

The New Age of Employee Benefits: Getting Ahead of the Curve

Contributed by [Employee Home View](#)



Background

Beyond vacation, 401K, and maternity leave, we all know that the long-time tradition and focus of most brokers and smaller employers are insurance-based benefits – health, dental, vision, life, disability and more recently, long-term care, legal, pet, and identity theft. All require a monthly premium cost; some have participation requirements, and some have face-to-face enrollments.

We also know employers are challenged with rising benefit costs and a competitive work climate with diverse worker types (full-time, part-time, 1099ers), ages (20-60+) and home-life (married, single, with/without children and/or pets, renters, homeowners). All are demanding more benefits – when wanted and needed – as they travel through their personal and unique life chapters. One size does not fit all. Consequently, the cost-shifting of benefits from the employer to worker is likely to continue. And the requirement and momentum for employers to add more, diverse, on-demand benefits is expected to accelerate.

Not only is it logical, but the multitude of studies all document that benefits are crucial to meeting company goals of attracting and retaining a happier, more productive workforce.

In a recent survey, 95% of Willis Towers Watson large clients said voluntary benefits will play a key role in their total rewards strategy over the next three years with a significant interest in newer, non-insurance benefits.

New Age Benefits

Some newer benefits are specific to at work perks such as free snacks, a monthly massage. Others are for work-life balance such as flextime, work-from-home, summer hours, get-away weekend travel packages. Some are for social and/or community involvement, such as time off for volunteering. Or specific to home life perks and discounts for shopping related items such as electronics, appliances, cell phones, entertainment tickets. In addition, many employers adopted wellness benefits and perks aimed at stop smoking, get in shape/lose weight. In many large employers this package of benefits now falls under Total Rewards and some are moving to Total Well-Being.

Most of these benefit offerings, in general, provide these fundamentals to workers'

- 1) Convenience;
- 2) Cost Savings...from company-funding and/or a reduced, group-rate premium charged to the worker and/or cost savings from the benefit itself such as discounts; and
- 3) Time Savings.

Furthermore, more employers are acknowledging that a less stressed, healthier, happier worker is generally more productive as well as more loyal. This further supports the value of Total Well-Being or Holistic Wellness - which includes physical/health, social, emotional, and financial.

Current insurance and wellness benefits largely focus on health and are considered to be a mature industry with limited growth opportunities. Recent findings all support that financial wellness is equally important with all signs indicating this is poised for rising demand and growth opportunities. Most desired are those that provide professional education and personal advice that can assist and guide workers to make improvements including better management of key financial elements and events including budgeting, savings options, credit rating score, credit card and student debt, home buying and financing.

Services are emerging quickly that make it simpler and affordable for employers to offer workers financial support and guidance in these many different facets of life.

Smaller employers just don't have the internal resources to keep up with leading-edge benefits, let alone do the research to find benefit providers that are credible, affordable (often at no cost), and most of all, easy for them to implement and easy for the workers to access.

Getting Ahead of the Curve

Financial wellness is a ripe area for advisors to get ahead of the curve and be on the ground floor of this emerging area that is poised for opportunity and growth. One of the fundamental elements of financial wellness is our home. It is the single item that consumes the largest percentage of our take-home pay. And, contributes to overall wealth.

Employees who own homes have a 45 times greater net worth than renters and are more financially stable according to the NAR 2015 Home Buyer and Seller Generational Report

Our home is also core to our overall well-being.

“Home and work environment are important influences on our sense of well-being, but they are often overlooked,” says UW Health psychologist Shilagh Mirgain. “These are the environments we spend the most time in, so it’s only natural they would have an impact on us.”

“People still view housing (home ownership) as a central component of happiness and a critical aspect of the American dream,” Dr. Elizabeth Dunn, an associate professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia who studies consumerism and happiness.

Changing residences – renting or buying - is one of the personal, key-life events that often occurs several times during our personal life journey from our 20’s through retirement. The US is a mobile population. 35 million people move every year. 1 out of 5 households every year are renting, buying, selling or refinancing. People are moving for many reasons however; it falls into 4 broad categories:

- 1) Change in lifestyle (e.g. marriage, divorce, kids, empty nester)
- 2) Financial (want to build equity; improve net worth)
- 3) Desire for convenience (closer to work, shopping, family, friends, schools)
- 4) Pursuit of personal dreams and goals (want to move up/down; likes change)

The 20-40+ age groups will continue pour into the marketplace either as first-time home buyers or move-up buyers. And, the 50’s thru retirement are predicted to be rightsizing and/or purchasing a 2nd home.

Regardless of the reason or how many times you have moved – this home life event, while often exciting, is also disruptive, time-consuming (several months), stressful to the entire family and it is costly. Moving is right up there with death, divorce and critical illness. And, it is well documented that all these events, unassisted, take a toll. With professional assistance given to workers, companies win too:

- Productivity: Traditional house selling and buying is time-consuming. Workers appreciate the time they’ve saved at work by having a personal consultant, on-line tools and not being interrupted with phone calls.
- Satisfaction: By making helping with such a personal and important life event, the process is easier, and they know the company cares.
- Retention: Multiple studies show homeownership has a positive psychological impact on the individual, including an increased sense of investment in the community and more loyalty to employer.

Research predicts that assistance to workers who are buying homes – changing residences – is likely to become one of the next big things. While in it infancy, many large companies – such as Facebook, Nissan, Lumber Liquidators, ADP – recognize the value and are offering worker benefits in this area.

Per Thomson Benefits survey – 30% - 80% of workers (depending on age) would like home buying assistance.

EHV - Forward Thinking Solution

Employee Home View is your leading-edge benefit provider. With a leadership team well-known in the global mobility industry, EHV Benefits uniquely provides a one-stop platform to assist the general worker population who are changing residences. The suite of services includes a personal and experienced moving consultant and an on-line technology app to help educate workers and manage the processes. Personal and customized assistance and resources are given based on individual worker needs whether renting,

buying and/or selling, including introduction to local, top performing real estate agents; home financing and household goods moving options. Services are provided throughout the US.

The services are at no cost to the employer and no cost to the worker to access and consider the available benefit resources and options. When the worker elects to utilize one or more of the service partners, the worker saves significant money through discounts. EHV Benefits receives its revenue from the supplier.

Of high value to the worker - EHV Benefits also gives the worker a home buy and/or sell rebate/reward that, on average, is one month's mortgage payment. This tax-free payment is a significant benefit and savings. EHV Benefits personal services with both time and cost savings not only improve financial wellness but also productivity.

Agencies have an opportunity to be get ahead of the curve on this new, powerful and emerging benefit. Help your clients and prospects know about and put in place EHV Benefits for 2020. It should be an easy "yes". There is no cost. No payroll deduct. Available to all workers. No participation requirement. Workers are empowered with on-line, self-enrollment via an EHV URL. And, it is easy to implement. No client contracts. Simple "plug-in" for Employee Navigator and/or client website and/or client benefit portal. Announce to workers.

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