

Maryland Nonprofits

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT ALTERNATIVES THAT COST LITTLE OR NOTHING

In these times of economic turmoil, how can we “do more with less” to increase our effectiveness at recruiting and retaining talented employees? Human resource personnel must work harder than ever to implement low cost or no-cost benefits to ensure that employees are attracted to the organization, and are motivated to stay. This list will provide you with ideas that can, in many instances, be easily implemented at any organization.

- **Trainings**

Employees want to learn and develop their talents and skills. Offering them the opportunity to take the time to attend trainings, seminars and conferences, will help your employees diversify their talents which in turn benefits the organization.

- **Commuter Assistance**

Whether assisting employees with carpooling, or subsidizing the costs of mass transit (with a tax credit available [here](#)), this benefit can help your employees start the day less frazzled, more ready to work, and grateful to their employer for caring about the environment and helping to pay for a major personal expense of employment.

- **Dressing Business Casual**

Most employees prefer dressing more casually at work; it can help them feel more relaxed, as well as part of a team. Moreover, khakis and slacks are almost always less expensive than suits and dress clothing.

- **Telecommuting**

Telecommuting is a popular benefit and is coveted by many employees. While offering telecommuting options may not work for all nonprofits (especially the human service-based organizations), providing such an option is an innovative way to attract employees.

- **On site flu shots**

Offering flu shots is a way to ensure a healthier workforce, and a more productive workforce (employees won't need to take time from their workday to get a flu shot). This is a benefit that has rapidly been growing in popularity.

- **Compressed Work Week/Flex Scheduling**

Work time and workday flexibility are top selections by employees who are surveyed about the benefits that they would most appreciate at their workplace. Given the high price of gas, more and more organizations are contemplating a switch to nontraditional workdays and workweeks. Whether allowing for 4-10 hour days or allowing employees to keep a schedule other than 9-5, organizations adopting these types of policies will

likely reap the reward of higher employee job satisfaction, increased productivity, and a lighter carbon footprint, without having to spend additional cash on a new benefit.

- **Floating Holidays**

Most organizations identify nine to twelve paid holidays that employees may take off each year. Of course, those identified holidays rarely include some very important religious occasions but typically include President's Day and Columbus Day. To accommodate employees' various religious beliefs, employers can offer an attractive alternative to employees by designating some of the identified holidays as "floating holidays." Designating floating holidays will allow employees to work on the "floating holiday," and take off a different day that has more significance to the employee.

- **Benefits to Domestic Partners/Significant Others**

Ensuring that all people can get health care for their significant other, no matter their sexual orientation, is now required under law in many states, including Maryland, if you have more than a certain number of employees. Providing coverage options for all employees and their partners is yet another way to demonstrate to your employees that they are valued members of the team.

- **Counseling**

Be it legal, pre-retirement, financial, or health, this is a benefit that is easy to offer to your employees, frequently at no cost or very little cost. Nonprofits may be able to get a discount on such services or join group plans that are very affordable.

- **Bring your _____ to work and other fun activities**

Be it "Bring your pet to work day," an afternoon movie, or some other cost-effective but fun reward, small things really do make a difference. Having a workplace which is seen as an enjoyable and welcoming place to employees can increase productivity, strengthen workplace relationships and make retaining employees, as well as internal references for new hires, all that much easier.

RESOURCES:

- <http://business.marylandtaxes.com/taxinfo/taxcredit/commuter/default.asp>
- <http://www.caliperonline.com/solutions/turnover.shtml>
- http://www.diversitycentral.com/business/recruitment_retention.html
- <http://www.entrepreneur.com/humanresources/compensationandbenefits/article171630.html>
- <http://www.itbusinessedge.com/item/?ci=36135>
- <http://www.smsearch.com/newsletter/1206.html>