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Nontraditional benefits like casual dress codes or student loan repayment benefits are gaining popularity as employers add new and innovative perks to reflect their diverse workforces.

Organizations have long offered employee benefits to attract and retain talent. A large majority of U.S. employers provide health care benefits—typically, major medical benefits, prescription drug coverage, and dental and vision benefits—to maintain a healthy and productive workforce. Most have defined benefit pensions, defined contribution plans or hybrid plans to help provide retirement security. In addition, organizations typically provide paid and unpaid time off benefits to allow workers to recuperate from illness or take a family vacation.

Beyond these traditional benefits, many organizations use innovative benefits to meet the varied needs of their workforce. Younger workers may place greater value on workplace flexibility and use educational benefits to return to school for an advanced degree or pay down student loan balances. More mature employee populations might value the stability of supplemental insurance offerings. A more physically active workforce may value reimbursement for wearable tracking devices, while employees with longer commutes may place a high value on transportation subsidies.

The International Foundation report *Employee Benefits Survey—2018 Results* captures benchmarking data on health, retirement and leave benefits but also on these miscellaneous offerings. Corporations and public employers offer a variety of at-work perquisites, education benefits, access to events and entertainment, insurance, external services, wellness programs and perks specifically for executive-level workers. Survey findings addressed several of the most prevalent types of innovative and miscellaneous benefits.

At-Work Perquisites

At-work perks aim to improve the workplace experience and, in turn, increase employee satisfaction and productivity. About two in three (63.8%) responding employers offer on-site coffee services, while five in nine (55.2%) have implemented a business casual dress code—a significant increase from the 2016 survey. Employers are expanding on this concept and are commonly offering a casual dress code on Fridays (41.1%) or the entire week (20.2%).

More than one-half (51.5%) of responding organizations have service award programs to encourage worker retention. Also, one in four (25.4%) responding organizations provides transportation benefits to workers, such as subsidies, or car- or vanpools. Similar proportions of respondents give holiday gifts to employees (24.1%), host “Take Your Child to Work” days (22.7%), and offer on-site or take-out meal options (19.5%). Finally, though rare, employers are making efforts to combat workplace stress through the use of nap/privacy/meditation rooms (11.1%).

Education

Employers provide a number of educational benefits aimed at developing a well-trained workforce and combating increasing costs. *Educational assistance plans*, which are employer-sponsored programs that partially or fully reimburse employees for education and training expenses, are offered by 33.7% of respondents, followed by workplace cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid training (27.1%). More than one in seven (15.0%) responding organizations offer 529 plans, which encourage saving for future educational expenses. In addition, 11.6% of respondents award scholarships to or pay tuition for employees’ children, helping workers ease the financial burden of higher education. Finally, a small but increasing proportion of responding orga-

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nizations (3.9%) have student loan repayment assistance programs, an attractive benefit for college graduates with substantial loan debt.

Events and Entertainment

Employers increasingly understand the value of employees socializing with co-workers and their family members outside of the office. Responding organizations commonly host employee and family events including picnics, concerts and fairs (38.4%). A similar proportion (35.0%) supply discounted tickets to sporting, recreational or cultural events, while 12.3% of respondents organize workplace sports teams, leagues or clubs. An additional 6.9% offer free or discounted activity lessons, such as personal training.

Insurance

Firms cover all or some of the premium on a variety of supplemental insurance products for employees who want to purchase them. One in ten responding employers (9.9%) offers access to identity theft insurance, followed by group automobile insurance (4.7%) and group homeowner/property insurance (4.4%).

External Services

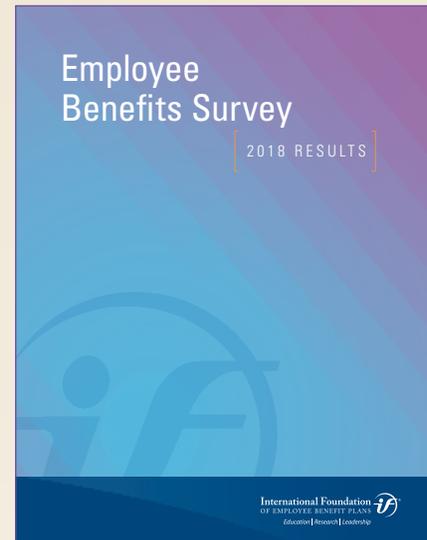
Employers provide a variety of external services designed to reduce the burden on employee finances and time. These include employee product discounts (27.3%), financial benefits for relocating workers (22.9%), subsidized cell phones and mobile devices

(22.2%), employee purchase programs (20.2%) and matching charitable gift programs (17.7%). Some employers are going one step further, providing dry cleaning and laundry services (11.6%), on-site postal services (11.3%), and on-site check cashing and banking (9.1%). While less common, other innovative organizations offer estate (7.9%) and funeral (5.7%) planning services, followed by formal career counseling services (4.2%), travel planning benefits (4.2%) and concierge services (3.4%).

Wellness Benefits

Wellness programs are designed to promote increased health and safety among workers, boost worker morale, and reduce costs associated with accident and illness. Responding organizations most commonly offer workers access to employee assistance programs (82.8%) and sponsor flu shot programs (76.8%), health risk assessments and screenings (59.9%), and smoking-cessation programs (51.6%). Respondents are increasingly providing disease management initiatives (46.4%), which seek to manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity and asthma.

Other popular wellness benefits include health coaching services, offered by 45.1% of organizations, on-site fitness centers or subsidized fitness services (40.9%), weight management programs (38.4%), and walking and exercise programs (35.9%). Smaller proportions of respondents offer work-



place meditation/mindfulness training (18.7%) and on-site massages (17.7%).

Executive Perquisites

More than 45% of corporate respondents provide specific benefits to executives including external services, compensation and retirement, supplemental insurance and travel benefits. Specifically, those that have these benefits most commonly offer supplemental executive retirement plans (53.7%), subsidized cell phones or mobile devices (37.3%), company car allowances (35.1%), additional equity compensation (32.8%) and executive physical examinations (29.1%). Other common benefits include supplemental life (24.6%) and disability insurance (24.6%), executive coaching (17.2%) and tax planning/preparation services (15.7%).

The Employee Benefits Survey—2018 Results reveals extensive benchmarking data from 677 organizations representing nearly 20 industries and ranging in size from fewer than 50 to more than 10,000 employees. Visit www.ifebp.org/benefitsurvey2018 for more information.