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# PROOF ADVERTISING'S UNCONVENTIONAL OFFICE SPACES AND EMPHASIS ON TEAM BUILDING CULTIVATE A POSITIVE WORK CULTURE

Proof Advertising is Ad Age's 2024 winner for Best Agency Culture

By [Gillian Follett](#). Published on March 11, 2024.

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Proof's flexible policies and egalitarian environment have kept the agency's attrition rate below 1% for the last two-and-a-half years. Credit: Proof Advertising

When a potential client called Proof Advertising saying they had landed in Austin, Texas, earlier than expected and had several hours to kill before their scheduled pitch meeting with the agency, Proof Presidents Jocelyn Friedman and Bryan Christian swung over to pick up the client's team and take them to lunch—in the agency's wakesurfing boat.

“We met them at noon and left them at 1:30 in the morning [that] night at a bar,” Christian said. “So, it was a 13-hour pitch.” That downtown Austin bar is, in fact, one of Proof’s two office locations, the other being a lake house that Friedman and Christian escorted the client team to for the formal pitch meeting.

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Proof did away with its traditional office space in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, striking a deal in 2021 with its favorite bar to allow its 47-person team to bring their work laptops to the bar top between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. on any day of the week, Christian said. A year later, Proof purchased its “Liberation Lakehouse” on Lake Austin, naturally buying a boat to accompany it, he added. One wall of the house displays each employee’s favorite album, a nod to the home’s past life as a recording studio.

“If anyone ever told me that some of my most important client meetings would take place on the deck of a lake house and would be followed by a tour of Lake Austin on an agency boat, I would have said that sounded crazy,” wrote a group account director at the agency. “But that’s Proof.”



Clients can get tours of Lake Austin on Proof’s wakesurfing boat. Credit: Proof Advertising

Proof’s unconventional office spaces are just one element of the agency’s flexible work environment. The agency has a “work from anywhere” policy, whether it be a bar in downtown Austin or halfway around the world, and offers unlimited PTO. And every six months, employees are allowed to take an “Inspiration Day,” where Proof provides them a few hundred dollars to “go do something that inspires them,” whether that be strolling through a museum or catching a concert, Christian said.

The agency’s culture also lacks a rigid hierarchy, meaning “the most junior person tells me to go stick it some days,” Christian said. “There’s just no barriers to conversation. And I think just having an organization where everybody feels invested and gets to be themselves and say what they think about anything helps

people feel involved in a way that you can’t manufacture.”

Proof's flexible policies and egalitarian environment have kept the agency's attrition rate below 1% for the last two-and-a-half years, Christian said. The average tenure at the agency hovers at approximately 10 years, and roughly one-third of the agency's staff are "boomerangs"—employees who returned to work for Proof after leaving the agency to work somewhere else, according to Friedman.

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Monthly outings bring employees together over friendly competitions from go-kart races to charcuterie board arranging. Winners receive customized trophies unique to the theme of each competition—awards for "best driver," "worst driver" and "slowest driver" at Proof's go-kart race, for example, were "doctored-up helmets painted in Proof colors," Christian said. Many of those monthly outings end with the group making their way to a karaoke bar, which "has also become a part of our agency culture, somehow," Friedman said.

Even outsiders can sense Proof's positive work culture. Two days after one of the agency's team outings—this time a pickleball tournament—a waitress who served food at the event messaged Christian on LinkedIn, saying she admired the camaraderie she witnessed and was interested in applying for a job at the agency.

Within two weeks, Christian and Friedman hired her. She now works on Proof's social team, Christian said.

"She witnessed something that made her think, 'Whatever that thing is, I want to be part of that,'" he said.

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