



Stay HR Savvy with HR Elements®

Welcome to the UBA Partner Firm exclusive monthly newsletter, delivering insights into timely human resources and employee benefits topics.

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Employee Benefits | Building Benefits That Employees Actually Value

As benefit costs continue to rise, many employers are asking the question: How can we deliver meaningful value to employees without dramatically increasing spending?

[The answer may not be adding more benefits. Instead, it may be helping employees better understand, access, and appreciate the benefits already available to them.](#)

Organizations frequently invest significant resources in health plans, retirement programs, wellness initiatives, employee assistance programs, and voluntary benefits. Yet utilization rates often remain surprisingly low. Employees can't value benefits they don't understand, and confusion frequently leads to underuse.

The Communication Gap

Annual enrollment meetings and benefits guides are important, but they are rarely enough. Employees face an ongoing stream of life events—marriage, parenthood, caregiving responsibilities, financial challenges, and health concerns—that affect their benefit needs throughout the year.

Leading employers are moving beyond enrollment-focused communication and adopting year-round benefits education strategies. They provide timely reminders, targeted resources, and practical examples that help employees connect available benefits to real-life situations.

For example:

- New parents may need reminders about dependent coverage, parental leave, and flexible spending accounts.
- Employees caring for aging parents may benefit from information about employee assistance programs, mental health resources, and caregiving support.
- Early-career employees may need guidance on retirement planning and financial wellness programs.

When communication is tied to employee needs rather than administrative deadlines, engagement increases significantly. Clearly describing the benefit in plain language and using multiple formats (email, video, fact sheets, in-person meetings) can help boost employees' understanding of their benefits.

Measuring Value Beyond Participation

Benefit success should not be measured solely by enrollment numbers. HR leaders should evaluate whether programs support broader organizational goals such as retention, productivity, engagement, and employee wellbeing.

Questions worth asking include:

- Are employees aware of available resources?
- Do employees understand how to access support?
- Are benefits helping reduce workplace stress?
- Do employees perceive the organization as caring about their wellbeing?

The answers often reveal opportunities to improve employee experience without introducing additional programs.

A Strategic Opportunity

In today's competitive labor market, benefits remain one of the most visible expressions of an employer's commitment to its workforce. [Organizations that focus on communication, accessibility, and employee understanding](#) can often achieve greater impact from existing investments than those that simply add new offerings.

The most effective benefits strategy is not necessarily the most expensive. It is the one employees understand, trust, and use.

Workplace Culture | The Leadership Visibility Advantage

Many organizations continue to navigate hybrid work environments, evolving employee expectations, and economic uncertainty. During periods of change, one cultural factor consistently influences employee confidence: [leadership visibility](#).

Visibility is not about executives being present at every meeting or constantly communicating. Rather, it's about ensuring employees understand organizational priorities, leadership thinking, and the rationale behind key decisions.

Why Visibility Matters

Employees naturally fill information gaps when communication is limited. Unfortunately, assumptions often trend toward concern rather than confidence.

Visible leaders reduce uncertainty by providing clarity. They create trust by sharing updates, acknowledging challenges, and explaining decisions. Employees may not always agree with every organizational choice, but transparency helps them understand the context.

Moving Beyond Formal Announcements

Effective leadership visibility extends beyond company-wide emails and quarterly town halls.

Organizations with strong cultures often encourage leaders to:

- Participate in informal employee discussions.
- Share lessons learned from successes and failures.
- Recognize employee contributions publicly.
- Explain business priorities in practical terms.
- Maintain consistent communication during both positive and difficult periods.

These actions humanize leadership and strengthen organizational connection.

Visibility and Retention

[Research consistently shows that employees are more likely to remain with organizations where they trust leadership.](#) Visibility supports that trust by demonstrating accessibility, authenticity, and accountability.

Employees want to know where the organization is headed and how their work contributes to broader goals. When leaders communicate clearly and consistently, employees gain a stronger sense of purpose and belonging.

Culture Is Experienced Daily

Culture is not defined by mission statements or values displayed on office walls. It is shaped by everyday interactions, communication practices, and leadership behaviors.

In a workplace environment where change is constant, leadership visibility remains one of the most practical and effective tools available to strengthen culture, improve engagement, and reinforce trust.

Dear HR Manager | Encouraging Participation without Pressure

Our organization offers several wellness and mental health resources, but employee utilization remains low. How can we encourage participation without making employees feel pressured or invading their privacy?

– Committed to Supporting Employees

Dear Committed:

Low utilization doesn't necessarily mean employees don't need the benefit; often it means they are unaware of available resources, unsure how to access them, or concerned about confidentiality.

Start by evaluating how these programs are communicated. Employees should regularly hear about available resources throughout the year, not just during open enrollment. Use multiple communication channels and focus on practical scenarios employees may encounter.

It's equally important to emphasize privacy protections. Employees need reassurance that participation in wellness programs, employee assistance programs, and mental health services remain confidential and separate from employment decisions.

Consider asking managers to have conversations about wellbeing without asking about personal health matters. Leaders can help create an environment where seeking support is viewed as a sign of self-awareness rather than weakness.

– HR Manager

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