



The Secret to Using Benefits to Inspire Employee Loyalty and Productivity

Figuring out the right employee benefits is shudder-inducing for both employers and employees. But it doesn't have to be that way. Here are simple solutions for offering benefits that inspire employee loyalty and productivity.

WHITE PAPER

For decades, employees' worlds were broken into two parts: work and personal life. The perspective was that these two facets were distinct from each other. Employees often were told they should be careful not to let their personal lives affect their performance at work.

Computers, the Internet and, more recently, mobile technology blurred those lines. Now, work demands follow employees home or to social engagements after business hours, and their "real lives" are with them at work. A July 2017 *Business News Daily* article, in fact, says employees spend almost an hour every work day using their mobile devices for non-work activities.

Other factors have changed employees' views on the workplace, as well.

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Workers – especially younger workers – have zero expectation of a long career with one company. They often don't even anticipate having just one career. In other words, employees no longer are willing to stay in dead-end or unrewarding jobs just to keep the paychecks coming. They look for work that fulfills them personally and where their individual personalities and talents contribute to the employer's overall goals.



When they don't find it, they quickly move on – to another employer or to a role enabled by the gig economy, which has opened doors for workers to fashion their own careers in ways that would have been unimaginable even a decade ago.

Supporting employees in work and life

Despite these workplace disruptions – and those technology will drive in the future – employees still have themselves and their families to support. According to a recent MetLife study, 49 percent of them are concerned and anxious – even fearful – about their financial wellbeing. When they come to work worried about financial problems, they're less focused and productive, less engaged and less likely to be committed to staying in their jobs long-term.

Beyond that, 73 percent of them believe employers have some responsibility for their employees' health and wellbeing. Employers agree, according to the report. In fact, their belief in that responsibility is even higher: 82 percent.



Expectations for Employee Wellbeing

	FINANCIAL WELLBEING (% that agree employers have a responsibility or employees' financial wellbeing)	HEALTH & WELLBEING (% that agree employers have a responsibility for employees' health and wellbeing)
EMPLOYEES	42	51
EMPLOYERS	47	61

As life and work increasingly merge into one continuum, employees increasingly look to their employers for benefits that provide both financial security and health and wellness support. From a financial standpoint, employees value traditional benefits like health insurance, dental and vision care and retirement savings plans. On the health and wellness front, employers have tended to focus their efforts (and their money) on trying to fix the obvious causes of poor employee health – sedentary lifestyles, overeating and smoking, among others.

Certainly, those damaging behaviors must be addressed in any company wellness plan. But the best way to confront them is to reward employees for adopting healthy behaviors. This can be done through a program that awards points for health-related activities and allows employees to use their points toward incentives they find valuable.



Benefits that meet employees where they are

Employers can fulfill their responsibility for employees' wellbeing by understanding how critical benefits are, not only to their employees, but also to their businesses. For employees, health care and other benefits provide peace of mind and financial stability. For the company, employee benefits are strong recruiting tools that drive loyalty and underscore the value the business places on its people.

That said, not all benefits are created equal. In the past, the workforce has been comprised of three or four generations working together at once. Today, however, many older workers remain in the workforce well beyond traditional retirement age, and the oldest members of Generation Z, now in their late teens and early twenties, are entering the job market. Some places of business might have as many as five generations – from people born in the mid-1940s to those born in the mid-1990s – working side-by-side. The benefits these employees need and value can vary greatly between age groups.

According to the MetLife study, older millennials (ages 25-34) and Gen Xers (ages 36-50) feel less in control of their finances than younger millennials and baby boomers do. This may be true for Gen X members because they likely are supporting children and perhaps parents, as well. Older millennials – the group most concerned about their finances – also may be supporting young families and are at the stage of life where they are thinking about home ownership. Yet, they typically have college debt and very little savings.

Besides multiple generations in the workforce, greater numbers of contract workers and a rise in same-sex marriages and single-parent households have contributed to today's diverse benefits needs. Regardless of the family structure, employees expect employers to help them feel secure and to support their desire for a holistic, family-first work-life balance.

Understanding the needs of each group and demographic in the workplace is the key to developing benefits strategies that will meet everyone's goals. Achieving this objective also will support the company in recruiting and retaining high-caliber talent.

To meet employees where they are, employers should consider:

- Offering a wide array of insurance/health care benefits options.
- Allowing employees to choose the options that best fit their personal situations.
- Providing experts who can explain the benefits to employees in clear, understandable language. These resource people should be available on an ongoing basis to answer questions or help employees adjust their benefits if their life situations change.
- Making it easy to enroll and manage their benefits online.

Often, a professional employer organization is both the employer's and employee's best friend when it comes to providing broad benefits options and helping employees tailor their choices to their individual needs

Help from a trusted source

Small and mid-sized employers wholeheartedly want to meet their employees' widely varying benefits needs. But they rarely have the financial resources to provide a breadth of options or the internal resources to hire human resources experts who are trained, knowledgeable and certified.



At the same time, employees often miss out on benefits that would be advantageous to them. They get weary trying to wade through cumbersome and confusing explanations, lose energy and give up, defaulting to the same choices they made the year before.

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A professional employer can:

- Give employers access to an array of benefits they could never have afforded on their own.
- Clearly explain each available benefit and help employees choose those that best fit their individualized needs.
- Provide trained, certified professionals who are available to answer questions – not just at enrollment time, but all year long.

- Keep the enrollment process on track and on deadline with little time required of the company's owners and managers.
- Simplify the benefits enrollment process for employers and employees by offering online enrollment. Over the long term, employees also can manage their accounts online, including reviewing and making changes as needed.

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About Axcet HR Solutions

Axcet HR Solutions is an IRS-certified PEO serving the Greater Kansas City Metro area since 1988. We provide professional Human Resources, benefits, payroll, safety, and workers' compensation services to small- to medium-sized business. Our mission is to empower small business owners with the time, confidence, and security to focus on their core business, and relieve them of the burdensome and time-consuming HR tasks.

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