

PEO INSIDER®

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THIS MONTH'S FOCUS

THE PEO RISK LANDSCAPE

THE PEO ROLE
IN WORKPLACE
SAFETY

CREATING SECURE
AND POSITIVE
WORKPLACES

UPS & DOWNS OF
WORKERS' COMP. &
EPLI MARKETS

COVER STORY

SEQUOIA ONE

CELEBRATING CLIENTS' GROWTH

Kathy Ross, CEO, Sequoia One & Christina Sullivan, Chief Client Officer, Sequoia

HAVE NO FEAR! THE PROPELLERS ARE HERE!

BY ROBERT “BRAX” CUTCHIN

In today’s digital marketplace, every brand is competing for attention. Audiences are inundated with content and options. If you’re a PEO, you really have to work to cut through the noise. Let’s face it: the concept of a PEO has never been easy for small businesses to grasp, and for PEOs, it can be tricky to explain.

At Propel HR we realized we needed a daring new direction to connect with small businesses on a whole new level. In a marketing world dominated by talking geckos, personified mayhem, and humorous commercials selling insurance, we knew this assignment required a trusted band of superheroes that would forge an emotional connection with business owners through digital storytelling and a touch of nostalgia. Enter The Propellers, a team of HR superheroes who solve real world HR problems for small businesses everywhere.

THE CAMPAIGN: MEET THE PROPELLERS—THE WORLD’S MIGHTIEST HR SUPERHEROES!

Why superheroes? Superheroes embody universally recognized archetypes: the hero, the villain, the sidekick, and the mentor. These roles resonate deeply with audiences as they tap into age-old

storytelling structures. Incorporating these archetypes allows us to tell a story that feels familiar yet in a new and exciting way. As someone who grew up flipping through the pages of now-vintage comic books, I saw an opportunity to connect the technicalities of PEO services to the universal appeal of superheroes. After all, superheroes solve problems, fight villains, and save the day—isn’t that exactly what a PEO does for a small business?

And so, The Propellers were born—a team of HR superheroes each

exemplifying a core service: payroll, benefits, technology, compliance, and PEO.

The goal was to create characters that felt approachable yet powerful, bringing PEO services to life through vivid personas. Our team includes:

- **Super Payroller.** A payroll powerhouse who ensures accuracy, compliance, and that every paycheck is on time and error-free.
- **Big Benny.** The benefits guru who’s all about securing top-notch health plans and irresistible perks that attract talent and keep employees happy.





- **Tech Titan.** The tech-savvy innovator who integrates seamless HR technology solutions, transforming HR from a time drain to a competitive advantage.
- **Wonder Human.** The human resources expert with an eye for regulatory detail, who keeps businesses safe from compliance calamities.
- **Captain Propeller.** The fearless team leader who utilizes the powerful bundling capabilities of a PEO to integrate payroll, benefits, and compliance into one seamless system.

THE VILLAINS OF HUMAN RESOURCES

What's a superhero story without villains? Our heroes face off against a formidable cast of HR villains, each symbolizing some of the toughest challenges businesses encounter today:

- **Wage Wrecker** wreaks havoc on your payroll, turning loyal employees into disgruntled ones with every payroll mistake. *Nemesis: Super Payroller.*
- **The Interceptor** preys on busy small businesses with outdated perks, swooping in with flashy benefits packages to snatch their brightest stars. *Nemesis: Big Benny.*
- **Data Disruptor** thrives on disorder, corrupting systems, draining resources

and turning valuable insights into noise. *Nemesis: Tech Titan.*

- **Compliance Crusher** exploits the complexity of changing regulations—stirring up chaos, costly fines, and sheer terror for small businesses struggling to stay compliant. *Nemesis: Wonder Human.*
- **Red Tape** is the Queen of Bureaucracy who thrives on overcomplicated processes and clunky paper-based systems—anything that bogs down and sabotages productivity. *Nemesis: Captain Propeller.*

BRINGING THE BRAND STORY TO LIFE

To launch The Propellers into the universe, we partnered with ALX Creatives, a full-service marketing agency known for transforming big ideas into powerful stories. ALX turned to the aesthetic of vintage comic books to create bold designs, dynamic poses, and a nostalgic aesthetic woven into every aspect of the campaign. Founder Alexandra Frumberg, a Propel client and advocate, brought in Head of Operations Katherine Oliver; graphic designer and comic book author Marc Fishman; and the talented artist Darryl Young—the dream team that would bring my vision of The Propellers to life. From Propel HR, Renata Parker,



Propel HR's superhero-driven marketing campaign shows their PEO expertise in action—rescuing businesses from administrative overload, compliance traps, and the fight to retain talent.

who writes our blog and handles our social media, and Robb Duke were also instrumental in the creation and launch of the campaign, and even star in some of the videos.

THE LAUNCH: A HEROIC DEBUT

Launching The Propellers campaign was itself an adventure. Working in secret for months, we needed to make a grand entrance with some good old-fashioned razzle-dazzle.

Before sharing the campaign publicly, we started where it mattered most—with our employees. We planned a full day when employees got their first look at the video introducing The Propellers¹, complete with action-packed animations and original music. Then life-size cardboard standees of each superhero were dramatically unveiled to thunderous applause. The energy in the room was electric—it was clear that our team was instantly on board.

From there, we extended The Propellers' reach through a multi-channel campaign designed to educate and connect with small businesses. Elements include:

New Website. To complement our primary site, propelhr.com, we created a superhero-themed hub, ThePropellers.com, where visitors could meet the team and explore their capabilities. We integrated the hero graphics into

service specific pages to bridge between The Propellers and Propel HR's real world offerings.

Vintage Trading Cards. Yes, real foil-wrapped, vintage-inspired custom trading cards with a stick of gum. The back of each card details the superpowers and stats and has just enough cheeky backstory to make them instant collectibles. There's a card for each Propeller and villain, plus cards with battles, headquarters, secret lairs, weapons and the super-rare "sketch variants." Collect all 18!

Standees. We had life-size standees created for each superhero (Big Benny is six feet tall!) to use in our office, in videos, and at conferences. Our employees love their department mascots and regularly dress them for holidays and special events.

Video. Our first video was an animated introduction to The Propellers based on the opening sequence of the 1970's Saturday morning cartoon, Super Friends. It's a must-see on social media and our website. We also filmed our employees interacting with the standees to use for reels and stories on our newly launched TikTok (@the_propellers) and Instagram (@propelhr) channels.

Hero-Focused Vintage Tees. Nothing builds team spirit like dressing the part. Not only did these vintage tees turn our employees and clients into walking ambassadors for the campaign, but it also helped to build team pride as each department sported their own superhero. More swag to come.

Digital Outdoor Billboard. Strategically placed digital billboards showcased The Propellers in action, with the tagline, "Earth's Mightiest HR Superheroes!"

Social Media Campaign. Across all platforms, we rolled out comic-style posts, and videos to engage our audience with relatable scenarios and issues that small businesses face.

Blog Series. A dedicated, ongoing blog series delves deeper into each character's



The Propellers Campaign Trading Cards

superpowers, offering practical guidance on benefits, payroll, compliance, and HR.

THE SUPERHERO DIFFERENCE: EARLY WINS AND BEYOND

Overall, The Propellers have proven to be more than just another marketing campaign; they represent a shift in how we communicate our value and values. By leaning into creativity and storytelling, we've found a way to break through the noise and better connect with our audience.

Though the campaign is still in its early stages, the initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Internally, it's been a morale booster, uniting our team around a shared vision and revitalizing our sense of purpose. Our employees have embraced the superhero theme as part of our brand identity, often referring to themselves as Propellers in meetings and client interactions.

Externally, clients and prospects are responding with curiosity and enthusiasm. By turning abstract concepts into

relatable characters, we've opened the door to new and deeper conversations about how we can help their businesses.

As we continue to build on this momentum, we're exploring new ways to amplify and expand The Propellers universe. Plans are already underway for interactive webinars featuring appearances by The Propellers, a comic book detailing their backstory, and perhaps even a live-action appearance at a NAPEO event—the opportunities are endless!

We're excited to see how these superheroes will continue to inspire and educate businesses in the months and years to come. Because when it comes to conquering dilemmas of HR, one thing's for sure: every small business deserves a team of superheroes by their side. ■

¹ Reference <https://youtu.be/ijEiw3YKqrU?si=Vn8g6uTQdCnicmOP>.

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