BENEFITS

Many small-business owners mistakenly believe they cannot afford to offer benefits. But while going without benefits may boost your bottom line in the short run, than penny-wise philosophy could strangle your business's chances for long-term prosperity. Providing benefits is an investment in your employees, and your employees are what make your business. When you do not provide benefits, you increase the risk of low morale, high turnover, and negative reviews. Moreover, you are less likely to get high quality candidates who are willing to accept the position.

Although medical, dental, and retirement are among the most common major benefits. There are a number of benefits that can increase your attractiveness to high quality candidates. These can include:

* Medical, Dental, Vision
* PTO
* Flexible work schedules
* Maternity/Paternity Leave
* Tuition Reimbursement
* Pet Insurance
* Student Loan Repayment
* Employee Assistance Program
* Life Insurance
* Disability Insurance
* Retirement Plans (401K)
* Flexible Spending Accounts
* Unemployment compensation
* Worker’s compensation
* FMLA

There are other simple benefits that can make an employee feel valued and appreciated. These are not costly, but can make a significant different in the morale and retention of employees. One example is a birthday bonus. Each employee gets $100 simply because it is their birthday. Now consider that you have 50 employees. This would be a cost of $5000 per year. If your business is profiting $100,000 or even millions, a $5000 expense is a nominal cost, and certainly one that is tax deductible. Yet for such a small cost, staff can look forward to their special day knowing they will have a little something extra to go out to dinner or buy something they’ve been unable to afford. Here is a list of low cost benefits:

* Birthday bonus
* Flexible work hours
* Remote working (work from home)
* Company training and professional development
* Paid sabbatical
* Discount programs (i.e. gym memberships, cell phone plans, restaurants etc)
* Break room snacks
* Pet friendly office
* Paid time off to vote
* Commissions
* Gratuities

Of course, it never hurts to investigate what your own employees want – perhaps, they have different needs than workers in other industries or locations. Ask for feedback via email or create online surveys. Also, some employers pay attention to the demographics of your employees to give everyone the benefits they need most based on their characteristics. For example, in order to retain and engage Millennials, businesses may offer them benefits such as student loan repayment support and co-sign support for auto loans.

Benefits do cost money, but they are a necessary investment as any other aspect of your business. The benefits of productivity, high morale, low retention, among others are sufficient cause to invest in benefits for your employees. But, not every benefit has to create heavy financial burdens for companies. Employees’ needs may change. Offering free lunches and gym memberships is great for younger employees. But, as they grow older and have families, flexible hours and parental leave might be more important. Listen to your employees and make changes when needed.