

Best Practices

Who Benefits from Over-the-Top Perks?

By JUDI E. LOOMIS

From an employee's perspective, do company benefits far outweigh monetary compensation? It depends. Ask young mothers who are offered on-site child care at a greatly reduced rate and the answer is a resounding "yes." Quiz a Baby Boomer who tends to be inspired by bonuses and flex hours, and whose young child-rearing days are over, and they might be more interested in their hourly wage and commissions. On the other hand, Gen Xers tend to be more interested in climbing the ladder and enriching their lives by practicing a healthy lifestyle. They tend to be enticed by companies that offer wellness programs, on-site fitness centers and gyms and memberships to spas.

Regardless of what genre employees hail from, companies across the nation are implementing perks that beckon to new job recruits for hard to fill positions, and fulfill the needs of loyal employees with wellness programs that keep them healthier on the job. Companies that are thinking out of the box are investing millions in providing employees with lifestyle comforts in the workplace.

Raytheon, one of Fort Wayne's largest employers, has made it convenient for its employees to get the kinks out of their necks while on the job by employing an on-site massage therapist. Sara Spinney, human

NOTE:

- The average annual health care cost per person in the United States far exceeds \$3,000.
- Preventable illness makes up approximately 70% of the total costs of illness.
- It costs employers an average of \$1,500 more per year to insure an obese employee than it does someone of average weight.
- It is possible for employers to take aggressive action toward reducing health care utilization and containing costs by implementing a health promotion program.

*Provided by the Wellness Councils of America

resource manager for Raytheon, who was just transferred to the Fort Wayne Raytheon location in July, hasn't used the massage therapist yet, but she has taken advantage of the convenience at the Texas and Florida Raytheon sites. It's her opinion that massage therapy is a perk many of Raytheon's 1,100 employees are taking advantage of.

"We also have an on-site salon/barber shop, flex time with our 9/80 program (employees have the option to work a nine-hour day and take every other Friday off), an on-site medical staff, telephonic legal counsel, a cafeteria, discount travel options and a fitness center," Spinney says. "These are perks that really get used by our employees.

There is a nominal fee for the use of the fitness center, but it is far more reasonable than any fitness club membership in the vicinity. The 9/80 program is probably the most popular perk that many of our employees are taking advantage of. All of these perks attracted me to Raytheon, but the number one factor was the company and the job opportunity. But, certainly the culmination of the benefits package here is very market competitive."

"The focus on bringing a wide range of options into the workplace makes clear Raytheon's commitment to a work life balance," adds Wayne Iurillo, Raytheon-Fort Wayne site executive.





Spiece Lifestyle and Fitness Center sees corporate employees in volumes. In fact, the company caters to both personal and corporate memberships. Spiece offers a full service of lifestyle changes including its fitness and wellness center and its medical center.

"I service many corporate clients," says Fazia Deen, corporate wellness director for Spiece. "There are a lot of companies looking into wellness benefits for their employees, and it's become mandatory in some cases. We have one client who pays for his employees' enrollment fees, and if they don't show up they pay him. Our main focus is to promote preventative wellness in the workplace, to catch illness or disease before problems arise, thereby, saving companies money, making them more productive and creating a vibrant workforce. At Spiece we can so offer companies confidential feedback on

their employees' health risk and fitness progress."

According to the Wellness Councils of America, more than 81-percent of businesses with 50 or more employees have some form of health promotion program, including an exercise program, stop smoking classes, back care programs and stress management. Assuming that the majority of the employees in these companies actually take advantage of these perks, a company can realize drastic reductions in medical costs which can consume half of its profits (according to the Wellness Councils of America). Research points to the fact that healthier and happier employees spend fewer days away from work, saving the company thousands and even millions of dollars in down time and hiring temporary help.

The Effects of Perks

By JUDI E. LOOMIS

What impact does providing employees with perks such as wellness programs, and incentives to stay healthy have on the workforce? "For one thing keeping your employees healthy is obviously good for the company," says John Dortch, president of Preston Joan Group, a Fort Wayne based human resources company. "But, keep in mind that healthy consists of wellness programs and wellness educating, and teaching people how to be and stay healthy. By providing on-site wellness centers and fitness centers, meditation and yoga and cafeterias that cater to a healthy lifestyle it will greatly affect a company's bottom line. Primarily, it will lower health insurance premiums. Companies should also be considering these perks for an employee's entire family. A person who is practicing a healthy lifestyle at home will obviously carry that over into the workforce. Conversely, if the home is dysfunctional it is going to cause problems in the workforce."

Are northeast Indiana companies doing enough to support their employee's wellness in the workplace? According to Dortch there are a lot of other employee perks companies should be considering.

"No they are not doing enough but I am noticing an increase in what employers are beginning to do," Dortch says. "More companies are beginning to offer some type of wellness program. Ultimately, what companies in northeast Indiana are doing is keeping up with the trends of the nation. Companies are beginning to see that it does have an impact on their bottom line in terms of what they pay out in health insurance premiums. In addition, companies are anticipating the next generations entrance into the workforce and they most certainly have different thoughts about work ethic and wellness."

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