

3 Benefits Changes That Will Boost Employee Engagement



A recent poll from Gallup connected employee engagement to workplace benefits—and it's time for your team to get on board. To get started, there are three benefits that HR teams should address to improve company culture in the new year: perks, financial resources and well-being. Fortunately, “rethinking” these employee benefits don't always mean spending more, just thinking differently.

1. Accept that perks are superficial.

Examine the budget for those big, expensive holiday parties. How could that money be better distributed? The ROI on a holiday party is merely a short-term boost in engagement. Instead of trying to identify the perfect perk, shift your focus to bringing the company's culture and mission to life in an authentic way.

You can start by examining the collective values, norms and beliefs of the organization. This is the backdrop for everything that happens at your

company and the day-to-day experience. Then ask yourself, do employees feel valued? Do we give honest feedback? Do leaders always “win” the conversation? Is the organization luxurious and elaborate, or frugal and modest? Is it fast-paced and risk-taking or methodical and calculated? Creating an intentional environment where employees feel cared for will deliver an exponentially higher impact than surface-level perks will.

2. Personalize your financial well-being resources.

Offering a 401(k) is great, but might feel overwhelming to an employee who’s trying to find money for groceries. More employers are offering retirement benefits, but exclude other factors, like credit score monitoring, financial literacy and structured programs tailored for the individual.

Going with a personalized approach to finance works. Nothing is more rewarding than seeing someone go from living paycheck to paycheck to purchasing his or her first home—all because the employer offered a personalized financial improvement program that guided him or her on a step-by-step journey.

3. Take a whole-person approach to well-being.

Employers spend thousands on gym memberships (and there’s nothing wrong with that), but what about helping employees manage stress during the busy season, or providing work-life balance support when someone returns from maternity leave? Much like the comprehensive financial guidance programs, providing a suite of whole-person benefits can spark an internal drive. And the most important benefits are the human ones—managers who care, employee resource groups that connect and inspire, leaders who show up as real and authentic.

This approach has a real business impact. In 2013, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee launched a whole-person well-being program that he later credited to improved job satisfaction. Recent data reveals a 25

percent reduction in employee turnover, a 37 percent reduction in overtime and 10 percent fewer sick days taken. And the state Department of Corrections reported a positive impact on people in jail as officers improved their overall well-being and performance at work.

In lieu of a potentially pricier health plan, consider the effects of time off. A 2015 survey revealed what thousands of employees thought would boost their “emotional health.” The results matched up with a report from the American Medical Association, which stated 60 percent of illnesses are caused by stress, costing businesses a hundred billion dollars annually.

Consider a day-time break program, where employees can meditate, take a walk or recharge, without rebuke. For our busiest employees, our technology can auto-schedule breaks into their daily Outlook calendars.

Lastly, it’s crucial for employers to show they authentically care and want their people to use the benefits available to them. Set the tone by having your CEO send a company-wide email or video that states he or she is invested in the whole-person well-being, where they can also share their personal well-being story. Remind employees of your company’s mission (the “why” behind the work). Integrating purpose and values into every interaction sets a positive tone, demonstrates care and builds trust—all key drivers of real employee engagement.

By Henry Albrecht