

# **Post-pandemic lessons: The true value of employee legal benefits**

Not enough Americans are aware of estate planning and its importance.

Benefits tech platform concept Companies are realizing that employee benefits can be life-changing for their workforce, especially those centered around care, estate planning, flexibility, and mental health.

All employees in the US are entitled to certain benefits: social security, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation insurance. However, sadly not enough Americans are aware of estate planning and its importance. This is especially concerning, given the fact that we are all still living with the consequences of COVID-19 but slowly migrating to a post-pandemic world. Not having the necessary documentation in place leaves assets under the control of the state, which is a worrying trend that could become increasingly common if people don't start preparing correctly.

While there has been a slight increase in the number of people who have some kind of will or estate planning document, the overall statistics have been down in recent years (33% in 2021 compared to 42% in 2017). Yet, 33% of one survey's respondents said that COVID caused a greater need for an estate plan, but 31% of those who saw a greater need didn't do anything about it.

The pandemic has emphasized how many people have been stuck in demanding and inflexible workplace cultures that can lead to burnout. But this has also caused employee empowerment, as they come out of this period of lockdowns and working from home wanting more from their employers. This is where employee legal benefits in the form of estate planning can have a considerable part to play, responding to employee demands, attracting the best talent, and providing ongoing support.

### Benefits for a happy workforce

A new study has revealed that more than half of employers expect more flexible working requests from staff after the pandemic, which suggests that workers are becoming more demanding of this.

Companies are realizing that employee benefits can be life-changing for their workforce, especially those centered around care, estate planning, flexibility, and mental health.

More businesses are planning to revise their benefits strategies in order to accommodate their employees' demands. According to a recent Harvard Business Review study, 57% of senior leaders said that their organizations are now assigning higher priority to care benefits to better support their employees in both work and life.

From an employer's perspective, it's vital to convince employees that every aspect of their benefits is covered. Employees concerned about financial security and what will happen when they are older are likely to value increased employer contributions to registered pensions, enhancements to registered life assurance, and comprehensive estate planning packages.

Employees who aren't ready with estate plans could spend lots of time managing financial and health-related matters for family members and could even be involved with litigation. It's likely that a lack of

estate planning could cause disputes and turmoil within the family dynamic, as making decisions about inheritance allocations is potentially challenging. Furthermore, these avoidable legal hassles can negatively impact work performance and lead to unexpected absences.

The stress of administrative matters and potential legal issues can be alleviated by offering current and potential employees a package that sets them up for the future. One-on-one coaching and in-person events are a couple of ways employers can help guide employees through the estate planning process.

Help for the future, not just for now

In most cases, simply providing a Will that passes everything to the spouse and children is not enough. Secure plans such as life interest or discretionary trusts, paired with an accompanying letter of wishes, provide maximum flexibility and serve to protect assets for future generations. Other documents, like Financial and Medical Powers of Attorney, give authority to trusted individuals to make decisions if the signer becomes incapacitated.

To accompany this, annual check-ins and reviews with the employee can update them on any law changes that affect them. Ongoing support with a compensation plan keeps the employee happy and safe in the knowledge that a holistic set of benefits is in place. Furthermore, with regular check-ins, they are consistently being reminded of how to maximize their benefits.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly changed what employees value in terms of benefits.

Employees are more conscious of their health and financial situation, as many of them have suffered from pay cuts, job losses, furlough schemes, and the mental strain that goes with these outcomes. A

survey from Prudential Group Insurance revealed that 77% of employees now consider a benefits program as a crucial part of their compensation.

Estate planning is a vital part of work compensation packages that enable employees to feel secure and happy at work. A flexible benefits plan with ongoing support is a very appealing prospect for employees and provides an opportunity for employers to engage more with their staff.

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