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GUEST COLUMN: The Value of Getting it Right: Why Employers Can't Afford to Stay Silent

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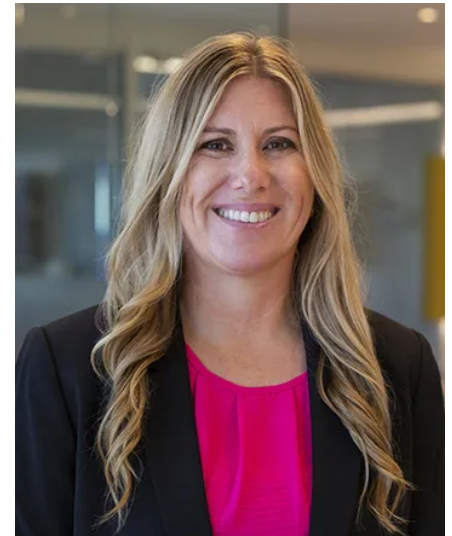


From health care to hospitality, employers are facing an uphill battle to attract and retain employees in industries where competition is fierce. Organizations are offering competitive pay and benefits, yet many still struggle with turnover and disengagement.

Why? Too often, employees don't fully understand or appreciate the investment being made in their total rewards package.

Consider this: employers now spend an average of \$16,804 per employee, per year, on health care alone, according to the 2025 Momentum Report. For a 100-person company, that's nearly \$1.7 million dollars annually.

Despite the significant investment organizations make in employee benefits, only a small fraction of that budget is typically devoted to communicating their value to employees. In other words: employers are making one of their biggest investments in employees but not always communicating it in a way that people see or value.



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Retention at Risk

The data backs it up. When employees don't understand the value of their benefits, engagement drops, turnover rises, and benefit dollars go underutilized. According to LinkedIn research, replacing a leaving worker can cost an employer 1.5 to 2 times their annual salary. Beyond the financial hit, poor communication erodes trust, fuels disengagement, and weakens your ability to retain and attract top talent.

Silence sends the wrong signal. When employees rarely hear about their benefits, they may assume leadership doesn't value them, or worse, that nothing meaningful is being offered. That perception gap can push employees to look elsewhere for what they think is "better," even if those benefits already exist within your organization.

Layer on top of that today's shifting workforce demographics, and the one-size-fits-all approach to benefits simply doesn't work anymore. Different generations value different things—whether it's flexible scheduling, student loan assistance, family benefits, or robust retirement planning. Employees want choice, personalization, and a sense of ownership in their total rewards package. Without clear, ongoing communication that highlights how benefits align to diverse needs, organizations risk losing ground in both retention and recruitment.

Research from the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) shows that organizational culture and benefits are deeply intertwined. In fact, the same research shows that employees who rate their culture as good are nearly 3.8 times more likely to recommend their company to others. It's no secret, employees in positive cultures are more productive, healthier and less likely to leave.

Approaching Benefits with Intention

Marketing your benefits isn't about flashy campaigns, it's about consistent, clear communication that helps employees understand the value of what you're offering, and how you are investing in them! Without a clear strategy, benefits often end up as a missed opportunity.

With a more intentional approach, organizations can close this gap. Communicating those benefits is just as intentional. That process moves through four phases:

- **Objectives and Budget** – Anchor benefits to your organization’s core values and financial commitment. What does your workforce need, and how much are you truly willing to invest?
- **Formulate** – Listen to employees. Surveys, focus groups, and demographic analysis uncover needs that generic benchmarking misses.
- **Design** – Go beyond “traditional” health and retirement plans. A modern total rewards strategy considers affordability, generational needs, family structures, and evolving expectations. This isn’t a one-year decision, it’s a multi-year roadmap.
- **Communicate** – Benefits only create value if employees understand and appreciate them. Leading organizations bring the same intentionality to internal communication that they do to external marketing.

Communicating the Value

Think of benefits like a product you want employees to use. When they understand them, awareness, appreciation, and engagement all go up. Innovative plan design helps you stay competitive, but even the best benefits don’t matter if employees don’t know how to use them. That’s why year-round communication, not just at open enrollment, is key to making sure employees truly see and value their total rewards.

Effective communication should consider:

- **Employee Awareness** – Are employees actively made aware of their total benefits package? Do applicants easily find benefits information on your website?
- **Communication Methods** – Is information shared only during enrollment, or through ongoing channels such as an online portal, emails, videos, or in-person sessions? Are there incentives for employees to engage with their benefits?
- **Communication Budget** – Is there a dedicated line item for benefits communication? If you’re spending \$1.7 million a year on benefits, what portion is invested in ensuring employees understand and use them?
- **Workplace Reputation** – Are candidates and employees seeing the full value of your benefits through recruiting materials, careers pages, and sites like Glassdoor?

Employers who market their benefits to their employees will see higher utilization, stronger employee satisfaction, and lower turnover. Employees feel supported and valued, while employers maximize the return on one of their largest investments.

Organizations who modernize and align their total rewards strategy not only win with recruitment in the short term, but they also build resilience in the future. We predict that within the next five years, companies who actively invest in *communicating* their benefits strategy will outperform peers in retention by as much as 20%.

Key Takeaways

Benefits are one of your largest expenses. If you don’t align them with culture and communicate them with intention, you’re leaving value—and talent—on the table. With the right strategy and execution, communication transforms benefits from a cost into a tangible tool for retention, engagement, and recruitment.

Don’t let your benefits go unnoticed. Contact your M3 Client Executive today to design and implement a communication strategy that ensures your workforce sees—and values—the investment you’re making in them.

[View the full article here.](#)

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