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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 | June 2024

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Dear HR Manager,

My team often eats their lunch while multitasking between bites or during Zoom calls. How can I encourage them to take mindful, restorative breaks instead?

*– Advocate for Mindful Breaks*

Dear Advocate for Mindful Breaks,

Encouraging meaningful breaks can help enhance productivity and well-being. Here are some strategies to help your team embrace the importance of mindful breaks.

### Highlight the Benefits of Breaks

Inform your team about the [health benefits of taking breaks](#). Stepping away from work can boost energy levels and mental well-being. Regular breaks, including lunch, are crucial for maintaining stable blood sugar levels and overall brain function. Highlighting these benefits can make employees more inclined to prioritize their break times.

### Create a Break-Friendly Culture

Shifts in workplace culture can cause employees to skip breaks. Many workers feel they must finish their tasks or fear judgment from their supervisors. Foster a culture where breaks are seen as essential rather than a sign

of slacking off. Communicate that taking breaks is a valued practice that supports long-term productivity and well-being.

### Provide Comfortable Spaces

Consider investing in your break areas to make them more inviting. A well-stocked and comfortable break room can encourage employees to take breaks. One study revealed that nearly [60% of employees](#) would be more likely to take breaks if they had access to a pleasant break room, and 76% said such spaces help them relax and decompress.

### Model the Behavior

As a leader, your behavior sets the tone for the team. Take your lunch breaks and encourage your team to do the same. This can help normalize the practice and reduce the stigma of taking breaks.

### Encourage Flexibility

Allow employees the flexibility to take breaks when they need them. Studies have shown that autonomy in taking breaks leads to better goal achievement and increased energy levels. Trust your team to manage their break times in a way that works best for them.

### Set Boundaries

Encourage employees to block out time on their calendars for lunch and ensure they feel empowered to use it. Clear communication about availability and setting boundaries around break times can help your team manage their schedules more effectively.

Encourage your team to step away from their desks and take time to recharge—it's a small change that can be a powerful tool for maintaining a healthy and effective work environment. Fostering a culture that values breaks may improve your team's well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction.

*– HR Manager*

## Workplace Culture | Embracing No-Meeting Fridays

As companies strive to enhance productivity and employee well-being, No-Meeting Fridays is gaining traction. This initiative aims to tackle the inefficiencies associated with frequent meetings and create a more focused work environment.

Without the constant interruptions of meetings, employees can experience improved focus, reduced stress, and higher productivity. [Studies have shown](#) that giving employees uninterrupted time can enhance their ability to complete tasks efficiently and creatively.

Here's how you can implement and benefit from No-Meeting Fridays.

### Create a No-Meeting Culture

Foster a workplace culture that values uninterrupted work time. Communicate the importance of No-Meeting Fridays and encourage all team members to respect this practice. By establishing clear expectations and

promoting a culture of focused work, you can [help your team make the most of their time](#). As a leader, you can set a positive example for your team when you avoid scheduling or attending meetings on Fridays and use the time for your focused work.

### Provide Guidelines and Support

To ensure the success of No-Meeting Fridays, encourage employees to schedule meetings on other days and to use Fridays for deep work, project completion, and personal development. Offer resources and tips on managing time effectively and prioritizing tasks during these focused work periods.

### Encourage Autonomy

On No-Meeting Fridays, allow employees the flexibility to manage their work in a way that suits them best. Trust your team to use this time effectively for deep work, planning, or catching up on tasks. Providing autonomy can lead to increased job satisfaction and better overall performance.

### Measure and Share Success

Regularly assess the impact of No-Meeting Fridays on productivity, engagement, and employee well-being. Use surveys and feedback to gather insights and make necessary adjustments. Share success stories and data with your team to highlight the positive outcomes and reinforce the value of this practice.

Implementing No-Meeting Fridays can boost productivity and job satisfaction. By prioritizing focused work time, your team can achieve better results and enhance well-being. Embrace this strategy to foster a healthier, more efficient workplace. Encouraging employees to step away from constant meetings and focus on meaningful tasks can improve job satisfaction and business outcomes and help employers attract and retain talent.

## Employee Benefits | Offering Financial Wellness

Financial wellness is essential to employee satisfaction and organizational success in the rapidly evolving modern workplace. Financial wellness benefits can alleviate employee stress, leading to increased productivity, reduced turnover, and a more engaged workforce.

### Understanding Financial Stress and Its Impact

According to the [2023 Workplace Benefits Report from Bank of America](#), only 42% of employees rate their financial wellness as good or excellent, the lowest since 2010. This decline is mainly due to rising interest rates, inflation, and economic uncertainty. While 96% of employers feel somewhat or extremely responsible for their employees' financial wellness, only 40% offer financial wellness programs. Financial stress can lead to health problems and decreased productivity, making it imperative for employers to address this issue.

### Creating Effective Financial Wellness Programs

Effective financial wellness programs start with understanding employee needs. Amazon, for instance, surveyed its workers about their financial health and the benefits they found most helpful. This approach led to the creation of a global financial health team in 2022, which has significantly improved savings rates and overall value for employees. The program's high employee ratings further indicate [its success in reducing financial stress](#).

## Key Components of Financial Wellness Programs

- Employer-Sponsored Retirement Plans: Offering defined contribution retirement plans, such as 401(k)s, can help employees save for retirement. The Secure 2.0 Act, effective January 1, 2024, [allows employers to match contributions based on student loan payments](#), easing the burden on employees.
- Safety Net Insurance: Providing life and disability insurance gives employees financial protection in case of unforeseen events, enhancing their sense of security.
- Emergency Expense Help: Emergency savings accounts (ESAs) and payroll advances help employees manage unexpected expenses, bridging financial gaps for employees who lack adequate emergency funds.
- Financial Education and Planning: Offering financial education services, including coaching, workshops, and online tools, empowers employees to make informed financial decisions, crucial for improving overall financial health.
- Support for Living Expenses: Benefits like health savings accounts (HSAs), caregiver support, daycare subsidies, and college fund assistance can significantly reduce employees' cost of living, contributing to their financial stability.

## Avoiding Common Pitfalls

When developing financial wellness programs, it's crucial to avoid common mistakes such as:

- Trying to do too much too fast: Gradual implementation allows for adjustments and improvements.
- Failing to understand employee needs: Tailoring programs to employees' specific needs ensures they are effective.
- Lack of measurable goals: Setting clear objectives and metrics helps track progress and success. Employers should measure the impact of financial wellness programs on employees and the business to gauge their effectiveness.

Offering financial wellness benefits is a strategic way to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational health. By addressing financial stress, employers can create a more supportive and productive work environment, ultimately leading to better business outcomes. Embrace financial wellness programs as a critical component of your employee benefits package to foster a healthier, more engaged workforce. As financial wellness benefits grow in popularity, they become an increasingly attractive tool for recruiting and retaining top talent.

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