



S T R A T E G I E S

Employee Benefits

How Millennials Are Changing the Employee Benefits Game

BY JOE ELLIS

Millennials are the largest generation ever, and with those numbers comes a lot of power. As this generation gains stature in the workplace, they're driving the conversation surrounding benefits.

Traditional benefits, while of course still a staple of any productive benefits plan, aren't the game changer anymore. When millennials think about what they want from an employer, they're looking for those unique benefits that set the organization apart from others.

And, in many ways, millennials find themselves invincible; they're not entirely wrong. They're paying more attention to high-deductible health plans because they believe they won't need to file any significant claims, yet they understand the importance of saving towards a health savings account. They recognize that medical, dental and vision benefits are all essential components in a plan, yet they tend to miss the importance of having long-term disability insurance and other vital benefits.

Millennials are making demands, and they're being heard. However, some are more outside-the-box than traditional employers may tend to think. So, it begs the question, what benefits are millennials looking for? And how can employers keep up with the invincibles?

Student Loan Repayment Programs

According to a study by ORC International, 63% of millennials have more than \$10,000 in student debt. They need help digging out of debt and are turning to their employers for assistance. In the past, student loan repayment programs were available only at large companies; however, companies of all sizes are now beginning to see the value of these programs. Smaller employers are realizing that in order to compete with large companies offering assistance, they need to follow suit.

Financial Wellness Offerings

In the wellbeing world, there is a strong emphasis on physical and mental health, but financial health often falls to the wayside. This is unfortunate since many view their finances as one of the most significant stressors that

contributes to poor health and habits. And, unfortunately, financial wellness and budgeting is not a skill that's frequently taught in school. If companies teach millennials how to budget or help them understand how to save money, they're fixing a main turnover issue. Employers wouldn't be as prone to lose an employee to a competing firm offering a small pay bump if that employee understood how to budget effectively.

Identify Theft Protection

Millennials feel that they're much more active and dependent on electronics compared to older generations. Therefore, they feel much more exposed to identity theft and other cybercrime. If an employer were to offer a plan that their employees could utilize to protect against these crimes, it would go a long way.

Mortgage Services

Millennials are much slower to purchase homes than were their predecessors. Employers are being engaged by vendors and partners looking to help first-time home buyers. They want to provide brown bag lunches, webinars and more in-person discussions about how to buy a house or what your credit should look like to be successful. Presenting mortgage support is a new trend that many millennials find enticing.

Millennials will soon be the majority of the workforce, bringing with them a new mindset and workplace culture expectations. Employers need to realize that this generation is different. Hence, their wants and communication preferences are different, too. It may be beneficial for employers to look at demographic studies and compare characteristics of various generations regarding how to address and communicate.

Millennials are breaking the mold on traditional benefits, yet employers don't need to feel the pressures of that break. Start the conversation early and know how the characteristics of this generation are different. By building a successful benefit plan with offerings that motivate millennials, you too can feel invincible. 🚩



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