



Ideas and Information for Human Resources Professionals

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

The Perk of Pets

Does your company offer health care? Check. Does it offer a 401(k) program? Check. How about paid time off and tuition reimbursement? Check and check. Now, does it offer pet-friendly perks? Huh?



Some of the latest and greatest company benefits have been the recognition that pets of employees are just like family. Companies on the leading edge of employee benefits, especially those that want to stand out within an industry, will offer such pet-friendly perks in order to attract top talent. But what exactly are these benefits?

According to an article titled, "[Pet-Friendly Perks](#)" in *Human Resource Executive Online*, employers are offering benefits such as pet insurance, paid pet bereavement leave, pet parental leave, paid leave to take care of a new pet, an on-site dog park, and the ever-popular bring your pet to work day. Most of these would have been unheard of even a few years ago.

On the website of *Workforce*, their infographic titled, "[By The Numbers: Pet-friendly Workplaces](#)," shows how the popularity of these benefits has skyrocketed, as evidenced by the fact that one in three Fortune 500 companies offer pet insurance. So, why are pet-related perks so popular now?

As mentioned in the *Human Resource Executive Online* article, the bond between pets and humans appears to be stronger these days. Individuals are placing a greater amount of importance on their pets and spending a significant amount of their disposable income on them. Employers have taken notice of this and even acknowledged that pets can have a positive impact in the workplace.



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The *Workforce* infographic shows that seven out of 10 people say that pets make a positive impact on office dynamics and morale, and bringing a dog to work is preferred three to one over table tennis and foosball tables. Yet, even with those strong statistics, only seven percent of employers allow pets in the workplace.

Obviously, while some job candidates are thrilled with pet-related benefits, others may cringe at the thought of working side-by-side with someone's dog or cat. They may have allergies, a fear of animals, or some other issue that makes them pet averse.

Employers need to find a balance if they decide to implement a pet-friendly work policy that takes into account everyone's opinions. Details need to be set in clear language and managers should be made aware of what is and is not allowed. If this trend continues, you may be lucky enough to have a furry, four-legged co-worker sitting next to you.

TECHNOLOGY

VR for HR

No matter how well traveled you are, or how busy your lifestyle may be, you likely haven't been everywhere in the world, or done everything there is to do. There is technology out there, however, that can bring the world to you. That technology is called "virtual reality," or VR for short, and it's changing the way that people experience life. VR provides a simulated environment that mimics a real one.



Whether you want to climb a mountain, dive deep underwater, or even go on a top-secret military mission, VR can bring all this to you in the comfort of your own home. So, what does all this have to do with human resources? In an article titled, "[Virtual Reality Gives Job Candidates a Vivid Big Picture](#)" on the *Society for Human Resource Management's* website, there are numerous, maybe even limitless, uses for VR. The U.S. Navy uses VR in its recruiting and so, too, are many companies.

Not only does VR simulate what it's like to work at a particular company, but it also highlights that a company is on the cutting edge in terms of technology and is using VR to differentiate itself from other companies. Just like Pink Floyd's song, "Wish you were here," VR can bring you to any location, whether it's a city or a corporate headquarters. The latter being especially relevant with recruiting because a company doesn't have to spend the money to fly job candidates to their office.

Plus, once these job candidates "see" what it would be like to work at a particular company in a particular city, they may even decide that it's

EMPLOYER WEBINAR

What Employers Need to Know about Severance Agreements and Bonus Plans

Tuesday, August 8, 2017
2:00 p.m. ET / 11:00 a.m. PT

This webinar will cover what to consider when offering severance agreements or bonus plans.

We will:

- Briefly describe severance agreements and bonus plans
- Generally discuss how federal and state laws impact these arrangements
- Describe how offering severance agreements or bonus plans may affect plan design
- Discuss the impact that these arrangements have on the payroll process and taxation
- Discuss the impact that these arrangements have on benefits such as life and long-term disability
- Discuss how severance agreements or bonus plans interplay with COBRA
- Discuss how offering these arrangements can set a precedent for future employer actions

This 60-minute intermediate level webinar will help employers understand the implications of offering severance agreements or bonus plans.

Registration

[Register here for the webinar](#). The presentation will be posted on the [UBA website](#) the day before the webinar.

About the Presenters

[Lorie Maring](#) is Of Counsel in the Atlanta, Georgia, office of Fisher

not what they want and retract their application. Thus, not wasting their time, or a company's time, during the interview process.

Another benefit of VR recruiting is the undivided attention of the wearer. While a job candidate explores the company's campus, offices, surroundings, etc., messages can be presented that include information about a company's health plan, employee benefits, and other opportunities.

VR technology is just another tool that recruiters can use, but it's definitely one of the more powerful ones. No other tool, not even video conferencing, can immerse someone so deeply into an environment so that he or she can seemingly blend into the workplace culture without actually stepping foot through the door.

WELLNESS

Coffee is the Nectar of the Gods

Ah, coffee, is there any better beverage? Speaking as a lover of coffee, but not a coffee snob, I always look forward to that first morning cup. As I savor its aroma – while the medium-bodied roast charms my taste buds – with each sip I am grateful to whoever created this libation.



I would drink coffee regardless of whether it was good or bad for my health. Fortunately, in an article on *CNN's* website titled, "[Drinking more coffee leads to a longer life, two studies say](#)," reveals that coffee may actually extend a person's life. If you follow coffee news, then you're most likely aware that there have been numerous studies on it and its effects. One of these latest studies, according to *CNN*, is the largest to date on coffee and its effect on a person's mortality.

If you're like me, then one cup is never enough and the studies found that people who drank between two to four cups of coffee each day benefited from an 18 percent lower risk of death compared to non-coffee drinkers. Furthermore, people who drank three or more cups of coffee daily had a lower risk of causes of death such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, etc.

As the article states, coffee is a "complex mixture of compounds" and these compounds have both neuroprotective and anti-inflammatory benefits. And while it's unknown how coffee is able to impart these benefits, I say just sit back and enjoy another cup.

So, raise your coffee mugs and toast this super beverage! It's not often that something that tastes so amazingly good is also good for you.

IN BRIEF

Phillips. She focuses her practice on helping employers navigate Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) and other state and federal laws impacting the design, implementation and ongoing compliance of their employee benefit plans and programs. She regularly advises clients on the Affordable Care Act, health and welfare benefits, qualified plans, executive compensation, Multiple Employer Welfare Arrangements (MEWAs) and multiemployer plan issues. Lorie also represents employers in managing Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and Department of Labor (DOL) audits, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance and fiduciary obligations. She serves clients in the public and private sector, including non-profit organizations and trade associations.

[Jennifer Sandberg](#) is a Partner in the Atlanta, Georgia, office of Fisher Phillips. Employers, In-House Counsel, and Human Resource professionals view her as a trusted advisor, providing solid business advice. She works to understand her clients' business and desired business outcomes in order to provide creative and cost-effective advice and counsel. She assists clients in accomplishing business objectives in the most efficient manner possible. Her advice is custom-tailored for employers with tens of thousands of employees or those with a mere handful of employees. Jennifer was selected for inclusion in The Legal 500 - Workplace & Employment Counseling in 2015.

Certification

This webinar event has been submitted to the [Human Resource Certification Institute](#) and the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) to qualify for one recertification credit hour.

About That Inheritance... Don't Count on It

Not too long ago, it was assumed that Social Security would pay for most people's retirement needs. Now, we know better and most employees, regardless of their age, are aware that they need to save additional funds for their retirement. In fact, many younger employees believe that Social Security won't even be around once they retire.



Unfortunately, these same employees also believe they will receive a significant inheritance from a parent or grandparent. To make matters worse, some actually believe that their children will help take care of them in their old age. This could be a major mistake on both counts, especially about receiving an inheritance.

An article on the website *Employee Benefit News* titled, "[Unrealistic expectations muddy employee retirement planning](#)," says that millennials anticipate their inheritance will cover any gaps in their retirement funding. A study in that article found that, not only don't many retirees have any money to pass along to their children, but half of them don't even have a will. As Judge Smails said in the movie *Caddyshack*, "You'll get nothing, and like it!"

The key takeaway in all this is that when it comes to retirement, you must rely on yourself. Don't rely on the government or Social Security. Don't expect that you'll inherit money. And definitely don't expect to win the lottery. Retirement has a funny way of sneaking up on you and, unlike buying Christmas presents, you can't wait until the last day to bail yourself out of the situation. Plan ahead and be diligent about saving for retirement. If you do happen to receive an inheritance, then consider it a bonus rather than a requirement to retire comfortably.

Companies can help their employees by providing retirement planning tools and even a financial advisor. If you're self-employed, or your employer doesn't provide these benefits, then seek out these tools and advisors yourself. There will always be things to worry about in life, so make sure that retirement isn't one of them.

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