



## BRINGING BUSINESS BACK TO HAWAII

“Being a young entrepreneur, there is such a huge learning curve in business and there are so many things that consume your time, and HR is the last thing you need to consume your time. That people portion is one of the hardest parts of business to navigate, and I’m grateful to have partners like ProService through the whole process.”

— ZAK BARRY, CO-FOUNDER OF BANÁN

### THE BANÁN STORY

Banán was born out of a teenage friendship that started at Punahou School between Zak Barry, Matt Hong, Luke Untermann and Galen McCleary. After graduating, the group parted ways to attend different colleges across the country before returning as young entrepreneurs with a vision to start a business in Hawaii—and show the next generation that it’s possible to create something successful without leaving for the mainland.

As Co-Founder Zak Barry says, **“Besides supporting local agriculture, one of the main things we wrote into our business plan and our vision is that we hoped to come back to Hawaii and be an inspiration to other youth who wanted to do something on their own in Hawaii and create something here.”**

They experimented with a frozen dairy-free soft serve concoction made purely out of bananas based on a friend’s recipe. The treat was so good they decided to try selling it, and from there Banán was born. Their mission was to bring a farm-to-table approach with locally sourced ingredients sold across Oahu.

Near the end of 2014, after raising funding from a Kickstarter campaign, the friends began selling their banana-based soft serve out of a food truck they bought on Craigslist on the south side of Oahu. Five years later, Banán has expanded to four locations and become one of the most popular quick service restaurants on the island.



### THE CHALLENGE

The founders of Banán were fresh out of college trying to fulfill a dream—all while looking for funding, formulating recipes, and developing marketing strategies for their business. As Banán began to take off, they were still learning on-the-job.

The friends soon realized that in order to support their rapid growth, they would have to hire staff members, which meant implementing a payroll system and HR policies. Because this was their first time hiring employees, they did what most people do and started hiring their peers, which proved to be problematic.

Banán needed expert guidance on how to quickly and legally hire and fire employees in a professional way—an all too common occurrence in the food service industry. With little knowledge of Human Resources, the four friends required immediate solutions as they embarked on the next wave of their entrepreneurial journey.



## THE SOLUTION

Zak's father, a local business owner himself, recommended Banán take a look at ProService Hawaii. For a homegrown Hawaii enterprise started by 23-year-old owners, the well-established Hawaii-based HR company seemed like the perfect fit. ProService proved to be a perfect partner to help guide the young entrepreneurs through onboarding, payroll, HR benefits, changing compliances, and overall advice.

Zak recalls the peace of mind that level of support provided, "This was our first time hiring people and firing people, and it was invaluable to have mentors to look up to—we could just call ProService and get consulting on how to handle that complex part of the business professionally."

ProService Hawaii's experts managed Banán's mounting paperwork and proactively ensured the business was compliant with state and federal regulations—seamlessly taking the burdens of HR administration off the entrepreneurs' plates.



## THE OUTCOME

Banán now has four locations, three food trucks and one brick and mortar store off University Avenue, with eyes on expanding locally and internationally to Australia and Japan. Says Zak, **"We grew from just the three of us to over 60 employees now, and I have to onboard someone at least every week. ProService saves me a ton of time by taking on that responsibility."**

As Banán continues to grow, and their founders bring on more and more employees, they are also getting support to better manage their expanding branches. Zak notes they have recently hired their first salaried employee as an operations manager, and relied on advice from ProService on the best way to develop that new position.

Through their continued partnership with ProService, Banán avoids time-consuming paperwork as well as costly compliance mistakes that could negatively impact their business – enabling Zak, Matt, Luke, and Galen to focus on their passion of supporting the local community and fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial spirit in Hawaii for generations to come.

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**“I would definitely recommend ProService to anyone who’s trying to streamline onboarding, payroll and who’s really trying to grow their business.”**

— ZAK BARRY, CO-FOUNDER OF BANÁN

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## Could your business benefit from HR services like these?

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