if you can keep your employees focused. As the warm weather rolls in, so does employee excitement. Longer lunch breaks, conflicting vacation requests, and working from home schedules begin to pop up. The key to keeping focus is finding a way for employees to channel their excitement in ways that will positively impact your company.

*The simplest way to keep your team focused this summer? Remove their focus from the workplace. Keep everyone engaged this summer **in** the office, by giving them the option to get **out** of the office.*

Over the years, I have been able to determine best practices for keeping your employees attentive and productive. Here are

a few initiatives that we have instilled at [Racepoint Global](#) to allow for relaxed and refreshed employees all summer long:

### **Additional Paid Time Off**

Budgeting paid time off can be tricky—when the weather gets warmer, employees are more inclined to use their vacation and personal days but must also remain mindful of commitments and holidays later in the year. Vacation time is meant to be taken—employers should encourage their employees to take time to rest, relax and pursue their special interests. Above and beyond a generous vacation policy, consider providing additional paid time off during the summer months. For example, employees at our agency are awarded two Summer Fridays (or Mondays) in between Memorial Day and Labor Day, allowing for a make-shift three day weekend of their choosing.

### **Summer Outings**

One of the best ways to keep your team focused during the summer months is with a team building activity, if possible outside. Find a day during the summer, preferably one that doesn't interfere with other holidays/long weekends, and schedule an outing for your teams. Provide your employees with time to get out of the office and focus on something other than work. This will hopefully alleviate some pressure and allow employees to relax and get to know each other. Our offices enjoy several settings for their summer outings, from a scenic sail around the San Francisco Bay, a great American BBQ at Kimball Farm in Westford, MA and a crab boat cruise down the Potomac River.

### **Flexible Schedule Options**

Life can be unpredictable. Ditch the standard 9 to 5 schedule and allow your employees the flexibility to take in the morning air or enjoy the late afternoon sun. Having the flexibility in where, how and when we work makes it easier for all to manage our personal and professional lives. At

Racepoint Global, employees may choose a flexible schedule allowing them to start their day later, or leave the office a bit earlier.

## **Surprise Events**

Whether you're five years old or five years from retirement, everyone loves to be appreciated. It is never a bad idea to recognize your team's hard work with some sort of "surprise." On a hot day, set up an impromptu ice cream social, ordering a sundae bar for the office. If your employees are getting restless towards the end of the week, get everyone outdoors for a picnic lunch and a game of Frisbee (side note—fun tchotchkes like company branded Frisbees are a fun take home gift for employees as well). A little appreciation can truly go a long way.

Whatever you decide works best for your employees to keep them focused, enforcing some of these initiatives will make for happier (and more productive) employees.

*About the Author: With 25 years' experience in human resources and operations management, Karen is responsible for the global operations of the company's human resources, office management, information technology and administrative systems and services. As a member of the Executive Management Team Karen works closely with the Chairman, President and CFO to develop and execute key strategies supporting Racepoint Global's business plans. Karen leads the design, implementation, reporting and maintenance of the organization's human capital strategies and key HR initiatives including workforce planning, succession planning, employee rewards & recognition, employee recruitment & retention and all other activities involving management of human capital. Karen also oversees the organization's technological direction including planning, implementing and maintaining best practices for information*

technology that aligns with all corporate functions. Two notable assets Karen possesses are her intimate knowledge of operational issues in public relations agencies and her extensive history in the technology and health care industries. Karen joined Racepoint Global from Caritas St. Elizabeth's Medical Center, where she played an integral role in managing benefits and human resources for the medical and health care establishment. During her time there, Karen worked closely with the leadership, finance, corporate and local human resources teams on strategy and implementation, as the organization experienced growth and integration. Prior to Caritas St. Elizabeth's, Karen was Director of Human Resources for Weber Shandwick Worldwide, one of the largest global public relations agencies.