

Survey results: Creative ways to provide “employee perks”



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This is the eighth in a series of “Management Pulse” articles written by members of your Management Services Committee. The “Pulse” program strives to bring useful information to managers and owners to prepare them for the daily struggles in our industry. The committee has developed the “Pulse” surveys to gather data from member participants to help get a flavor for what our industry is currently doing in several areas. The articles summarize the findings from these surveys.

Our employees — our most valuable asset — are retained in some part because of the benefits and perks we provide. In competing labor pools we must be creative in the fringe benefits and perks we provide.

Those companies in markets with depressed economies may have an easier time hiring and retaining good employees. However, some markets with high industrial growth and lower than normal unemployment numbers will have to compete for employees.

Fortune 500 companies and many others have the ability to pay higher wages. Some even provide platinum health care plans with little or no cost to the employee. Vacation plans can stretch to 3-5 weeks or more that many in our industry just can't touch.



Bradleys', Inc. provides employees with a fitness gym with more than 30 pieces of workout equipment.

Alternatives to “high end” benefits

It is difficult for many of us to compete with these “high end” benefits. However, what we can do is provide a personal touch with less-expensive, but much appreciated benefits. The family environment, missing in those large companies, is normal in so many of the companies in this industry. Simple actions, such as knowing employee names and engaging in a little non-business dialog now and then goes a long way to make them feel like a significant part of the company.

Our most recent Management Pulse survey focused on “employee perks.” Here are some of the highlights from the 122 respondents in the survey:

- 85% provide uniforms for their employees.
- Less than half provide a steel toed shoes allowance. For those that do, the allowance ranges from a few dollars to complete coverage for one pair per year; \$100-\$150 per year appears to be a good average.
- Prescription safety glasses are covered (through an annual allowance) by 45% of the respondents. The allowance runs from a few dollars to complete coverage; the average is from \$100-\$200.
- 38% provide some form of a wellness program. At Bradleys', we have taken our wellness program to a new level. We have a trainer on staff in our Human Resources department. We have dedicated 2200 square feet to a fitness gym with 30+ pieces of workout equipment (see photo). We engage our employees in a very comprehensive wellness program. We have several great case histories where we have helped employees identify personal health issues. We have coached and supported them to lead healthier lives.
- 70% provide reimbursement for training.
- Long term disability insurance is paid for by 37% of respondents. I recommend

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- you look into this type of insurance as it is very inexpensive. This insurance kicks in after 90 days. This insurance can take care of loyal employees and limit the need for company intervention.
- Short term disability insurance is paid for by 52% of respondents.

Contribute to sense of family

Company parties, civic events and community gatherings are all great ways to pull your employees together. Barbecue for lunch, Friday after-work social hours and weekend gatherings all contribute to that sense of family.

Unlike some jobs, our people must perform. To show our appreciation for their efforts, we must engage, we must respect and we must connect with our employees. Your management teams must be trained to acknowledge the needs of today's work force. I have heard in more than one discussion that people quit managers, not jobs. If you struggle in a particular department to retain employees, look at the actions of the supervisor(s).

Many of us “bleed company colors.” The task at hand as owners and managers is to perform a “transfusion” to have more employees as part of these valuable groups. At Bradleys', we call it “Bleed Bradleys' Blue.” As our seasoned work force retires and moves on, we must continue to fill the employee pipeline for growth and onset of attrition.

EASA's Management Services Committee appreciates those members who took the time to participate in our Management Pulse survey. ●