

WORKPLACE TECHNOLOGY TRENDS

3rd Quarter 2021

Changing Technology and Benefits Administration

Variations of virtual open enrollment are among the many ways to make employee benefits adaptable. Technology doesn't fully remove the human aspect from HR, but it can certainly enhance it. When employers use technology to create efficiencies in their benefits administration, HR professionals can shift their focus from administrative tasks to actual employees. As such, the overall workplace experience may be improved.

Technology-based Trends

As the future of benefits administration goes digital, here are some technology trends for employers to monitor:

- **Using robotic process automation (RPA) to streamline processes—** Chatbots and other artificial intelligence (AI) elements can remotely guide employees through benefits enrollment, medical plans, retirement savings and financial wellness. RPA technology ranges from easily accessible online tools to custom applications.
- **Bundling robotic-process-as-a-service (RPaaS) to administer benefits—** Going a step beyond AI, RPaaS combines automation and cloud-based platforms so users can access applications on shared computing systems. Employers can reduce tedious rule-based processes, which allows employees to focus on higher-value work.
- **Leveraging data for cost-saving potential—** Benefits administrators and employers can use data and analytics to lower health care costs and provide custom experiences.

Digital tools and thoughtful user experiences will matter now more than ever. As feasible, employers can seize the opportunity now and design a good benefits technology platform that engages and connects employees to each other and the company.

The Rise and Influence of the Hybrid Work Model

Work flexibility is consistently cited as a post-pandemic trend. Some employers are already introducing hybrid work models in their reopening plans and exploring how technology can support a sustainable hybrid workplace.

A Mercer survey revealed the following insights from U.S. employers:

- 73% plan to implement a hybrid work environment.
- 42% plan to focus managerial and employee training on leading and working in a virtual or hybrid environment.
- 29% of employers say remote workplace setup is their top priority for sustainable execution.

Hybrid workplaces have been and will continue to be a catalyst for increased focus on improving the overall employee experience. These adjustments will be critical to employee retention. Additionally, as workforces are relying more on communication tools, collaboration platforms, human capital management software and corporate wellness software, hybrid work is expected to result in an increased investment in technology and cybersecurity. Integrated workplace technologies can provide a seamless employee experience and deliver real business outcomes.

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