

GROWERTALKS

Features

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From Boomers to Gen Z: The Benefits That Win Them Over

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Benefit packages are an essential compensation component that significantly influences a professional's decision to join a company and then stay with that company. Benefits today extend well beyond the traditional health insurance and retirement plans and now cater to a much wider range of needs valued by employees.

We have four distinct generations in the workforce, each with their own values, behaviors and needs. There are over 125 benefits that a company can offer to become a top destination to work for. Some can be

lower investments, such as gym memberships, or speak to emotions, such as pet insurance. As we move further into 2026, there are commonalities among all generations' emphasis on mental health, flexibility and professional development—but for diverse reasons and with different emphasis placed on importance.

Forbes conducted an intensive online survey of 1,000 employed Americans distributed equally across generations and found “an overwhelming 79% of respondents prioritize flexible work options, with 64% highlighting the need for flexible parental leave and 62% emphasizing access to mental health resources.”

How does a company identify the top benefits beyond health care and retirement plans in creating a benefit package that satisfies each generation's desire to feel taken care of? Let's look at five additional benefits (after health and retirement) ranked in order of importance by each generation.

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

Health and retirement benefits are highly valued as Baby Boomers enter or approach retirement. The five additional benefits in order of importance are:

- Flexible work options primarily focused on making their own schedule. Many continue to not just want to, but need to, work in an office setting due to behaviors developed in their career when this was the norm. But they want the freedom to manage their own schedule.

- Flexible vacation and PTO that reflect and respect the years and hours of work commitment invested by this generation.
- Flexible parental leave is important to this generation, as many continue to care for elderly parents and now grandchildren. Let's not forget that their adult children will always need "mom and dad"!
- Long-term care benefits: With so many in retirement phase or planning, companies providing long-term care benefits will be highly attractive to these professionals.
- Recognition programs: A potentially surprising benefit of importance to Baby Boomers is the presence of team or individual recognition programs. They strongly value recognizing results.

Generation X (1965-1980)

This generation of professionals place an overall emphasis on work/life balance with flexibility built in. Of additional importance to Gen X employees are:

- Flexible work options working remotely or hybrid with a flexible work schedule. The ability to manage personal responsibilities with work—due to increased value they place on pursuing hobbies, community projects or non-profit support—allows them to better integrate their personal and professional lives.
- Flexible vacation and PTO rank highly, as this generation begins to look favorably on unlimited vacation benefit programs. They realize just how crucial time off is to recharge physically and mentally.
- Mental health and wellness resources have become prominent in attracting and retaining Gen X employees. They place a high value on companies offering insurance coverage for mental health services and workplace counselors with dedicated space for conversation.
- Flexible parental leave benefits: Like the generations above them, Gen X wants flexible parental leave benefits, as many find themselves in the "sandwich generation" of caring directly for their children and their parents.
- Professional development benefits take precedence, especially those that allow them to participate autonomously accessing learning management systems, particularly when focused on cross-functional training and development.

Millennials (or Gen Y) (1981-1996)

This generation places an overarching value on flexibility and mental health. In order, the specific benefits these employees look for are:

- Flexible work options are specific to fully remote with flexible hours, allowing them to work the hours they're most productive.
- Mental health and wellness benefits move up in importance with this generation. Insurance coverage for mental health services, dedicated office space, and therapists or counselors acting as mental health first responders are foremost to them.
- Flexible vacation and PTO programs attract them, as they value investing downtime in their mental and physical wellness.
- Continuous learning and development benefits include access to company learning management systems along with tuition stipends for continual learning that can be applied to past education debt. Millennials place an emphasis on their desire for constructive performance reviews.
- Paid parental leave, which emphasizes family-friendly policies, is important to Millennials who are now often juggling their children's busy schedules along with their own.

Generation Z (1997-2012)

Gen Z places overall priority on remote work and mental health benefits of companies. Top benefits include:

- Flexible work options with remote-first focus and flexible hours to match their productivity peaks.
- Mental health and wellness benefits include insurance coverage for mental health services, and dedicated company counselors with dedicated safe spaces. Gen Z employees engage strongly in a variety of mental health workshops when offered.
- Flexible vacation and PTO continues to rate highly as Gen Z tends to be on the go while working those flexible schedules as they travel.
- Commitment to authentic DEI and social values emerge as core reasons Gen Z will be attracted to a company. Offer paid time off for volunteering to charitable initiatives the company supports from leadership down or that the employee has a personal investment in.
- Fast skill-building and career growth opportunities: Gen Z is attracted to companies offering rapid development paths. Access to learning management systems remains important to Gen Z, specifically for manager training and cross-functional department learning. Education stipends for continual learning will often be a factor in deciding between one company or another.

Conclusion

Benefit programs are more challenging than ever both in cost (healthcare) and scope (what do our employees want out of 125-plus benefits). We can eliminate the risk of guessing what will set your company apart as a “best place to work.” Begin by understanding the value and ranking that generations place on benefits and, more importantly, listen. Direct employee feedback remains crucial for successful benefit program design. Take the time to comprehensively ask your employees what additional benefits are attractive to them and why. Your team will thank you, as will your recruitment, retention and productivity metrics! **GT**

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