



5 TRENDS

every HR and benefits
professional should know

2014

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
2013 EAP trends	4
Key trends and takeaways for 2013	5
The Affordable Care Act: Converting a challenge into an opportunity	5
Employee engagement in wellness programs: Why is it so tough?	7
Resilience, the secret weapon against workplace stress	8
Work-life integration, the new work-life balance	10
How millennials are changing the benefits landscape	12
Conclusion	14

About us

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Work-Life Services offer an array of diverse, integrated human resource (HR) programs and services designed to maximize organizational and employee performance. With decades of experience pioneering HR strategy, we collaborate with organizations in leadership development, employee benefits strategies, and workplace productivity solutions.

A true understanding of business and human psychology sets us apart from other providers. Our creativity has led us to a number of innovations, such as seamless delivery of services and designing our programs to integrate with other employee benefits. We also provide strategic marketing and communication expertise to develop messaging specifically to meet the organization's objectives and the specific needs of employees to help with retention and engagement.

Simply put, our goal is to make life easier for organizations and their workers.

Introduction

In today's workplace, employers get caught up in complex issues such as healthcare costs, work-life balance, and culture clashes among workers. Many organizations try to problem-solve these workforce challenges by learning best practices; however, the rules, norms, and workers themselves are constantly changing, and employers that do not keep up with change can get left behind. The big question to ask right now is: How has the workplace evolved recently?

The year 2013 was a culmination of changes brought about by ghosts of the past and glimpses of the future. A condensed workforce has become the norm in many organizations five years after the financial crisis. In October 2013 came the official launch of the public health insurance exchanges, further opening up the health insurance marketplace. And workers who fall into the generational category of millennials are projected to become the majority in the workforce within a few years.

As a leading provider of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Work-Life Services, we identify trends affecting the American workforce today, based on research and consulting with industry experts. In this report, we discuss five workplace issues that we believe will become important to human resources (HR) and benefits leaders.

2013 EAP trends

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) saw a modest hike in utilization in 2013, compared with that of 2012 and 2011.

Many economists characterize the current post-recession period as a “jobless recovery,” where a nation’s economy is growing despite slow hiring. “People are still doing more work with fewer resources,” says Randy Martin, PhD, director of the EAP at Humana EAP and Work-Life Services.¹ “Job-related stress” appeared for the second time in five years in the top seven reasons for calling the EAP.

As further proof of the lingering effects of the recession, legal issues topped the list of reasons for calling the EAP for the third year in a row. Calls for legal issues approached the record high set in 2011.

Concerns from both managers and employees about the intergenerational workforce continued in 2013. Reported cultural clashes with “younger workers” were usually over conflicting communication styles and differing opinions about work-life balance.

EAP trend highlights in 2013

Legal issues

- Top reason for calling for third year in a row
- Increased since 2012

Marital/relationship/family issues

- Marital/relationship calls placed second for second year in a row

Stress and anxiety

- Stress was the fifth most frequent reason for calling for second year in a row
- Anxiety decreased since 2012

Work-Life Services

- Adult/elder care was still the top reason for calling Work-Life
- Convenience calls rose 62 percent since 2012

Top reasons to call the EAP

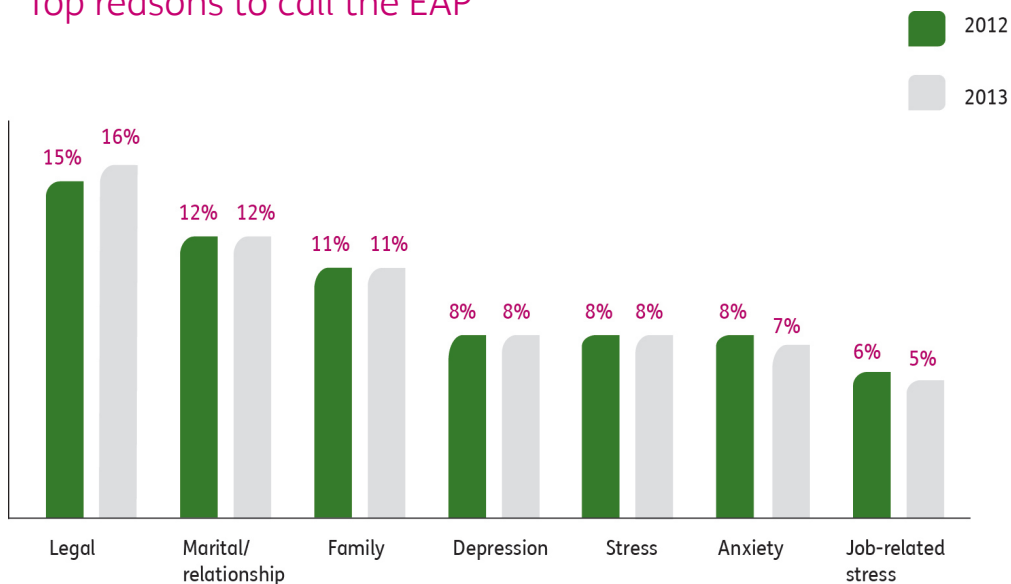


Figure 1²

Humana's Work-Life Services saw members' financial constraints at the heart of many calls across a diverse continuum in 2013.³ At one end of the spectrum, members sought financial assistance or community-based programs like food pantries. Other callers were asking about the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or seeking elder care subsidies (many of which had waiting lists due to high demand and reduced funding).

There were fewer requests for nanny agencies, even from callers with higher-paying jobs, but there was an uptick in requests for odd-hour care, as shift workers and those with demanding jobs were in search of services that went beyond the usual hours of most providers.

Convenience cases made up about a quarter of calls to Work-Life Services. Some members were looking for career and employment resources for an unemployed spouse or to find supplementary part-time work.

Key trends and takeaways for 2013

We look at five key topics for employers to consider in 2014: how the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) has caused a shift in benefits offerings, employee engagement in workplace wellness, how to support an increasingly stressed workforce, work-life integration, and the importance of understanding millennial workers.

The Affordable Care Act: Converting a challenge into an opportunity

In October 2013, the federal government launched its health insurance marketplaces, known as the public exchanges. However, *private* exchanges have been available since the 1980s.⁴ With employer-designed private exchanges, an employer allots a specific sum of money for each employee to “shop” for health insurance. Some private exchanges may have two plans to choose from, while others offer three or more.⁵

“Over 50 percent of large employers are at least contemplating private exchanges in their future,” says Pattie Dale Tye, segment vice president at Humana.⁶ “They really empower employees on a benefit-by-benefit basis. ‘Here’s the marketplace and you can spend your money the way you want to.’”

Traditionally, employers have offered one defined benefit plan that every employee would use. With defined contribution plans, employees choose insurers from a range preselected by the employer. According to a study by the Healthcare Trends Institute, the majority of employers are considering switching to defined contribution plans within the next three years.⁷

Shopping for benefits

“I think the trend of health consumerism has really changed the way employers are looking at their benefits,” says Jon Trevisan, senior vice president and director of placement for the human capital practice at Willis, the global insurance broker.⁸ “Some employers are saying, ‘There are some attributes of public exchanges that I like, but I don’t want to give up the relationship I have with my employees.’ That’s where the private exchanges come in.”

Employers are also increasingly looking to consumer-directed health plans, mainly in the form of health savings accounts and health reimbursement arrangements, offered in conjunction with high-deductible health plans.⁹ With consumer-directed health plans, employees are more directly responsible for the healthcare costs that they incur, while the high-deductible health plan covers them for serious medical conditions.

However, some workers may become concerned that a high-deductible health plan is not enough. Randal Dickens, consumer benefits national practice leader for BB&T Insurance Services, offers this example. “Say you have an accident and receive treatment at the emergency room, resulting in an \$800 medical bill. But a \$3,000 deductible doesn’t cover that. An accident product is designed to provide a soft financial landing for direct medical expenses that are excluded from medical plans due to deductibles and co-pays, and help with the indirect expenses associated with being injured.”¹⁰

Some employers may offer voluntary benefits that cover accidents and critical illness as a financial cushion for cash-strapped employees – a possible strategy for the employer who fears lowering the perceived value of health insurance benefits. “These have been gaining traction as employers increase deductibles to defray the increasing costs in health insurance premiums,” says Becky DeHart, area vice president at Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc.¹¹

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DeHart also foresees that changes to health insurance will affect employers’ benefits packages as a whole: “We have really seen a shift where employers are reviewing their benefits in their entirety, from PTO, to growth potential, to salary structure. How can they still maintain the quality of staffing and invest in the employees’ personal and professional growth?”¹² Non-health benefits may take on a more prominent position in the future.

Increased employee decision making is good for employers, but employees need guidance

Employees’ increased involvement with the ins and outs of health insurance is inevitable. But HR professionals may have good reasons for fearing that newer plans, such as health savings accounts, could cause confusion.¹³ One of the major complaints about healthcare is that costs may vary widely by region or by provider.¹⁴

However, most experts believe that shifting some of the costs to employees will compel them to better examine costs and weigh quality vs. value in choosing providers, medication, and services. Indeed, in one survey, more than 54 percent thought a defined contribution plan “would help employees make more cost-conscious benefit decisions.”¹⁵ Technological solutions are being provided to employers to help end-users better understand, and thus control, their healthcare consumption. One company uses a “program [that] scans an employee population for utilization of services – such as mental health treatment or prescription fills – and looks at both quality and cost metrics, and sends out alerts after an employee has a claim filed. That alert offers information about a cheaper or higher-quality provider.”¹⁶

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Workers may need emotional support and guidance when making lifestyle changes and facing financial decisions about healthcare. A majority of surveyed employers have already taken steps to address this issue: “Nearly 70 percent of employers...understand the importance of providing a culture that supports its healthy lifestyle program with almost 70 percent of them noting that they have an Employee Assistance Program in place to help workers with a variety of work/life balance challenges.”¹⁷

Best practices and tips for HR

- See how to include employees in the design and selection of health coverage plans; keep in mind that more workers have been or will be concerned about rising healthcare costs

- Look at increasing the variety of healthcare plan options, such as health savings accounts, as well as other benefits, such as voluntary products, to accommodate a workforce that is diverse in its healthcare and financial concerns
- Use data collected from your wellness program to help drive decisions about plan selection
- Emphasize that a greater variety of options for paying for healthcare is a way to give employees the chance to better control their health expenses
- Look for ways to disseminate information about the new array of choices available to an employee regarding health insurers, providers, services, medication, etc.
- Take advantage of your EAP to support a culture of wellness within your organization

Employee engagement in wellness programs: Why is it so tough?

According to a survey, the most common barrier to a successful wellness program is low employee engagement.¹⁸ When it comes to incentives, some employers have seen their workers do the minimum to avoid penalties, while some workers do not bother at all. Why is employee engagement difficult to achieve?

There is no “one-size-fits-all” model

Wellness programs should be customized to each organization’s unique culture. Anita Verheul, executive vice president at William Gallagher Associates, advises a meeting with leadership. “What is the culture here? We use focus groups. We use surveys to get at concerns and barriers.”¹⁹

Chris Nicholson, vice president of the employer group segment and COO of wellness at Humana, states that “Employer assessments are very important to help evaluate the current state and set benchmarks related to the culture, well-being, and productivity of the workforce.... This gives employers the information needed to help determine their starting point on the journey to creating a culture of well-being.”²⁰

Wellness programs should be customized to each organization’s unique culture.

At times, an organization’s values can become a barrier to wellness. Verheul offers one example. “Part of the problem with stress is that people still see it as a badge of honor. At the executive level in some organizations, they say, ‘Yes, my employees should be stressed because it’s a tough job.’”²¹

“Your environment has to be healthy,” advises Verheul. Creating a change in the everyday visual cues of a workplace environment could make a meaningful difference. Examples include smoking bans on campus, elevator music changed to wellness messages, and screen savers on work computers changed to some simple text promoting healthy behaviors.²²

Creating external and internal motivation in employees

How can program incentives get people to make significant and long-lasting healthy choices? First, the program should offer a menu of options from which employees can choose to fulfill the program’s goals. These activities should gradually increase in difficulty and commitment. When tasks start off easy, people are more likely to be encouraged because they are accomplishing what is known as “small wins,” which psychologists say make people feel that goals are achievable.²³ If possible, use a platform where participants can add their own activities. Allow participants to add suggestions and earn credits for pursuits such as a 15-minute walk or joining a dance class.

Second, communication is an important component of a successful wellness program. Rich Reda, executive vice president at Lockton Insurance, weighs in: “If you don’t communicate effectively, you let the plan design do all the work. And that takes time and money.” Organizations may be so eager to see a return on investment for wellness programs that they don’t budget for marketing. One way to control cost is to involve the in-house marketing team to help promote wellness initiatives.²⁴

Third, find ways to make parts of the program inherently enjoyable. More sophisticated programs are now using “gamification platforms” where participants can select and customize their wellness activities on a computer, tablet, or smartphone.²⁵ The process itself is like a game, and the participant is rewarded with badges, points, or other small prizes.

Messaging about the program should be tailored to the individual’s preferences, schedule, and activities. Nicholson explains how Humana uses third-party platforms like FitBit to leverage moments of influence and deliver relevant messages at the right time. For example, Nicholson explains how the FitBit delivers timely messages. “The platform learns and adapts to best support your desired goals. For example, if you average 10,000 steps per day, it learns and adapts to your activity. Let’s say it’s eight o’clock at night and you only have 8,000 steps for that day – you may get a nudge that says ‘you are close to your goal – only 2,000 steps to go.’ Or you can even get a real-time notification, highlighting a savings opportunity on healthy foods when you drive by a supporting grocery store. All of these personalized pathways can help people achieve their goals and best health.”²⁶

More sophisticated programs are now using “gamification platforms” where participants can select and customize their wellness activities on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. The process itself is like a game, and the participant is rewarded with badges, points, or other small prizes.

Finally, communications may be further customized on an individual level by connecting health goals to other life objectives. Employees who smoke and express an interest in saving money might be responsive to wellness messages that highlight how many dollars quitting smoking can save them per week.

Best practices and tips for HR

- Take the organization’s culture into account. Is it consensus oriented or more hierarchical? Are there different teams or departments that can participate in friendly competitions? Are there incentives that would be inclusive for workers who telecommute?
- Design a program that begins with simple tasks, but then gets progressively more challenging
- Look to technology for better timed and individualized messaging
- Consider using environmental cues, such as installing screensavers displaying wellness messages
- Integrate non-health goals into messaging about wellness, so employees can see the connection between health and other parts of their lives
- Provide options to wellness participants on how they want to receive communications
- Consider using rewards for any type of participation in the wellness program, including providing data via survey or prompts

Resilience, the secret weapon against workplace stress

In 2013, “nearly eight in 10 companies (78 percent) identify stress as a top workforce risk issue.”²⁷ Widespread and ongoing stress has been a long-term effect of the current jobless economic recovery, where the country is still growing on a large scale, but employment has not kept pace with that growth. Since the 2008 financial crisis, many organizations have managed to do more with less, but workers are feeling the toll: In the stress survey mentioned above, they most frequently cited “inadequate staffing” as a source of stress.

Reframing stress as a part of wellness

Jerry Ganoni, segment VP and president of small business at Humana, asserts, “Small businesses said they need help with their employees’ stress concerning job uncertainty, the economy, work, and family-related issues. We believe that controlling stress is key to improving productivity and well-being.”²⁸

In a study of more than a thousand small business owners and decision makers, one of the key survey results was that “High-stress levels top small business owners’ list of most pressing health and wellness concerns [at 42 percent] – even over concerns about physical health.”²⁹

A meaningful way to incorporate stress into wellness is to underscore its role as a driver of unhealthy behavior, and to give solutions for stress with the same importance as diet, exercise, and sleep. “Focusing on mental health is critical,” says Verheul. “As part of the expansion of the wellness discussion, all parts of a person’s life must be put into account. ‘I attend yoga classes three times a week, but I can’t pay my bills.’ Is that a really good balance? We have to focus on the whole person. Just as work is becoming 24/7, the employer needs to think about how to support employees when they are outside of the workplace.”³⁰

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To create better continuity, she recommends that employers look for ways to incorporate other benefits they already offer, such as legal/financial, an EAP, or work-life program. “Consider communications about holistic wellness and making a connection to other benefits and offerings. Create opportunities for additional education to employees about financial health and support. For example, at WGA, a service we provide to clients is on-site, one-on-one meetings with employees and their parents about medical/prescription benefits that are available upon retirement.”³¹

Building resiliency resources

While the employer can provide support to workers through benefits education and wellness initiatives, employees must learn for themselves how to build resilience.

According to psychologists, resiliency assets include relationships, emotional intelligence, competence, optimism, and coping skills.³² Dr. Martin explains, “Emotional intelligence means being able to look at things objectively and understanding another person’s point of view. Competence is about feeling empowered. Resilient people feel they have control over their lives, to a reasonable extent. Optimism is the ability to interpret events in a more positive light. Not everyone has these abilities, but that’s where training and the EAP can step in and help.”³³

Another aspect of resilience that employers can address is positive coping skills. Everyone has coping skills, but not all are healthy and sustainable for the long term. “Resilient people exercise, get sleep, and eat well,” says Dr. Martin. “They don’t veer into the excesses of heavy drinking, drugs, addicted gambling, or compulsive shopping.”³⁴ He finds that the wellness program is a natural venue for educating employees about positive coping skills.

Best practices and tips for HR

- Integrate stress management into a wellness program, such as education about relaxation techniques
- Create wellness messaging about how exercise helps with stress reduction
- Promote stress reduction on-site exercises, such as five-minute stretches or a short walk around the campus

- Blend other benefits into the wellness program to address various concerns that may affect a person's overall well-being
- Support relationship-building in the workplace with mentorship programs, buddy campaigns, charity and volunteer events, and peer-driven accolades
- Partner with your EAP for resilience training and stress management

Work-life integration, the new work-life balance

Is the term “work-life balance” passé? “It conveys a zero-sum tradeoff, which makes it the completely wrong metaphor,”³⁵ explains Stew Friedman, a professor at The Wharton School, who surveyed his graduating classes in 1992 and 2012 about their career and family plans. One of the most significant findings in his surveys was that “the rate of Wharton graduates who plan to have children has dropped by about half over the past 20 years.”³⁶ They cited the friction between career and raising a family as the biggest barrier.

The challenge of making time for both work and life has only grown in recent years, due to “increased work opportunities for women, investment in home life by men, growing global economic pressures and continually improving communications technology.”³⁷

Employers have already begun responding to work-life challenges with agile work arrangements. According to a Society for Human Resource Management study published in 2013, “Nearly three-fifths (57 percent) of organizations offer these benefits. Among those organizations, almost one-half (45 percent) indicated that the majority of their employees are allowed to use flex work. This figure has increased 11 percentage points since 2012.”³⁸

The agile, but slightly uncomfortable, workplace

Not all employers have necessarily embraced workplace agility. “High-profile companies such as Yahoo, Best Buy, and HP” have pulled back on flexibility options.³⁹ One of the barriers to the successful implementation of a flexible workplace is lack of training. In one survey, only 17 percent of organizations indicated that they “specifically train employees to be successful with flexible work arrangements, [and] provide training to managers of employees using flexibility programs.”⁴⁰

Another issue with workplace agility is that, in some cases, it may blur the lines between work and life. Technology is one of the reasons for increased productivity, but it is also one of the causes of work overtaking life. “There’s a palpable sense that home has invaded work and work has invaded home and the boundary is likely never to be restored,” says Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project.⁴¹

Technology is one of the reasons for increased productivity, but it is also one of the causes of work overtaking life.

Some environments may warrant availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week from certain employees, but managers and employees should work together to set clear boundaries. For example, they could discuss expectations regarding email responsiveness during after-work hours and paid time off.

“Finally, we need to get back to the language issue – it’s about harmony and integration, not balance,” Stew Friedman said in a recent interview.⁴² Recognizing that work and life will overlap at times, instead of competing for the same space, may be a helpful mindset at all levels of an organization to help everyone manage his or her time and responsibilities.

Creating an agile culture

According to a survey, “employers that scored themselves as having an ‘established flexibility culture’ reported overwhelmingly that workplace flexibility has had a positive or extremely positive impact on engagement (85 percent), motivation (84 percent), and satisfaction (92 percent).”⁴³

Although flexibility is a benefit, it is important to reframe it as a business strategy when training employees about its purpose and advantages. In a joint study conducted by the Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management, the researchers concluded, “Our data show that a culture of flexibility is as, if not more, important than simply having access to flexibility options.” In their examination of small businesses, researchers found that “Employers in small organizations, while less likely to create formal policy, may still invest in flexible work arrangements when their employees need it.” Even with informal flexibility, workers reported higher rates of job satisfaction.⁴⁴

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Furthermore, the messaging about flexibility should be inclusive and not just focus on parents and other caregivers. One large employer provided examples such as “employees who have spouses who relocate, who have a passion for ballroom dancing or cartoon drawing, and who want to stay healthy.”⁴⁵

Employee training may include self-assessments with questions such as “What are your life goals or interests that you could better achieve with a workflex option?” or educational materials on how to set up a work environment at home.⁴⁶ In one case, a firm with more than 2,000 employees launched a comprehensive learning program where a member of each department paired with an HR representative to train the department about flexibility with live, interactive sessions. The firm also posted 15-minute “e-learning modules” on its intranet site, added references to flexible work in its training manual, and used webinars to “share success stories and address challenges.”⁴⁷

Best practices and tips for HR

- If workplace agility becomes a part of the culture of the organization, support its value with meaningful messaging, employee feedback via surveys, and case examples of success stories via message board, posters, or promotional materials
- Training for both employees and managers will expedite the transition to a more agile workplace
- Agility does not need to be codified in permanent policies; with approval from leadership, managers can exercise agility with their teams on an informal, ad hoc basis
- Consider less common forms of flexible work arrangements, such as phased return from leave, compressed workweeks, and job sharing
- Include questions about agility in employee surveys and yearly evaluations
- Your EAP can help employees manage personal distractions in the workplace and find solutions for stress related to caregiving, major life events, and daily living
- If you have a work-life program, promote it to employees (whether or not they have flexible options) as another benefit to help them save time and worry

How millennials are changing the benefits landscape

Workers who fall into the generational category of millennials currently make up 25 percent of the workforce, and are projected to comprise 75 percent of all workers by 2030.⁴⁸ They are statistically more likely to leave their current job to pursue other opportunities.⁴⁹ Millennial workers are often stereotyped as entitled, demanding, and impatient, but studies show that they are altruistic, family oriented, and eager to contribute.⁵⁰ By understanding the values of this generation, organizations may better attract the oncoming majority of workers.

The entitlement issue

One common perception of millennials is that they are not willing to “pay their dues” because of their desire for flexible work arrangements.⁵¹ There could be two reasons for this trend. One is that many millennials see work as an obstacle to an enriching home life. One survey of graduating students revealed that “There is now a greater sense of shared responsibility for domestic life. Young men are realizing they have to do more at home than their fathers did.”⁵² The same study showed that women were pessimistic about “having it all” – that is, about being able to enjoy both career advancement and devotion to family life. Workers from this age group see their work and family lives as being at odds with each other.

Millennials do not simply desire more free time; they see time as a type of “currency, rather than an investment.”⁵³ They grew up with technology, are overloaded with information, and favor speed and conciseness. They may view long hours as inefficiency, not productivity. Contrast this attitude with those of previous generations, where coming in early and leaving late were signs of commitment.

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In a recent survey, HR professionals said they are beginning to focus less on benefits and more on “flexible work schedules” as a “valuable factor in recruiting.”⁵⁴ In another study, about 50 percent of workers age 18 to 34 reported having “considered leaving or have left a job because it wasn’t flexible enough” in contrast to 39 percent of working adults in all age groups.⁵⁵

Millennials may be seen as entitled also because of their eagerness to share their opinions. This characteristic can be turned into an advantage when it comes to driving engagement in wellness programs. As part of bringing wellness into the workplace, millennials could become wellness champions if they are given the opportunity to bring their collaborative spirit to HR’s efforts. “Generational studies show that this generation is much more open to sharing health information and supporting each other in online social environments,” says Chris Nicholson. “We see higher percentages of under 30-year-olds posting health information, sharing fitness tips on what is working for them and creating social communities on diet, exercise, stress reduction, and other wellness-related topics. Sharp HR organizations will create models to allow these wellness champions to thrive and strengthen the culture of wellness in an organization.”⁵⁶

A recent Pew study also revealed that “Exercise is a big part of the lives of most millennials. More than half say they got some kind of vigorous exercise, such as jogging, biking, or working out at a gym, in the 24 hours before they were interviewed for the survey.”⁵⁷ Given their affinity for healthy behaviors and self-expression, millennials could become motivators or team leaders. Those who would benefit the most from wellness programs tend to use the most healthcare⁵⁸; younger workers who are already engaged in healthy behaviors can help lead the way for others.

How to better attract and retain millennial workers

Employers could improve retention of younger workers by better understanding their values. One way to better retain younger workers is to help them find value in their existing benefits, utilizing the concise messaging that many of them find more appealing.

Workers of this age group are also more likely to express dissatisfaction with the technology services of their organizations. For example, younger employees were more likely to find “wasting time searching for documents” particularly frustrating.⁵⁹ In response, some organizations have allowed their workers to use open-source or consumer-oriented solutions, such as file-sharing programs like DropBox or Google Drive, and corporate social media platforms like Yammer. As a result, employers saw an uptick in productivity and a boost of innovation for the organization.⁶⁰

When it comes to career development, some leaders may think the younger employees want promotions too fast and too early, but others, like the CEO of HubSpot, think the need is not about financial reward. “They care less about money and more about learning,” Brian Halligan said in an interview. “We want there to be a certain percentage of the company that moves every three months between departments and does new jobs... They’re constantly curious about what they can do next.”⁶¹

Finally, consider how this age group has been targeted as *consumers* to understand their stance on corporate social responsibility (CSR). This generation has been influenced by the marketing of fair-trade coffee, cruelty-free makeup, recyclable packaging, and other such indicators. As a result, CSR is a meaningful value for this age group. Just take a look at these survey findings:

This generation has been influenced by the marketing of fair-trade coffee, cruelty-free makeup, recyclable packaging, and other indicators of CSR. As a result, it is a meaningful value for this age group.

- 61 percent of 18- to 26-year-olds “would prefer to work for a company that offers volunteer opportunities”⁶²
- In a study with almost 300 MBAs, “reputation-related attributes of caring about employees, environmental sustainability, community/stakeholder relations, and ethical products and services [were] important in job choice decisions”⁶³

How would organizations benefit from meeting millennials’ needs? First, they will make up the majority of the workforce within a few years. Second, they can help an organization to innovate technologically. Third, they are eager to contribute, not only in their prescribed roles, but also in spaces that could promote morale, such as wellness programs and CSR. And finally, money is not necessarily their main motivator – flexibility options, openness to technological solutions, lateral moves, and creating opportunities for autonomy and collaboration can also be effective.

Best practices and tips for HR

- If your workplace does not have flexible work options, think about how to provide other opportunities for employee autonomy, such as flexible lunch breaks, access to alternative technological solutions, or having managers give workers chances to contribute to decision making.
- Promote work-life benefits and explain how they can help employees take control of their time and balance various responsibilities.
- Showcase any of your organization’s commitments to causes such as corporate responsibility, the environment, charity donations, and volunteer opportunities.
- Create and promote a CSR task force or committee.

- Use surveys and follow-up communications to support the millennial inclination to offer feedback.
- Engage younger workers in wellness programs, particularly as promoters or leaders. Consider platforms such as teams, leader boards, or online forums.
- Attempt concise messaging, such as email blasts, to promote benefits. Some wellness programs can integrate formats such as texting and app alerts.

Conclusion

We monitor workplace and industry trends to anticipate needs and priorities so that we can continue our mission of helping organizations reach their fullest potential. The trends we explored this year reveal opportunities for employers to connect in new ways with employees. The underlying themes we saw again and again – workers' need for autonomy, information, choice, and recognition as individuals – are reminders that people will achieve their utmost when they feel supported. Organizations that address these demands as they continue to develop their benefits, policies, and other forms of employee support will succeed in engaging talented and committed workers.

Please reach out to us to learn more about how we can help your organization.

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