

Employee Benefits Are Evolving for Remote Workers

By Tina VanBuren

Once upon a time almost all salaried employees drove a car, hopped a bus or subway, boarded a commuter train or walked when heading to work each weekday morning.



This age-old custom began to change beginning in January 2020 when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerted the nation to the COVID-19 virus outbreak abroad. By the time spring arrived the Work from Home movement had officially arrived in the United States.

Looking back, it is astonishing to consider how radical this movement was. People who had reported to work for more than thirty years were suddenly meeting remotely on Zoom. While many workers have today returned to the office, it is likely remnants of the Work from Home movement have achieved permanent status.

In responding to this potentially lasting change, human resources professionals are reevaluating benefits packages offered to employees to include perks supporting remote or flexible work arrangements. These perks can include stipends for home office setups, mental health resources and flexible work hours.

Following are additional initiatives being undertaken to address the new remote work reality:

Wellness Programs: Absent the mental stimulation and pleasures attributable to fraternity and collegiality, employers are increasingly focusing on remote employees' physical and mental well-being. Wellness programs may include gym memberships, health resources, counseling services and stress management initiatives.

Financial Wellbeing: Companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of supporting employees' financial health. In accordance with this recognition, benefits including student loan assistance, financial education and retirement planning are becoming more common.

Childcare Support: The challenges of balancing work and family life for both men and women are real and are not going away. In response to this vexing challenge, some companies are offering childcare support. This support includes financial subsidies, onsite childcare facilities and flexible scheduling to accommodate parental responsibilities.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives: In recognition of an

increasingly diverse labor force, companies are incorporating benefits promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. These benefits include mentorship programs, training on unconscious bias and resources to support underrepresented groups.

Customized Benefits Packages: Companies are beginning to offer more personalized benefits packages in recognition of the fact employees have diverse needs. Benefits packages may include a menu of options employees can choose from based on individual preferences and circumstances.

Technology-Driven Solutions: There is no denying technology is expanding into all corners of our daily lives. Therefore, it is no surprise the use of technology in managing and delivering benefits is increasing. This expanding footprint includes digital platforms for benefits administration, telemedicine services and wellness program apps.

Expanded Mental Health Support: Mental health awareness is on the rise both in and outside the workplace. In response to this increased awareness, employers are expanding the basket of mental health benefits being offered to employees. Access to counseling services,

mental health days and stress reduction programs are some of the initiatives being launched.

Trends and changes regarding the evolving employee benefits space will vary across industries, regions and companies. Check with your trusted human resources professional for the latest and most accurate information on the ways employee benefits are evolving to match the remote work environment.

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