

in the know

workers want wellness

When deciding whether to work for an organization, 63% of employees consider health and wellness benefits to be an important factor. At the same time, the percentage of plan sponsors offering wellness programs has seen a significant decline over the past five years.

The five wellness offerings most valued by workers, according to an OfficeTeam survey of more than 1,000 workers and 600 senior managers in Canada, are ergonomic evaluations and equipment, fitness programs and facilities, stress management resources, healthy food options and wellness incentives. The top two choices, related to ergonomics and fitness, are offered by 36% of surveyed companies, and that number drops to around 25% for the next three offerings. Nearly 30% of companies don't offer any of these health and wellness benefits.

The desire for health and wellness benefits is even more pronounced with younger employees, with 74% of professionals age 18-34 saying it would impact their decision to work at an organization, compared with 60% for those age 35-54 and 50% for those 55 and older.

But the importance of these benefits arrives at a time when plan sponsor wellness programs appear to be on the decline. The 2018 health care survey by Sanofi Canada showed that 41% of plan sponsors offer a wellness program, down from 51% in 2017 and 64% in 2013.

"Candidates are weighing job opportunities more holistically, including assessing the potential impact a role may have on their well-being," Koula Vasilopoulos, district director for OfficeTeam, said in a news release. "Companies that offer their staff a variety of resources to support a healthy lifestyle both in and out of the office ultimately benefit from a more appealing corporate culture and an engaged, productive and satisfied workforce."

According to Sanofi Canada, plan sponsors said the top three factors for successful wellness programs are a healthy workplace culture, a sufficient budget and support from leadership.

As a resource for plan sponsors and employers, the International Foundation offers the "Workplace Wellness Makeover Tool Kit," with information on messaging, increasing engagement and expanding the understanding of leadership, at www.ifebp.org/pdf/Workplace-Wellness-Toolkit.pdf. For more education and resources on wellness, including research and success stories, visit www.ifebp.org/wellness.

