



## HR ELEMENTS®



### HR & EMPLOYEE BENEFITS NEWSLETTER

## 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.

HR Elements | November 2023

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*Dear HR Manager,*

I need help finding candidates for open positions in today's tight job market. Do you have recommendations for sources I may have yet to think to tap into?

*– Now Hiring*

*Dear Now Hiring,*

The last few years have been challenging for job seekers and employers alike. The “Great Resignation” and low unemployment rates left many employers with positions they have been unable to fill.

Consider tapping into the pool of “[hidden workers](#),” who are often overlooked despite their willingness and ability to contribute to the workforce. These may include gig workers, caregivers, military veterans and spouses, immigrants, refugees, neurodivergent, differently abled, and re-entry workers who have been absent from the workforce for an extended period. They often want to work but are often excluded by traditional recruiting systems.

Here are a few suggestions to break down barriers and attract this pool of candidates.

1. **Use positive job filters.**  
Instead of using recruitment management systems that automatically screen out applicants based on inflexible criteria, positive filters focus on skills and qualifications truly relevant to the position.
2. **Focus on critical skills in job descriptions.**  
Simplify job descriptions by emphasizing the critical skills that will result in on-the-job success. Lengthy and complicated job descriptions can discourage applications. Focus on transferable skills and experience rather than on gaps in employment.
3. **Target your outreach.**  
Hidden workers come from many different backgrounds. Partnering with community groups serving these diverse populations may help reach a wider pool of candidates.
4. **Foster an inclusive culture.**  
Promoting an inclusive culture is vital to unlocking the potential of hidden workers. Actively challenge preconceptions and ensure all employees understand the strategic value of opening the workforce to workers with differing backgrounds. Having a senior leader champion this initiative can significantly impact acceptance.

[Embrace hidden workers](#) to fill your open roles and create a more diverse and enriched team. Tapping into a pool of hidden talents to fill your job openings also helps your company stay competitive and serve your community better.

## Workplace Culture | Reviewing Your Bereavement Leave Policy

Losing a loved one is a deeply emotional and mentally challenging experience. It is a time when individuals need support, understanding, and time to grieve. Bereavement leave is a compassionate gesture and a [vital benefit](#) for employee well-being.

### What is bereavement leave?

Bereavement leave is a form of paid or unpaid leave that employees can utilize when dealing with the death of a close family member or loved one. While many organizations traditionally limit bereavement leave to immediate family members such as parents, siblings, children, and spouses, some employers extend its use to cover the loss of any loved one.

No federal law in the United States mandates that employers provide bereavement leave, but approximately 88% of companies offer some paid bereavement leave. Otherwise, employees may need to use their accrued paid time off (PTO) or sick days to take time off for bereavement.

## How can I best support employees?

When employers offer bereavement leave as a discretionary benefit, they support their employees' mental and emotional well-being in many ways.

- Employees who feel valued and cared for are more likely to remain with the company. Supporting them in difficult times is as important as recognizing their successes.
- Paid bereavement leave supports employees in their grief and promotes their engagement and productivity when they return to work. Offering paid leave ensures that employees have one less worry during a difficult period, signaling their well-being is a top priority.
- As workplaces evolve to include more than the traditional "nuclear" family, employers can be more inclusive by acknowledging close bonds employees may have with other relatives, close friends, and other non-familial ties.
- Offering a short time off to begin healing can help prevent longer-term absences.
- Giving employees time to support others experiencing a loss by attending funerals underscores the importance of acknowledging grief and offering support.

## How can I craft an effective bereavement leave policy?

While [bereavement policies](#) will vary among organizations, it is important to document the policy in the employee handbook if the company has one. There are several key elements that should be included in any comprehensive policy:

- **Definition of Bereavement Leave**  
Clearly define what constitutes bereavement leave and the types of relationships that qualify, which may extend beyond immediate family members to include pets, extended family, or stepfamily.
- **Duration of Leave**  
Specify the leave period, whether it varies for different relationships, and whether it is paid or unpaid. Address any time limits on unpaid bereavement leave.
- **Related Obligations**  
Identify the obligations that qualify for bereavement time, such as attending funerals and participating in legal planning.
- **Request Guidelines**  
Provide clear instructions on how employees can request standard bereavement leave and any additional time they may require.
- **Supplemental Benefits**  
Highlight any supplementary benefits, perks, and resources available to support grieving employees, such as flexible schedules, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs).

Grief is a life-changing experience, and bereavement leave provides the emotional space employees need to cope with the logistical and emotional aspects of the death of a family member or loved one in a healthy way. It is a proactive measure in promoting mental wellness, both within and outside the workplace.

Even if employers provide just one paid day of bereavement leave, it sends a powerful message to the team – that they are valued, deserving of care, and that the company stands by them during challenging times.

## Employee Benefits | Do your employees love your benefits as much as you do?

Employers and HR professionals must adopt employee benefits strategies that resonate with their workforce. A recent survey revealed a disconnect between how HR personnel perceive benefits and how employees experience them.

Employers can use four key strategies to [attract and retain top talent](#).

### 1. Ask: Dig deeper with thoughtful surveys

Move beyond generic surveys and pose specific, open-ended questions to employees, encouraging deeper insights into preferred benefits. The goal is to identify the reasons behind satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

### 2. Listen: Understand Employee Needs

Listening is vital to identifying discrepancies between employer perceptions and employee sentiments. Realizing that employees may express emotions and opinions differently, employers should look beyond data points and pay attention to nuanced feedback.

### 3. Act: Address Core Employee Needs

Having gathered insights, employers will need to balance feasibility and costs with employee requests. Benefits advisors can help navigate costs and options, weighing the impact of potential changes on employees. It's about aligning benefit offerings with the core needs identified through the feedback process.

### 4. Repeat: Continuous Improvement

Crafting an employee-centric benefit plan is an ongoing process. Workforces evolve, and so do their needs. A recommended cycle is every six months, allowing employers to stay attuned to employee sentiments and adapt benefits accordingly.

## Why It Matters

Employee benefits play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining top talent. Studies indicate that many job seekers consider benefits a crucial factor in job acceptance. By tapping into employee preferences and sentiments, employers provide desirable benefits and position themselves to support overall employee well-being.

While these strategies form the foundation, understanding the [types of benefits](#) that hold the most significance for employees is equally vital.

## Essential Benefits to Consider

### 1. Health Benefits

- Traditional group health insurance
- Health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs)
- Health and wellness fringe benefits

### 2. Retirement Benefits

- 401(k) plans
- Defined benefits plans

### 3. Remote Work

- Full-time or hybrid remote work options
- Remote work stipends for internet and phone expenses

### 4. Education and Professional Development

- Tuition reimbursement programs
- Paid job training
- Knowledge-sharing webinars
- Technology stipends

### 5. Family Benefits:

- Fertility benefits
- Adoption assistance
- Childcare support
- Eldercare
- Meal allowances
- Pet insurance

### Additional Considerations:

- Paid Time Off (PTO): Crucial for establishing a positive company culture
- Flexible Schedules
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Anonymous mental health benefits
- Commuter Benefits: Reducing transportation expenses
- Reward and Recognition Programs: Boosting engagement and retention

A comprehensive employee benefits plan goes beyond monetary incentives. Employers must consider the diverse needs of their workforce and adapt continuously. Benefits advisors can serve as invaluable guides in this process, helping employers navigate the complex landscape of employee benefits to attract and retain top talent.

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