

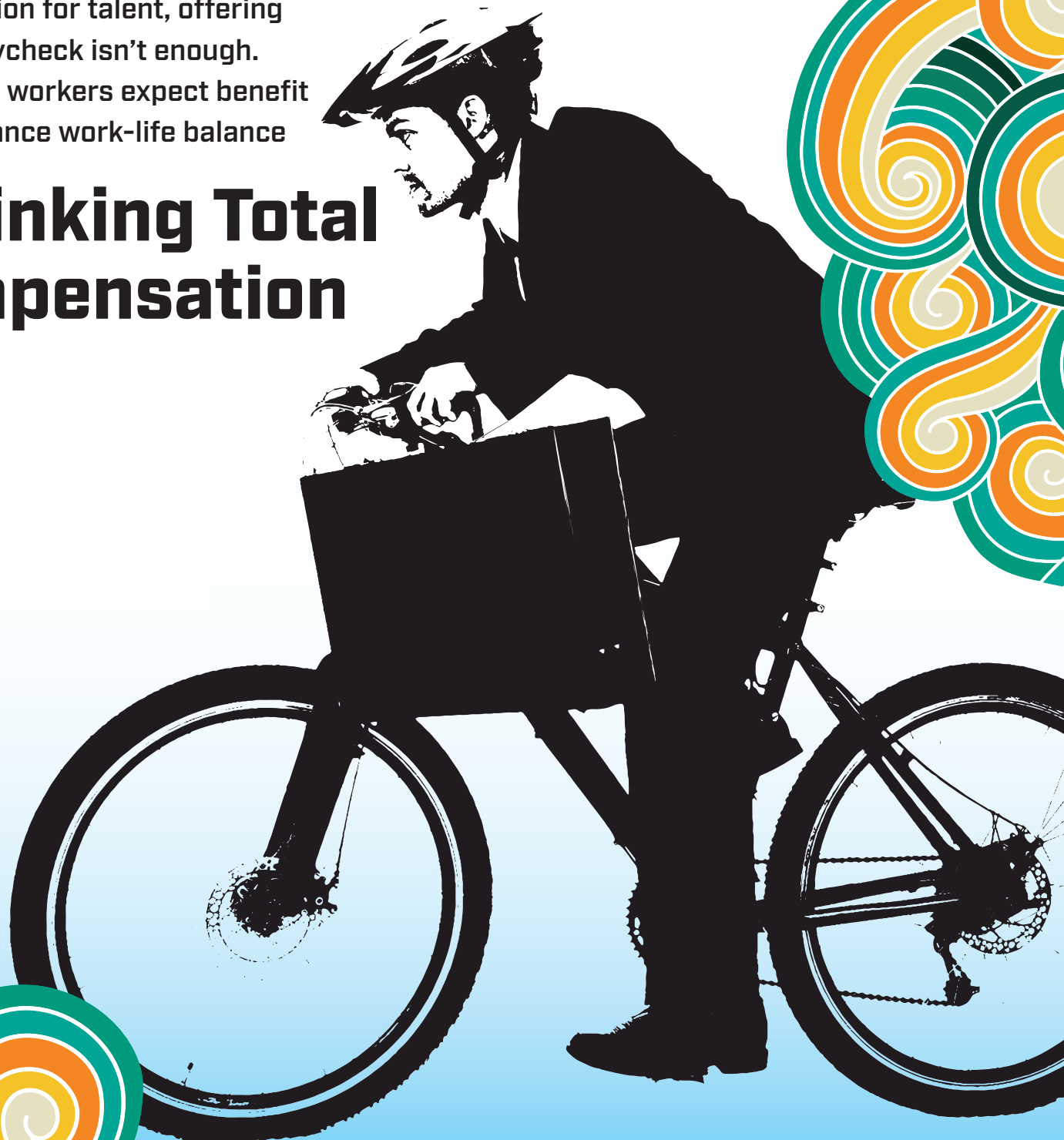
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Employee Benefit News

July 2017 | benefitnews.com

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a competitive paycheck isn't enough.
The most-in-demand workers expect benefit
packages that enhance work-life balance

Rethinking Total Compensation



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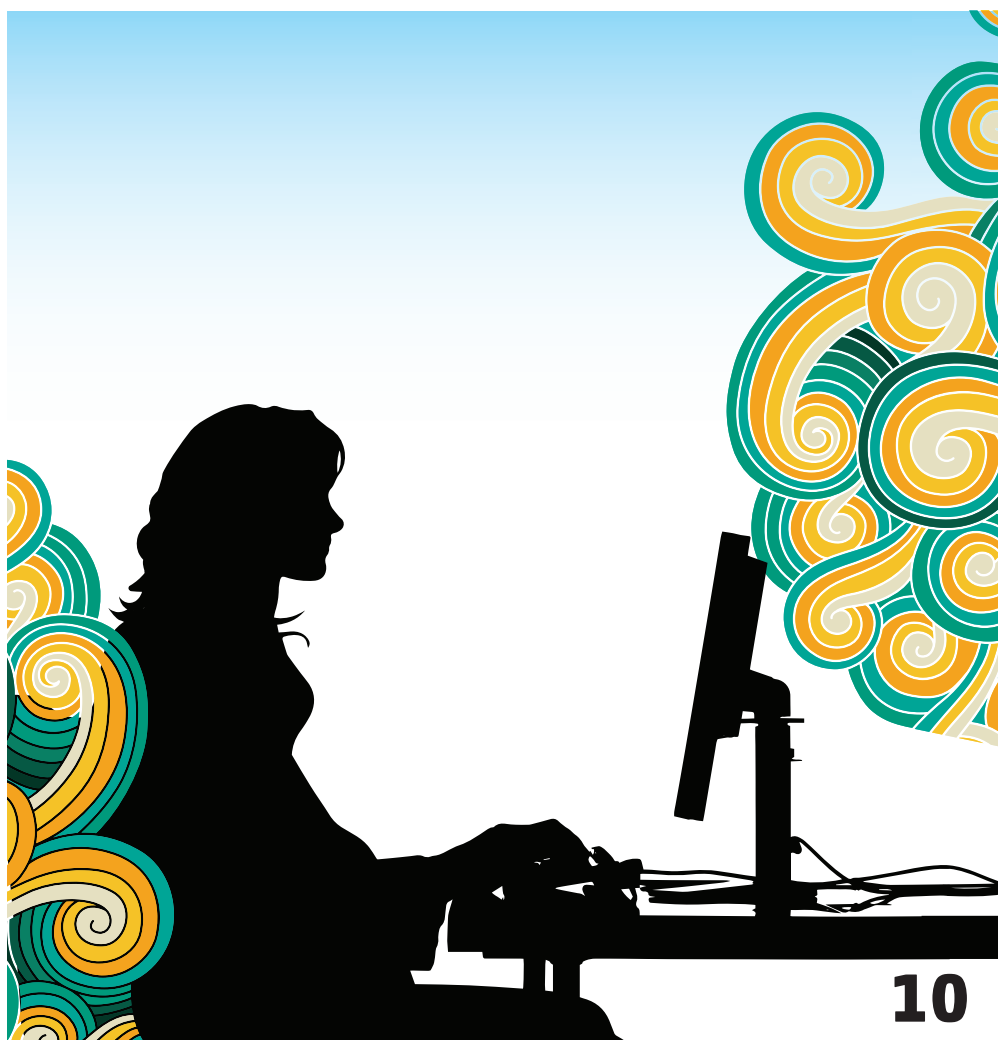
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HSA's: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACHIEVING HEALTH & WEALTH

July 20, 2017 | 2 PM ET / 11 AM PT

You've likely heard that Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) are gaining recognition as a valuable tool for retirement savings due to their triple tax advantage and investment opportunities. While 75% of employers view HSAs as part of a successful retirement benefits strategy,¹ important metrics show they are not fully leveraged as a long-term savings tool. But, an emerging trend gives us hope HSAs can play an important role in closing America's retirement savings gap.

Employers, brokers and financial advisors will learn how they can contribute to increased awareness and adoption of HSAs as a key component of a holistic retirement strategy, when combined with traditional retirement tools (401k and IRA). We'll break down the phases of HSA account ownership as employees in various life stages move from account opening to maximizing HSA investments to saving the average \$260,000 a couple may need for healthcare expenses in retirement,² and explain your role in adding value to this process.

¹ April 24, 2017. Accessed June 1, 2017. https://www.psc.org/survey_HSA_2017.

² August 16, 2016. Accessed June 1, 2017. <https://www.fidelity.com/viewpoints/retirement/retiree-health-costs-rise>.

Additionally, This Webinar Will Provide Insight Into:

- The benefits of HSAs for accountholders and employers
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EMPLOYEE BENEFIT VIEWS

An excerpt from our *Employee Benefit Views* blog, written by Loretta Metzger, benefits consultant at Corporate Synergies, an employee benefits brokerage and consultancy.

Preparing employees for surprise medical bills

When employees get sick or injured, the last thing they need is a jolt to the heart when medical bills start rolling in. Yet surprise bills are becoming more common.

As an employer, you might feel powerless to help an employee deal with a financial blow of hundreds or even thousands of dollars. But you can help, or rather, there are specialized employee advocacy centers that can offer assistance.

The doctors who charge the most are typically those that a patient did not choose. A seriously ill or injured person who is rushed to the emergency room may not be in a position to check if the anesthesiologists, ER physicians, neurosurgeons, pathologists and radiologists are all in-network. Researchers from the Yale School of Public Health and the Yale School of Management reviewed



more than 2 million ER department visits and they found that one in five patients who used in-network emergency room facilities were actually treated by an out-of-network doctor. This exposed patients to additional, and sometimes huge, charges that were not covered by their medical plans.

A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that the average physician charges about two-and-a-half times what Medicare pays, while some charge up to four times more. Insur-

ers typically use Medicare payments to determine what they will reimburse patients. Out-of-network physicians referred by the in-network doctor also drive high costs.

The problem of surprise medical bills is becoming a fact of life for many employees, as insurance networks narrow and eliminate coverage for out-of-network services in an effort to save costs. This can put employers in a tough spot. Employees could get stuck with a hefty medical bill several weeks — or even months — after getting care. Then they come to HR or their benefits department for help deciphering a bill or a complicated explanation of benefits statement.

Benefits advocacy services are often provided by health insurance brokers. A strong employee advocacy program can help employees navigate a high medical bill and even intercede to reduce a bill for emergency health-care services. Benefits advocates can also help participants review their insurance plans before a procedure to determine what the plan will pay.

To read this blog in its entirety, check out <http://bit.ly/2rGZb1J>.

→ VIEW

EBN's slideshow gallery:

10 compliance issues for 2018 health and benefit planning

Despite the uncertain future of the Affordable Care Act and pending replacement legislation, employers should continue finalizing their 2018 health and benefit offerings, contribution strategies, vendor terms and employee communications, according to consulting firm Mercer.

<http://bit.ly/2rW52nZ>

10 best states for job seekers

A competitive job market often means a higher employee turnover rate, which costs companies time and money. New research from WalletHub shows which states have the best job opportunities — insight benefit managers might want to use to beef up offerings to help deter current employees from leaving.

<http://bit.ly/2sFoa6X>



5 tips for starting or refining a wellness program

Employers should offer incentives to get employees to participate, create a healthy culture at work and properly communicate offerings to workers, among other guidelines.

<http://bit.ly/2rGuQ3z>

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EDITOR'S DESK

The concern for employers is becoming less about, "how am I going to solve my company's problems?" and more about "how am I going to help my employees solve their problems?"

How do you solve a problem like retention?



KATHRYN MAYER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

GET 15,000 HR PROFESSIONALS in a room together and you might be surprised to find out what their biggest concern is.

It isn't about how to address rising healthcare costs — which for years has been the No. 1 pain point. It isn't a talent shortage, or keeping up with the latest technologies. It isn't about ongoing health reform legislation — despite the latest Senate bill just dropping. And it isn't even about the growing demographic of millennial workers — a generation with which many said they struggled to connect.

Instead, as I found in chatting with benefits and HR professionals during the Society for Human Resource Management's annual conference in New Orleans, the biggest concern is recruiting top-notch employees, then figuring out how to get them to stick around.

And it became pretty obvious what the solution was as the conference went on.

Recruiting and retaining employees was the reason that one-third of employers said they beefed up their benefit packages this year, according to SHRM's newly released annual benefits survey. And while health and wellness offerings are still important

— 22% of organizations said they increased health benefits and 24% said they increased wellness perks — those are hardly enough reason for employees to stay true to their employer.

More and more, workers are demanding perks that help improve their quality of life. And employers are finally taking note.

Benefits on the rise, according to SHRM, include flexibility, financial advice, telecommuting and lactation rooms. And smart employers, of course, are going even further. As you'll read about on p. 10, Southwest Airlines offers one-on-one financial counseling, American Express has a work-life balance program for its employees, and Akamai Technologies offers a liberal telework program called Akamai Anywhere that allows workers to apply to do their jobs entirely off site.

Patagonia, the outdoor clothing retailer, offers an onsite childcare center — among other family-friendly perks — and a Patagonia executive wondered during the SHRM conference why other employers don't.

"It's astonishing — and a little embarrassing — that our country's business leaders provide paid leave to just 13% of workers and just a fraction

provide onsite childcare," Rick Ridgeway, Patagonia's vice president of public engagement, said during one session. "It costs us a lot to provide [onsite childcare] but we get so much return on employee retention and engagement."

Overall, the concern for employers is becoming less about, "how am I going to solve my company's problems?" and more about "how am I going to help my employees solve *their* problems?"

From balancing budgets to balancing work-life balance, there's no doubt workers are looking for assistance. And soon, I predict, they'll be demanding it.

When it comes to the talent war, employees are now in the driver's seat. So employers, are you going along for the ride?

Send letters, queries and story ideas to Editor-in-Chief Kathryn Mayer at kathryn.mayer@sourcemedia.com.

A handwritten signature of Kathryn Mayer in black ink.

HEALTH CARE

In this section:
>Wellness



WELLNESS

Employers boosting benefits packages to attract talent

Health and wellness perks dominate offerings added in the last year, according to SHRM's annual report

BY NICK OTTO

Nearly one-third of employers expanded their benefit packages in the last 12 months in an effort to attract and retain top talent, according to the Society for Human Resource Management's 2017 Employee Benefits Survey.

Increases in health (22%) and wellness (24%) offerings, as well as providing healthcare benefits to employees' spouses and domestic partners, were major strategies from organizations in helping to remain competitive.

In 2014, 71% of companies offered opposite-sex spouses healthcare cov-

erage, while only 46% offered it to same-sex spouses. That gap closed to just 10 percentage points in 2017, according to the report.

"Most companies are now using benefits as a strategic tool for recruiting and retaining talent in this competitive environment."

Ninety-five percent of employees now offer healthcare coverage to opposite-sex spouses, while 85% offer it to same-sex spouses. Although

to control healthcare costs, 19% of employers have restrictions or a surcharge for coverage for opposite-sex spouses, and 16% have restrictions for coverage for same-sex spouses, SHRM says.

"Recruiting difficulty has continued to increase over the last five years, and competition for talent is high," says Shonna Waters, vice president of research for SHRM. "Most companies are now using benefits as a strategic tool for recruiting and retaining talent in this competitive environment."

Alongside the focus on healthcare, employers also are taking a deep dive into wellness programs, with about three in every five em-

ployers offering general wellness programs, according to the report.

Nearly one-quarter (24%) reported increased wellness benefits offerings in the past year, with the most common wellness benefit being providing wellness resources and information (71%). According to the study, 62% gave wellness tips or information at least quarterly in the form of a newsletter, e-mail, column, tweets, etc.

While many organizations have been extending healthcare coverage to employees' families, two-thirds of those surveyed said they were very concerned about controlling healthcare costs while another 31% were somewhat concerned.

From 2016 to 2017, healthcare costs increased for 79% of organizations, with an 11% increase, on average, according to SHRM.

One strategy that some organizations are using to mitigate healthcare costs is to implement restrictions on coverage for spouses and domestic partners. One of the more common cost-curbing employer moves was adding a surcharge or denying coverage if the employee's spouse was offered coverage by another employer.

Other cost-saving measures include providing only secondary coverage, charging higher premiums or cost-sharing amounts, and not allowing employees to use pretax earnings to pay for spousal premiums, the report notes.

Health savings accounts are another tactic.

More than one-half (55%) of organizations offered HSAs in 2017, according to SHRM, and more than one-third (36%) provided an employer contribution to the HSA, also showing an upward trend.

Meanwhile, flexible spending accounts have seen a slight dip over the past few years, according to the study. In 2013, 72% of organizations were offering an FSA; that number has tapered off to 65% this year.■

Image from Adobe Stock



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Pet-friendly policies are an office morale booster

Employees report lower stress, better work-life balance, higher company loyalty and more, research shows

BY BRUCE SHUTAN

While animal-loving employees appreciate policies that permit pets in the workplace, they actually prefer pet-related paid time off and bereavement leave, notes a survey of 1,000 employees and 200 HR decision-makers conducted by Banfield Pet Hospital.

The Pet-Friendly Workplace PAWrometer findings also noted improvements reported in five key areas as a result of implementing pet-friendly policies. They included higher morale (93%), lower stress (93%), better work-life balance (91%), increased company

loyalty (91%) and reduced guilt among pet owners about leaving their pets at home (91%).

The past two years of this annual research suggests that “employers are becoming more receptive to the idea of implementing pet-friendly policies at work due to the increasing interest from employees and the positive impacts associated with these policies,” says Stephanie Neuvirth, SVP of people and organization at Banfield Pet Hospital, the world’s largest general-veterinary practice, which was bought earlier in the year by candy company Mars.

“We believe pet-related benefits will continue to rise in popularity among desired workplace benefits.”

She says HR professionals and their advisers should be aware that pet-friendly policies positively impact everything from recruiting and hiring to well-being, productivity and retention — particularly among millennials.

For example, Neuvirth says the data suggests those policies are more likely to influence a millennial’s job search (42%) than older adults (23%). In addition, she notes that millennials are far more likely to continue employment at a company that implements pet-friendly policies (60%) than their elders (39%).

A pet-friendly workplace helps build a sense of connectedness with teammates, but there are potential downsides to consider, explains Paul

White, a licensed psychologist, consultant and author of “The Vibrant Workplace.”

Since many people want co-workers to know about other parts of their life, including hobbies, he believes “it makes sense that they would like others to know about the pets they have. And I think it’s reasonable to have openness to bringing your pet in to introduce to your colleagues.”

However, White says employees who don’t have pets might feel pet owners have an unfair advantage. Another issue he raises is that allowing pets at work presents “logistical hassles” day in and day out that create a “diminishing return” on any investment made in fostering this environment. Still, researchers at the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Human-Animal Interaction noted the benefits of having such a policy. Employees of a manufacturing services company who were permitted to bring their dogs to work were less stressed, while many pet-free co-workers noticed a positive impact on their productivity as well.

White sees value in other pet-related benefits. “My office administrator had gotten a young dog that she loved, and it had a major medical issue,” he explains. “We worked with her to be able to take time off to be with her pet during the procedure and see the dog either early in the morning or late in the afternoon, and people would cover for her. That was meaningful because it was an important part of her life and she was deeply appreciative of it.”

One way that employers can promote this flexibility, he suggests, is if they consider as an alternative use of family and medical leave that extends paid or unpaid leaves of absence to caring for or being with a pet in lieu of a person.

“We value choice and the opportunity to choose,” White explains, “and we resent it when we are essentially commanded to do something and don’t have a choice.” ■

RETHINKING TOTAL COMPENSATION

BY **RANDY BARRETT**

Leading innovators, including Akamai, Rackspace, Southwest Airlines and Vivint, are focusing on “quality of life” perks and other benefits that our grandfathers wouldn’t have dreamed of – or thought possible.





In today's war for talent, the number on the paycheck is just one of many aspects prospective employees consider when deciding where to work. Millennials are largely driving this shift, as they look for work/life balance and a socially conscious corporate culture.

Leading innovators, including Akamai, Rackspace, Southwest Airlines and Vivint, are focusing on "quality of life" perks and other benefits that our grandfathers wouldn't have dreamed of — or thought possible. They include daycare assistance, adoption and fertility funding, onsite medical scans, ID-theft services and enhanced options for working remotely.

"Benefits, or what we refer to as WorkPerks at Southwest, are a big driver when it comes to attracting, retaining and engaging [employees]," says Julie Weber, VP of people at Southwest Airlines. She adds that the company "doesn't just focus on traditional benefits like wellness, health-care and retirement." For the airline, that means a positive work culture, career development and generous travel privileges.

Sarah Sardella, senior director of global benefits for Akamai Technologies, a digital content delivery company based in Cambridge, Mass., has come to the same conclusion. She says many companies focus on health insurance, which is important, but it doesn't have to be in the gold-plated category to attract talent.

"If we're going to spend more money, I can take that and spend it on enhanced caregiver benefits," Sardella says. "Those tend to be something employees respond to."

Benefits aren't make or break when it comes to hiring, but they are a key negotiating point, says Sharon Noneman, director of global benefits and wellness for Rackspace, a cloud services technology company in Windcrest, Texas. "They are the ancillary things that push them over the edge: massage on site, free onsite gym, paid family leave," she explains.

The key is getting the offerings right. Increasingly, that means exceptionally strong family-oriented benefits. While baby boomers focused on

good traditional benefits, millennials are more interested in quality of life.

"I do think we see more of a desire for flexibility," Weber says.

American Express recently expanded its parental leave policy and now offers its U.S.-based full-time and part-time employees 20 weeks of paid time off. And it offers the same benefit to both men and women.

"We believe longer parental leave has a far-reaching positive impact on the mental and physical health of our employees and their families," says David Kasiaz, senior vice president, global rewards and learning.

The chemical company BASF, based in Florham Park, N.J., has followed suit and grown its parental leave program to 16 weeks — and added five more days of medical leave. "We give people time to unplug and really be there with their families," says Mollie O'Brien, the company's director of total rewards.

"Some employees think unlimited vacation is great, and others think it's a ploy to not let them take as much time away from work."

The home technology company Vivint, based in Provo, Utah, supplies 12 weeks of paid maternity time and six weeks of paid time off for adoptions. "It gives people an opportunity to bond with their child and recover from having a baby or going through the hoops of adoption," says Starr Fowler, senior vice president of HR. "They can come back and they don't need to worry — we're taking care of them."

Akamai offers birth mothers paid leave for up to 18 weeks — eight weeks through the company's short-term disability insurance and 10 weeks of paid family leave provided by Akamai. New fathers and adoptive and/or non-delivery parents receive 10 weeks of paid leave. The company also goes a step further and provides up to \$5,000 to help with adoption expenses.

Fertility coverage is becoming more common as well. BASF offers up to \$10,000 to cover IVF treatments. Akamai also provides infer-

tility coverage in its health plans, as does American Express.

Destination employers also have begun to recognize the importance of supplying support for daycare and eldercare. Many employees live in the sandwich generation and are in need of both. American Express offers enhanced eldercare support that helps employees find the right situation for their loved ones.

"The program provides 24/7 access to confidential help, including assistance in finding long-term care solutions such as assisted living facilities and nursing homes," Kasiaz says. The company has a deal with the provider Bright Horizons and gives its U.S. employees up to 20 days of subsidized care per year.

Rackspace and Akamai also offer supplemental eldercare as well as child daycare. The benefits are designed as a stop-gap when babysitting situations fall through. Akamai

employees can get the help for just \$6 an hour. BASF offers 80 hours a year of backup childcare and also provides nursing rooms on site.

Work/life balance

The pampered millennial is a cliché, but as always there's some truth to the generalization. One issue smart companies are paying close attention to is work/life balance. Boomers were trained to show up, toil at their desk and stay, if required, until the job was done. Millennials see work as more fluid and not specifically tied to the workplace.

"Millennials say, 'What's the big deal? I have email on my phone,'" states Sardella, who was working at home and taking care of her child when interviewed by *EBN*. "We're out of the recession and it's starting to get harder to find good talent again. What do you want that work experience to look like?" Sardella says Akamai strives to offer benefits that complement work and family life so

What millennials want

As more millennials enter the workforce, employers are looking to the largest growing employee base to get a pulse on which perks are most desirable.

Telecommuting options, flexibility, parental leave policies and workplace extras such as free snacks, gym memberships and nap pods are the most essential perks employers can offer young employees, according to a survey from ReportLinker, a technology research company.

However, those are the least likely perks to be offered by employers, according to the survey's 500 online respondents

While healthcare benefits (68%), paid family sick leave (54%) and flexible scheduling benefits (47%) are the most popular perks offered by employers, according to ReportLinker, employees desire benefits that most employers don't offer.

Only 11% of employers offer telecommute benefits, whereas 19% of employers offer gym/fitness membership and 16% offer free snacks, according to the consumer survey.

If employers incorporate those benefits, the survey suggests employees are more inclined to stay loyal to the company.

"A few decades ago, when you accepted a job with an employer, you could expect to spend the rest of your career there," the ReportLinker report says. "Good pay and health benefits ensured your loyalty. But today, as younger generations move into the workplace, businesses are finding it's much tougher to earn employee loyalty."

Forty percent of millennials say they are "somewhat" committed to their employer, while 66% of older employees who say they are "highly" committed.

Thus, "organizations are testing several new strategies to make employees happier and encourage them to stay longer," ReportLinker says. "They're providing more opportunities for professional growth, offering a wider range of perks, and making a stronger commitment to improving work-life balance."

—Amanda Eisenberg

employees can "manage that blur between being at work and being at home."

The company offers a liberal telework program called Akamai Anywhere that allows workers to apply to do their jobs entirely off-site. Sardella recently had a valued employee in tears in her office because of a pending move to upstate New York. The worker thought resigning her position was inevitable until Sardella solved the problem.

"She's now working at her house in Syracuse," Sardella explains. "It works fine, and she loves it. It's part of who we are."

American Express offers a Work Life Program to help employees manage the balancing act. "We not only want to help our employees and their families make their fulfilling experiences happen, but we want to give them back some time in their day," Kasiarz says. That includes the improved parental leave policy, but also a new personal assistant service to help employees with a range of to-dos, like finding affordable pet or childcare, sourcing home repairs, planning a move and even party planning.

HR experts agree that millennials also want flexibility when it comes to time off. More organizations are moving away from the "Sir, may I" tradition of tightly controlled vacations and the associated stress and anxiety. Tech companies have clearly led the pack, but the trend toward open vacation policies is slowly gaining ground.

Vivint has done it for some time. "We've done away with tracking vacation and time off," Fowler says. "We recognize not everyone manages to an annual calendar. We trust they'll get the job done." That leaves it up to workers and managers to negotiate the right balance.

Akamai hasn't required a formal cap on vacation for a decade. While the policy sounds great on paper, Sardella concedes managing it is "really tricky in a lot of real, tactical ways."

It requires managers to set measurable goals and objectives and stay on top of them, she says. "We ended up launching a training program where part of it dealt with how to use discretion, be consistent and be fair."

The other challenge would seem less apparent: Without a traditional vacation policy with use-it-or-lose-it rules, some employees take less time off and are at risk for burnout.

"Some employees think it's great, and others think it's a ploy to not let them take as much time away from work," Sardella says.

The policy clearly isn't for every industry. BASF hews to traditional vacations, given the nature of its business, O'Brien says. "Half our population at BASF is in chemical plants. They are production workers that have very technical roles." If John doesn't show up for work, somebody on his team has to cover his shift.

Wellness

As insurance premiums continue to rise, destination companies are pushing wellness as a key benefit to encourage employees to lead healthier

lifestyles. Southwest offers its own internal rewards program that supplies up to \$500 in cash for getting enough sleep and exercise. The company also provides biometric screenings (bloodwork, etc.) and even brings mammography trucks to the workplace.

American Express has gone wide and deep on wellness. "Our goal is to build a culture of health through our leadership, policies and work environment," Kasiarz says. "Better health for our employees and their families is good for them and it's good for us." The company operates 22 Healthy Living Wellness Centers in its worksites across the world.

In 2013, American Express began targeting mental health. "We know that one in four people around the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives," Kasiarz says. "We also know that the trajectory of mental illness is far better when addressed early on." The company provides counseling 24/7 via telephone, and employees can also work with a mental health professional on site or near work. The service is free and confidential.

Vivint has an onsite health clinic that is also available to family members. It costs just \$30 a visit.

The concept of wellness is now being applied to the financial health of employees. American Express offers an extensive package of services called Smart Savings that includes a personal finance coach. "We also offer various discounted insurance options so employees can protect what matters to them at a lower cost, and [it's] hassle-free through automatic payroll deductions," Kasiarz says.

Southwest also offers one-on-one financial counseling, as does Akamai.

Millennials like to have options, which is leading destination employers to offer more customization and personalization, says Bill Ziebell, CEO of Gallagher Benefit Services. Voluntary benefits are gaining popularity by giving employees access to discounted services from legal assistance to auto and home insurance, and from pet insurance to identity-theft protection. Many companies are also making available critical-injury insurance for younger employees confident in their physical invincibility.

"Millennials know they need insurance, but don't want the expensive plan," Ziebell says. "They would rather have more days off."

BASF offers a full complement of voluntary benefits, as does Akamai, but Sardella warns that managing them isn't as simple as just signing a deal with a third-party vendor. "You really have to hone the benefit if you're going to get serious interest — it's actually more complicated than it should be," she says.

The average student debt in America currently stands at \$30,100 per college graduate, according to the Institute for College Access and Success. More companies recognize the crushing burden and are offering tuition reimbursement to lure

the best prospects. Last year, Southwest began providing \$2,500 to undergrads and \$5,000 for graduate and professional certification training. Akamai offers \$7,500 per year, as does American Express.

Millennials don't like feeling they're just punching a time card at Acme Day Job. They want to work for companies that have a heart. "They seem to be more idealistic and socially conscious and more group oriented," says Trevis Parson, chief actuary for health and benefits for Willis Towers Watson.

A culture of corporate volunteerism is central to destination employers. For every 40 hours of volunteer time put in by an employee, Southwest provides a round-trip ticket to the non-profit organization being helped. Through its Vivint Gives Back program, the company encourages workers to help build sensory rooms for autistic kids and schools in Peru and Mexico, among other projects. More than half of Vivint's employees participate.

Rackspace offers each employee 24 hours of time off per year for volunteer work.

Blab about it

The best benefit plan in the world doesn't mean much if workers are in the dark.

"In many companies, employees don't know all the benefits they have," says BASF's O'Brien. "I don't think people spend a lot of time thinking about it." So her shop has built a brand around communicating its offerings called You At BASF.

Noneman at Rackspace is keenly aware that millennials are digital beings. She hired a company called Jellyvision to create

interactive software to make onboarding easier. "We need to really leverage tech and think about how we're communicating a variety of

complicated benefit issues," she says.

If in doubt about what worker perks might be best, ask the people who know:

employees. American Express holds benefit focus groups and taps employee networks. As Kasiaz points out: "It's because our

employees are helping us to shape our benefits, and we're continually involving them, that we don't run into initiatives falling flat." ■



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EBN's MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN BENEFIT ADVISING

In a largely male-dominated profession, *EBN's* 2017 Most Influential Women in Benefit Advising stand out for both personal and professional reasons. Some of these winners were credited with finding substantial savings for employer clients and strengthening their organization's bottom line.

Several showed bravery in the face of unspeakable obstacles or gave back to their local community. One woman runs a nonprofit dedicated to curing lung cancer. Many mentored female peers whom they encouraged to climb the corporate ladder.

The list, selected by editors from *EBN* and *Employee Benefit Adviser* after a month-long online nomination process, is brimming with thought leaders who belong to various industry organizations. Some made their mark in media by contributing to books or popular news outlets. Others advocate a holistic approach to technology, behavioral finance, level-funding techniques, mind-body healing and metrics to track corporate objectives.

2017 winners include results-oriented thought leaders with heart and soul

BY BRUCE SHUTAN

1



VICE PRESIDENT

Meredith BeamEMPLOYEE SOLUTIONS, WINSTON
BENEFITS

Beam's business development efforts have led to explosive growth for her firm across the Southeast, with more than \$2.2 million in new business revenue within the first two years. Her insight has helped new clients transition to a fully automated approach to enrollment and administrative processes.

2

AREA SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
CLIENT DEVELOPMENT**Marne Bell**

ARTHUR J. GALLAGHER & CO.

An industry thought leader on worksite health initiatives, Bell has been interviewed by CNN about on-site clinic trends and solutions. For more than a year she valiantly fought a life-threatening illness while still becoming a top producer with the most recognized brand names.

3



PRESIDENT/CEO

Tanya Boyd

TANYA BOYD & ASSOCIATES LLC

A recipient of the Dallas Association of Underwriters' Stellar Award, Boyd is a Leading Producers Round Table Soaring Eagle and member of an agent group supporting women in the field. Her company has doubled every year, adding more than 50 new groups and 100 individual clients in 2016.

4



CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER

Rae Lee Clark

VITA COMPANIES

Clark is an expert at complex health-care laws and regulations, and she was instrumental in developing a paperless strategy that has reduced Vita's eco-footprint. Her blog has seen a dramatic uptake in readership that has bolstered the firm's marketing and reputation.

5

PARTNER, THE CAPACITY GROUP,
AN EPIC COMPANY, CEO**Susan L. Combs**

COMBS & COMPANY LLC

Having served as the youngest president of Women in Insurance and Financial Services in the group's 81-year history, Combs was instrumental in helping develop its National Mentorship Program. She is a strong advocate of luring more women to the benefit advising field.

6

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNT
MANAGEMENT**Susan Donohue**

NFP

Donohue's approach to helping save more than \$1 million on a pharmacy contract that exposed excessive pricing has been leveraged for other NFP client relationships. She also helps new recruits balance and develop valuable career paths, and created a client event series that includes a wine tasting and a night at the Boston Pops.

7



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

Pamela Anne Files

FISHER BROWN BOTTRELL INSURANCE

Buoyed by a strategic vision to align with an analytics firm, Files has seen an exceptional embedded algorithms process make a meaningful difference for clients. She's also deeply dedicated to helping female colleagues share best practices and inspire them to reach leadership positions among health underwriters in her state.

8



VICE PRESIDENT, ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Heather Gillow

PACIFIC RESOURCES

Gillow was instrumental in advising clients to discontinue medical claim payments for employees who were out on long-term disability, which saved millions of dollars. She currently manages \$275 million in premium and maintains 100% client retention.

9



SENIOR STRATEGIST OF HEALTH AND WELFARE CONSULTING

Marybeth Gray

TRION GROUP, A MARSH & MCLENNAN AGENCY LLC

Gray has produced more than \$1.5 million in new business each of the past five years and ranked among the top five producers in the Marsh & McLennan Agency during that time. She is also the mentorship co-chair of Trion's Growth in Relationships & Opportunities for Women initiative.

10



PRINCIPAL AND LEAD ADVISOR

Jamie Greenleaf

CAFARO GREENLEAF

Greenleaf built her career on a core belief that all hard-working Americans deserve to retire with dignity. She's a huge advocate of behavioral finance and understands the unique challenges women face in planning for retirement, including a longer lifespan and careers paused by care-taking.

11



NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES

Kiera Hanselman

FBMC BENEFITS MANAGEMENT INC.

Hanselman has made a tremendous impact since joining in May 2016, when sales opportunities ballooned and then exceeded 1,000% above last year's total in the first half of 2017. She has also helped lead and organize a statewide county employee benefits benchmark analysis study.

12



EMPLOYEE BENEFITS CONSULTANT

Cerrina Jensen

COREMARK INSURANCE SERVICES INC.

At least two clients of Jensen survived regulatory audits because of her hands-on support. Under her leadership, the Sacramento Association of Health Underwriters broke a number of records and earned the Pacesetter Award and Presidential Citation.

13



PRESIDENT, OWNER AND EMPLOYEE BENEFIT STRATEGIST

Suzanne (Suzy) K. Johnson

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT ADVISORS OF THE CAROLINAS LLC

Johnson has qualified for the National Association of Health Underwriters' Soaring Eagle agency recognition award each year since its 2010 inception and helped redesign the eligibility criteria for the group's Leading Producers Roundtable. Her agency has excelled by introducing level-funding techniques to many mid-market clients.

14



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, HEALTH & BENEFITS MAJOR MARKET LEADER

Jenna Klein

HUB INTERNATIONAL MIDWEST LIMITED

Klein is responsible for creation and implementation of best practices, and is integral in formulating HUB's client service model. She helped build a new and improved deliverable system, including templates, calendars, best practices, three- to five-year client strategies and stewardship reports.

15



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

PK Kriha

MARSH & MCLENNAN AGENCY LLC

Kriha, who has been recognized as a top 10% performer in a \$1 billion organization, has qualified for the Circle of Champion award for six consecutive years. She's also involved with WoMN, whose 100-plus members help educate women about philanthropy and provide grants.

16



FOUNDING PARTNER

Elizabeth Krystyn

BALDWIN KRYSTYN SHERMAN PARTNERS

Known as a cultural evangelist at a firm consistently recognized as a Best Place to Work, Krystyn addressed both of those strategic themes at a 2016 HR Tampa conference talk. She has also developed metrics to define and track objectives and their expected outcomes.



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17



HEALTH & WELLBEING MANAGER
Kaleana Markley
SEQUOIA CONSULTING

Markley is an expert on employee productivity and retention through next generation benefits strategies, speaking on panels and writing for Ariana Huffington's Thrive Global. She has sought to improve employee engagement in corporate wellbeing initiatives through a handy mobile app.

18



MANAGING PRINCIPAL
Suzanne McGarey
ASCENDE, A DIVISION OF EPIC

McGarey has helped define best practices for compliance and has closely monitored changes across the health-care reform landscape. Under her leadership, Ascende has transitioned from a regional player to a thriving business with \$5 million in client revenue and cross-selling opportunities.

19



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BENEFITS CONSULTING
Jeanne Nicholson
CBG BENEFITS

With more than 35 years of industry experience, Nicholson is considered a major reason why her firm has increased its revenues more than 25% annually since she joined six years ago. She's also founder and president of a networking group of more than 550 HR professionals in her field.

20



CEO
Naama O. Pozniak
PAZ HOLDING INC./DBA A+ INSURANCE SERVICES

Pozniak is a strong believer in the mind-body connection as a means of both healing and reducing healthcare costs. She also founded a new yoga studio in her community and hosts programs at her home on wellness and spiritual living.

21



VICE PRESIDENT
Patricia Purdy
GLOBAL EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS, PACIFIC RESOURCES

When it comes to disability insurance and absence management consulting services, Purdy is an expert at devising best practices. As the only female on her firm's senior leadership team, she's widely recognized as an influential thought leader among her peers.

22



PRESIDENT
Karin Rettger
PRINCIPAL RESOURCE GROUP

Featured on the 2016 list of Most Influential Women in Benefit Advising, Rettger has been a leading voice on the importance of Health Savings Accounts as a tax-preferred savings vehicle. She's also a contributing author for a book on innovative benefit strategies that will soon be published.

23



CHIEF CLIENT OFFICER
Michelle Robleto
FBMC BENEFITS MANAGEMENT INC.

Robleto has helped shape a client-focused culture by defining exceptional customer service and developing tangible metrics. In 2016 she established a dashboard chart to capture key enrollment information that could be shared with all employees on a weekly basis throughout the season.

24



PRODUCER
Jamie Sachtjen
AHT INSURANCE

As the first account executive and only female team member of the Chicago location, as well as one of just 11 female producers for the entire firm, Sachtjen has carved a niche with architectural firms. In her spare time, she runs a nonprofit dedicated to curing lung cancer.



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25



PRESIDENT
Debbie Schultz
TOTEM SOLUTIONS

Schultz is a member of the Women's Business Enterprise National Council and has supported Opportunity International, which helps women in business and seeks to reduce global poverty. She's also a co-author of *The Ridiculously Simple Guide to Health Insurance*.

26



PRESIDENT
Dawn Sheue
SUMMIT INSURANCE SERVICES

Sheue is a pioneer in incorporating enhanced voluntary benefits into level-funded medical plans. Recognized annually as one of the top benefit advisers in the Rocky Mountain area, she recently was named to the Advisory Board of the Workplace Benefits Association.

27



PRESIDENT
Liz Smith
ASSURANCE

Under Smith's leadership, the firm's employee benefits department has grown 600% in the past decade, including 23% growth last year. She also has groomed half a dozen women for leadership positions through mentorships.

28



MANAGING DIRECTOR & GENERAL COUNSEL
Katy (Catherine) Stowers
FIRSTPERSON

Under Stowers' leadership, an internal Operations Task Force meets biweekly on ways to improve the company, including better support during the open-enrollment season. She oversees her firm's 29 largest accounts and plays a critical role in the success of an \$11 million company.

29



FINANCIAL ADVISOR
Julie Veltus
VELTUS FINANCIAL SERVICES LLC

Veltus embraces a holistic approach to technology. She also intimately knows the importance of income-protection products as the mother of a disabled adult son, and is a powerful advocate for such solutions.

30



Charlotte Santa Cruz

Charlotte Santa Cruz, founder and CEO of the Santa Cruz Insurance Group LLC in Bay St. Louis, Miss., about an hour's drive outside New Orleans, specializes in the voluntary employee benefit space and is known for her relentless commitment to customers and former customers alike. Her and her 35 employees cover a spectrum of plans involving health, dental, vision, life and disability as well as various other voluntary benefits for more than 150 companies.

Her firm is known for providing extensive HR, billing and claims support on the back end, where most firms rely on carriers to provide this post-enrollment service because it's not cost effective to do that additional work. Knowing that contacting the carrier for service rarely solves a client's service issues, Santa Cruz provides this unique service at no cost to clients other than compensation received from products sold.

In 1994, she founded Advanced Business Systems, which handled electronic billing for health insurance claims and underwent an official name change to Santa Cruz Insurance Group LLC in 2002 after adding insurance products to her portfolio.

Leading up to Hurricane Katrina, she was managing enrollment services for 500 to 1,000 employees. Since then, despite losing her home and business in the storm and scrambling to work from temporary locations, she has managed, enrolled or advised 54,000 additional employees in their benefit decisions with the help of her team.

In addition, production went from mid-six figures to roughly \$3 million in annual new sales about three to four years after a crippling accident that nearly claimed her life in April 2006. This production surge doubled revenues as well, climbing steadily every year since about 2008 and making Santa Cruz one of the nation's top producing enrollment firms over the past decade.

RE:INVENT | RETIREMENT



Q&A

Financial wellness push promoting 401(k) health

BY RICHARD STOLZ

AS EMPLOYERS START TO SEE EMPLOYEES STRUGGLE with paying bills and saving for retirement, financial well-being programs have sprouted up across American businesses. Rob Austin, director of retirement research at Aon Hewitt, has spent nearly two decades working with employers to improve the retirement outcomes of their workers. An enrolled actuary by trade, Austin says he has “a passion for analyzing data.” As a member of the ERISA Industry Committee, he works with large employers to advocate for and shape legislation and regulations on key employee benefit issues. He spoke with *Employee Benefit News* about his recent work, which focuses on financial well-being and behavioral finance. This is an edited version of the discussion.

Employee Benefit News: Why has financial wellness become such a hot topic for employers?

Rob Austin: Back during the financial crisis, companies were just trying to keep their lights on. Although things are much better today, employers still want to get the most bang for their benefits buck. They’re saying, “Let’s try to find out ways that we can really help employees out.” And here’s where I think financial wellness comes in. Things like helping them to improve their budgeting, establish a little emergency savings, and make better use of their 401(k) plan, including cutting back on plan loans, is important.

EBN: But what is it about financial wellness in particular? There are other “bang-for-your-buck” benefits employers can offer.

Austin: What we saw from our latest survey is that most employers are doing this because they think it’s the right thing to do. The second most com-

FINANCIAL WELLNESS

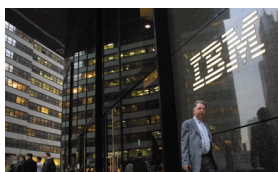


FINANCIAL WELLNESS ‘MUST HAVE’ BENEFIT

More employers are developing programs to help employees plan for retirement.

P.22

CASE STUDY



IBM MERGES RETIREMENT, FINANCIAL PLANNING

The company has a set of specific goals when implementing a new benefit.

P.23



MORE ONLINE

- Women lag in 401(k) account savings
- Why employers need to offer retiree healthcare benefits
- How to boost employees’ financial wellness
- What’s really draining employee 401(k) accounts
- 10 biggest 401(k) misconceptions

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RE:INVENT | RETIREMENT

mon answer is that they are doing it to help increase employee engagement. The theory behind this is people who are less stressed financially are going to be able to be more dedicated in their work, and they are going to become better workers. If you have someone who is constantly worried about their finances, those people probably are not the employees most committed to the organization.

EBN: How can employers determine the extent to which their employees need this kind of support, at least from the employees' own point of view? Is it measurable?

Austin: Absolutely. We can set up a system in which when plan participants try to check their 401(k) balance, they're presented with a survey that asks them a couple of financial questions. The results can give the employer a high-level look at whether people are really struggling with the basics, like budgeting, or maybe looking for something more, like estate planning.

EBN: Do you see a lot of variations in the responses?

Austin: Yes. It varies by industry, and also how well people are paid. We happen to have a few very large retail organizations as clients, and there you find people are a little bit

lower on the financial well-being scale. We also have large financial institutions where people tend to have a little bit more financial acumen.

EBN: If employers learn from this process that some employees are struggling financially not because they're financially illiterate, but simply because they aren't paid very much, do they consider changes in their compensation philosophy?

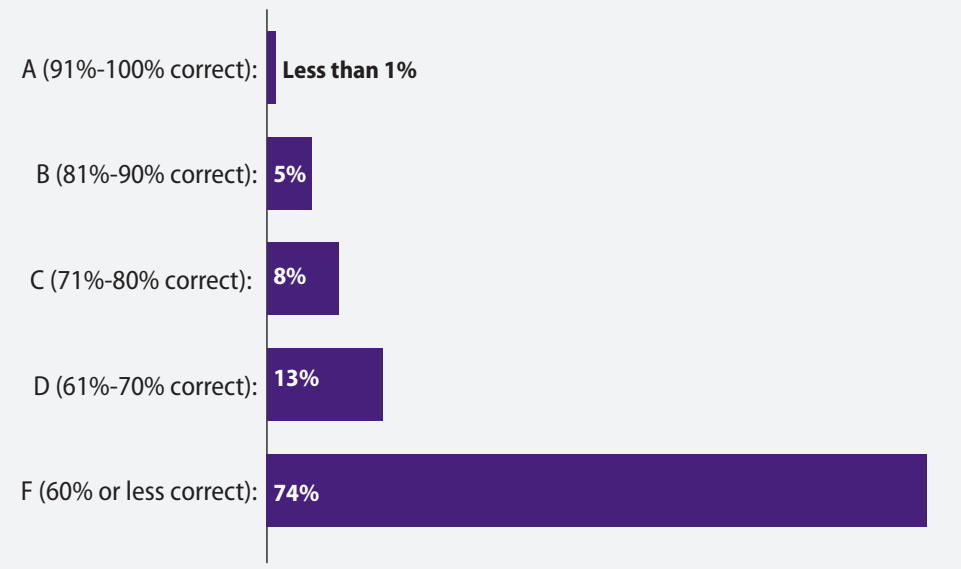
Austin: Yes, that can happen. But the general idea is, we can teach somebody to fish or we can give them fish, and it's better to have somebody learn how to deal with their money than just to give them more money. There are plenty of people who are very highly paid who are struggling financially as well, and it's not because they don't have enough compensation, but maybe because they are not spending it appropriately.

EBN: What innovation have you seen lately to engage participants in their retirement savings?

Austin: Employers are trying to turn it into something fun, something hip, to hit the population that would resist spending time on learning about retirement finance. It's about leading them to an action item, and it seems to be working. ■

LACKING LITERACY

Retirement-age Americans are lacking retirement income literacy, according to new research from the American College of Financial Services. The vast majority of employees failed a retirement quiz, which included questions on paying for long-term care expenses, investment considerations, strategies for sustaining income throughout retirement and life expectancy. Here's how they scored:



*The data has been rounded and therefore equals a percentage slightly higher than 100%.

Source: The American College of Financial Services

FINANCIAL WELLNESS



Wellness 'must have' benefit

BY NICK OTTO

FINANCIAL WELLNESS PROGRAMS ARE cementing their place in workplace benefit plans, but challenges remain for employers in defining what financial well-being means.

While financial wellness programs have not reached the level of penetration seen with other long-standing benefit offerings, 52% of employers said they have implemented, or are considering implementing, a wellness program, according to a new survey from Charles Schwab.

Further, 44% believe that a financial wellness program is becoming a "must-have" benefit for them to be competitive, the report says.

"Financial wellness is very personal for each employee, and employers need to be mindful of that when implementing a new program," says Nate Bidner, managing director of Schwab Workplace Financial Solutions.

Generally, employers are defining financial wellness for employees as better financial outcomes and a reduction in financial stress as a result of employees taking ownership of their financial well-being, Charles Schwab says.

According to the survey, most employers believe a high-quality wellness program should:

- Offer broad guidance on personal financial management principles, including goals-based planning, savings fundamentals, debt management and asset allocation.
- Provide an online content portal for access to education and assessment tools.
- Fully integrate the program with existing benefits and compensation packages.
- Demonstrate a measurable impact on retirement plan usage and retirement readiness.

"While general education and tools are useful for a broad cross-section of employees, the real task is to get them engaged and motivated to utilize the resources available," Bidner says, noting that 70% of workers want personalized 401(k) advice. ■

Image from Adobe Stock

CASE STUDY



IBM merges retirement, financial planning

BY PAULA AVEN GLADYCH

HAVING GREAT BENEFITS ISN'T JUST about having a good healthcare program or 401(k) plan anymore, says Ellen Exum, vice president of global health and wellness strategy at IBM. It means tackling financial stress, as well.

That's why IBM hired Welltok, a software as a service provider that helps companies provide multi-channel engagement services, resources, rewards and predictive analytics for various health and financial wellness benefits. Many companies think of financial well-being as having a 401(k), investment opportunities or stock purchase programs. IBM offers all of those benefits, but when it thinks about financial well-being, it thinks about the support it can offer, based on what individuals need, to help them fulfill their financial wellness needs, Exum says.

"It's not about how much you have in your bank account but helping you understand how much you have, how much you need and how to get from point A to point B," she says. "It also helps support you in what you are going to spend it on and how frequently you will spend it."

The Welltok system allows employees to give a thumbs up or thumbs down on any content provided. Employees can give real-time feedback on any of the benefits programs that IBM offers. In response, IBM holds meetings multiple times a year to understand that feedback and adjust their programs accordingly, Exum says.

Employees are eligible to participate in IBM's 401(k) plan on the date they are hired. They are automatically enrolled at 5% of their pre-tax eligible earnings about one month after receiving their enrollment package if no action is taken.

After one year of service, the company will contribute 1% to each employee's pre-tax account regardless of their savings pattern and match 100% of the first 5% of employee's pre-tax or Roth contributions.

The company also has its IBM Money Smart program, which offers financial education and planning to help employees with financial decision-making on a range of issues, including retirement and estate planning, debt management, college savings, tax and investment strategies and other topics. It is offered at no cost to all IBM U.S. regular employees and is provided through The Ayco Company, a Goldman Sachs company, and Fidelity Investments.

A recent study by PriceWaterhouseCoopers found that more than half of people are stressed out about their finances, which translates into lost time at work and diminished presenteeism. In other words, workers are in their seats at work but they're not really focused on their jobs.

"You don't need necessarily a whole host of different programs but you do want things that are multi-modal and things that can be personalized to the individual," Exum says. "One size does not fit all, particularly in financial wellness." ■

HEALTHY RETIREMENT

Health costs hurt 401(k) contributions

BY PAULA AVEN GLADYCH

RISING HEALTHCARE costs have had a dramatic impact on the ability of workers to save for retirement and other financial goals.

The latest Bank of America Merrill Lynch Workplace Benefits Report finds that of the workers who have experienced rising healthcare costs, more than half say they are contributing less to their financial goals as a result, including more than six in 10 who say they are saving less for retirement.

Financial stress also is playing a big role in employee physical health, with nearly six in 10 employees saying it has had a negative impact on their physical well-being. This stress weighs most heavily on millennials at 68%, compared with baby boomers at 51%, according to the research.

Because of these dire statistics, more employees are looking to their employer to help them with financial challenges.

"We spend a lot of our waking time working, and a lot of our finances are made up of the compensation and benefits our employer provides," says Sylvie Feast, director of financial guidance services for Bank of America Merrill Lynch. "[Employer's] healthcare and 401(k) plans are really valued by employees. I don't think it's surprising that they are looking to their employer to help provide access to ways to better manage their finances."

And because employers offer healthcare and retirement benefits, it isn't a stretch for workers to expect their employers to offer financial wellness as a benefit, Feast says. "There's no silver bullet, but a continuing evolution of trying new things to see what works and has an impact with the workforce," she says, adding that online tools, educational content, professional seminars in the workplace and personal consultations can be especially effective. ■



WELL-BEING

Why employers should include spouses in wellness programs

By involving partners, companies can create a support system at home that can drive better health and performance at work

BY KAREN MOSELEY

Employers who want to promote better health and wellness among their employees would be well served to look beyond the office and into the home. By involving spouses and domestic partners in wellness offerings, employers can create a support system at home that has the potential to drive better health and performance at work.

A number of studies over the years

have shown links between social environment and health. If the people around you drink, smoke or eat too much, you are likely to follow suit. Surround yourself with marathoners who eat a strict diet of vegetables and there's a better chance you'll be fit. The same goes for spouses and domestic partners.

An individual whose partner lowered his or her BMI is likely to follow suit, according to new research from epidemiologist Andrew Rundle. There were similar links related to blood

pressure and both high- and low-density lipoprotein. Those kinds of connections could lead to some meaningful benefits for employers.

Financial performance and improved employee health are only part of the equation. While spouses represent about one-fifth of covered members in employee health plans, they generate nearly one-third of healthcare costs, according to data from HR consulting firm Mercer and the Health Enhancement Research Organization, a nonprofit that identi-

fies best practices in the field of workplace health and wellness. Including spouses in health improvement efforts, then, could result in measurable savings.

Employers can contribute to this social influence. By allowing spouses to take part in well-being programs, they may drive better employee participation. Data from the HERO Scorecard support that idea. For example:

- 28% of employees participated in lifestyle coaching if a spouse was involved, compared to 14% with no spousal involvement.
- 88% of employers reported improvements in health risk with spousal involvement, compared to 81% without.
- 70% reported positive impact on medical trend with spousal involvement, compared to 64% without.

Improving a spouse's well-being might even make an employee more productive, data suggests.

So, how can employers encourage involvement in health and well-being activities that will support their employees?

- Consider extending wellness benefits to spouses and families.
- Provide information that can help couples develop joint strategies for implementing a healthy diet.
- Provide well-being education in multiple formats that employees can easily share with spouses.
- Address joint barriers to engaging in healthy behaviors by giving spouses access to the same programs that are available to employees.
- Make sure spouses have the same access to healthy foods, and help both partners avoid situations that lead to unhealthy behaviors. ■

Karen Moseley is vice president of education and director of operations for the Health Enhancement Research Organization, a nonprofit that identifies best practices in the field of workplace health and wellness.

Image from Adobe Stock



Employee Benefit Views

**Coming straight from the minds
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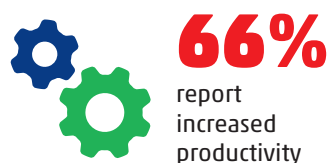
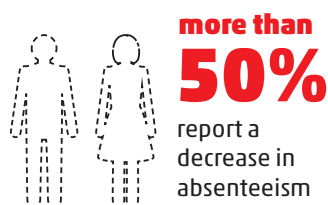
BY THE NUMB3RS: Wellness going beyond ROI

As workplace wellness efforts continue to grow in popularity, the majority of employers say they are offering programs more to improve worker health and well-being and less to curb healthcare costs, according to findings from the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans.

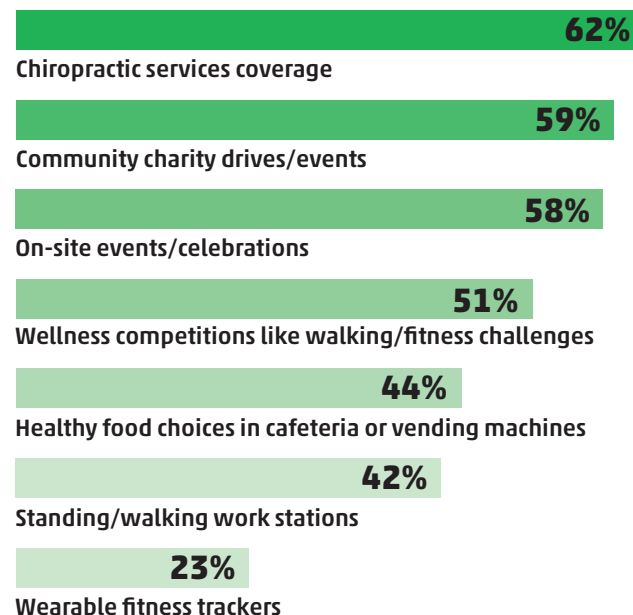


Wellness works

Among employers offering and measuring their wellness efforts:



Popular emerging wellness benefits include:



Source: International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans

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¹Walgreens patients on new-to-therapy medications had higher adherence and lower overall costs compared to non-Walgreens patients. Akinbosoye, O.E., Taitel, M.S., Grana, J., Hill, J., & Wade, R. L. (2016). Improving Medication Adherence and Health Care Outcomes in a Commercial Population Through a Community Pharmacy. *Population Health Management* 2016 Dec; 19(6): 454-461.

