



# THE STRATEGIC LINK™

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## Retention now the Top Benefits Objective

*BenefitNews.com February 27, 2007*

For the first time in five years, employee retention has trumped cost control as employers' No. 1 benefit objective.

A new MetLife study shows that 55% of employers rank retention as their top benefits goal. The percentage was even higher among companies in certain industries, including retail (62%) and services (59%).

"This is a significant change," says Ronald Leopold, MetLife vice president of international business. "We're at a tipping point. We've gone from a buyer's market to a seller's market where benefits are

becoming a much more important lever to use in attracting the best talent and retaining people."

The value of the benefits level is clearly shown by the link between benefits satisfaction. Among employees who are highly satisfied with their benefits, 80% express strong job satisfaction now, up from 65% in 2005. "Benefits satisfaction, job satisfaction, retention and business success are cascading events that depend on one another," Leopold confirms.

However, many employers are missing the opportunity



to increase employees' benefits satisfaction. Only 33% of workers feel strongly that their company effectively educates them on their benefits options. "Total compensation statements can be a simple, but effective tool for communicating value to employees," MetLife states.

## Workers spend less time on benefits than taxes

*BenefitNews.com 3/15/07*

American workers are short-changing benefits decisions and possibly making hasty choices, a study by the Guardian Life Insurance Co. finds.

Employees spent 1.4 hours examining their benefits options during open

enrollment last year, while they spent 4.9 hours on holiday shopping, 2.8 hours working on taxes and 2.7 hours preparing for Thanksgiving.

Some employers probably would argue benefits selection is a no-brainer.

About 71% of workers admitted it was "easy" to select benefits while 21% said it was "difficult." But when asked about basics regarding group, individual and disability coverage, employees were in the dark. About 70% of employees said they

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## Insurance Information for Spanish-speakers

Employers with many Spanish-speaking workers may want to take not of a new resources on benefits and insurance topics. To help educate Spanish-speaking consumers on various types of insurance, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners recently launched a new Spanish –

language website that employers and workers can use.

Insure U, <http://www.insureuonline.org/index.htm>, is organized according to life stage to help consumers get information about insurance and understand their

evolving needs. The goal is to make the Spanish-speaking population well-versed on basic information about health, life, auto and renters/homeowners insurance.

This site is available in English and Spanish.

*(BenefitNews.com 1/20/07)*

## Get Paid to Lose Weight

In an attempt to hold down spiraling health-care costs, many companies are paying employees to lose weight or get in better shape. Employers are doling out bonuses, insurance discounts, vacation days and even gift cards.

Highmark, a Pennsylvania Blue Cross/Blue Shield licensee, offers a health and fitness program called Lifestyle Returns that pays \$225 each year to employees agreeing to medical assessments and free health and nutrition coaching. The

program is open to all employees, whether they are fit or fat. Because as Highmark Vice president Anna Silberman puts it, not only do they want to move people from high to low risk, they also want to “keep low-risk at low risk.”

“We know that 70% of chronic conditions are preventable,” Silberman says. “If we can prevent adverse health effects, this is a win for the insurance company and a win for the employee.”

Freedom One Financial Group, a Michigan provider of 401(k) plans, jump-started its fitness program in 2005 by offering a free four-day cruise to Jamaica for employees who met certain weight loss or body fat reduction goals. At the end of the three-month challenge, 36 of its 70 employees had together lost 310 pounds, and 21 employees were given the free cruise. Now that so many of its employees are participating in its wellness challenges, it has begun offering more great prizes.

*(MSN by Melinda Fulmer 3/21/07)*

## Firm creates innovative work-life program

Accounting firm RSM McGladrey has taken a unique approach toward helping its employees achieve a positive work-life balance. It requires them to include a personal goal along with their professional goals at the start of each year.

Supervisors help employees strive for their

personal goal, whether it's competing in a triathlon, taking that ever-elusive dream vacation or simply attending a child's birthday party.

“We wanted to give employees permission to talk about their work-life needs,” said Teresa Hopke, director of work-life strategies. RSM McGladrey

conducted exit interviews which revealed that employees were intimidated to ask about work-life benefits.

She estimated that that 65% of the 7,500 employees participate in the program, which started in 2004 as a part of a pilot project involving 200 workers.

*(BenefitNews 2/27/07)*



**Our greatest  
glory is not in  
never falling  
but in rising  
every time we  
fall.**

**-Confucius**

## Retention, Top Objective

*(Continued from page 1)*

Other key findings include:

- Seventy percent of employees would be interested in having their employer offer a consumer-driven health plan.
- Forty-nine percent of companies offer executive benefits now, up from 39% in 2004.
- Sixty-three percent of employers expect to increase spending on retiree benefits over the next five years, up from 27% in 2004.

- Thirty-seven percent of employers offered financial planning as a benefit in 2005.
- Thirty percent of employers cited benefit administration outsourcing as an important cost-reducing strategy in 2006, up from, 24% in the previous two years.

MetLife polled 1,514 benefits decision makers and 1,202 employees.

(BenefitNews.com, December 2006)

## Less time on benefits than taxes

*(Continued from page 1)*

understood the differences between group and individual life insurance. Oddly enough, about half of those employees incorrectly said a medical exam was mandatory in order to purchase group life insurance.

Employees turn to several sources for help with benefit choices. 50% of workers read the benefits brochures, while 42% spoke with a HR representative and 36% met with a benefit advisor. However, only 45% of workers discussed benefit options with family members, Guardian notes.

## Wonderful Website

<http://www.usatf.org/routes/map/>

This is the USA Track and Field website. The link above takes you to the best and most unique part of the website.

This website will help you track a route anywhere in the

US. All you have to do is select the city and state or zip code. You can select a map, satellite or hybrid view. I recommend using the hybrid view because it is a real picture of the landscape with the names of the streets and highways.

You draw your route with your mouse and it automatically calculates the distance.

This will help if you are looking to track miles or are just wondering how far you walked.

Check it out!!!



"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

## The B&A Buzz

B&A is welcoming a new team member, Kyle Pionek, Client Relations Manager.

Kyle comes to us with over seven years of financial services and insurance industry experience. He is

Series 7, Series 63 and Life & Health licensed.

Kyle has a Bachelors degree in Business Administration from Marquette University.



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*just good business.*

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Check out our website  
at [www.burkwald.com](http://www.burkwald.com)*

## THE IMPORTANCE OF NEWSLETTERS

- **71%** of organizations provide a newsletter.
- **72%** are prepared by in-house staff.
- The most popular distribution method was mailing to homes, **56%**.
- Top issues covered include benefits (**88%**), organization news (**72%**), health or wellness tips (**62%**), messages from the CEO or president (**52%**) and retirement planning (**50%**).

Source:  
International  
Foundation of  
Employee Benefit Plans

