

Employers widen view of inclusion and diversity to include workplace culture and benefit programs

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ARLINGTON, VA, April 9, 2019 – Employers are taking a broader view of inclusion and diversity, and a growing number are now embedding their inclusion and diversity objectives into workplace culture and benefit programs, (e.g., health care, retirement, voluntary benefits and perks), as well as employee pay and wellbeing initiatives. This, according to research from leading global advisory, broking and solutions company Willis Towers Watson's (NASDAQ: WLTW) 2019 Emerging Trends in Health Care Survey.

“Employers today understand the importance of inclusion and diversity for their talent and business performance more than any previous point in history,” said Rachael McCann, senior director, Health and Benefits, Willis Towers Watson. “They also recognize that inclusion and diversity cannot exist in a vacuum. It needs to be built for each organization’s unique and diverse workforce and woven into the fabric of their culture, benefits, pay and workplace policies.”

Over the last three years, a majority of employers (55%) have taken steps to communicate their inclusion and diversity initiatives as they pertain to workplace culture and policies, while nearly three-quarters (73%) indicate they intend to do so over the next three years. Similarly, just over half (51%) have promoted inclusion and diversity endeavors aligned with their benefit programs over the past three years, with more than two-thirds (68%) aiming to do so in the next three years.

Attracting and retaining talent (82%) and driving employee engagement (62%) are overwhelmingly the most important factors behind employers taking action to promote inclusion and diversity within their workforce.

“The need to recruit, retain and engage diverse talent in a highly competitive labor market will only accelerate activity over the coming years,” continued McCann. “Yet, it isn’t the only reason. We also expect other advantages, such as broader perspectives, better environmental, social and governance metrics, stronger brand recognition and improved corporate sustainability to deepen organizations’ commitment to inclusion and diversity. Simply put, inclusion and diversity has become a top focus of the C-suite, given the clear link between diverse talent and improved business results.”

Leave of absence programs will continue to be a starting point to reinforce inclusion and diversity through benefits. In fact, three-quarters (75%) of respondents have either taken actions on their leave of absence programs or plan to this year or next, giving more employees opportunity to balance their unique work/life situation. “To have real impact, these enhanced policies should live in an inclusive culture that permits employees of all types to access the benefits,” said McCann.

Employers ranked their top inclusion and diversity priorities over the next three years as financial planning, e.g., health, emergency savings, retirement (37%); core medical and/or pharmacy benefits (30%); maternity & family planning/infertility benefits (27%); and mental health and substance abuse treatment (27%).

“As employers look for inclusion and diversity levers that will generate the progress we need, they shouldn’t overlook benefits, where they’ll find several important opportunities to support the diverse needs of different workforce segments, bring to life the attributes of an inclusive culture, and deliver a sustainable human capital model to enhance performance,” concluded McCann.

About Emerging Trends in Health Care Survey

The Willis Towers Watson Emerging Trends in Health Care Survey was completed by 535 U.S. employers in January 2019. The respondents collectively employ 5.5 million employees and operate in all major industry sectors. Results provided are based on employers with at least 100 employees.

About Willis Towers Watson

Willis Towers Watson (NASDAQ: WLTW) is a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company that helps clients around the world turn risk into a path for growth. With roots dating to 1828, Willis Towers Watson has 45,000 employees serving more than 140 countries and markets. We design and deliver solutions that manage risk, optimize benefits, cultivate talent, and expand the power of capital to protect and strengthen institutions and individuals. Our unique perspective allows us to see the critical intersections between talent, assets and ideas – the dynamic formula that drives business performance. Together, we unlock potential.

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