



THE EMPLOYER PLAYBOOK

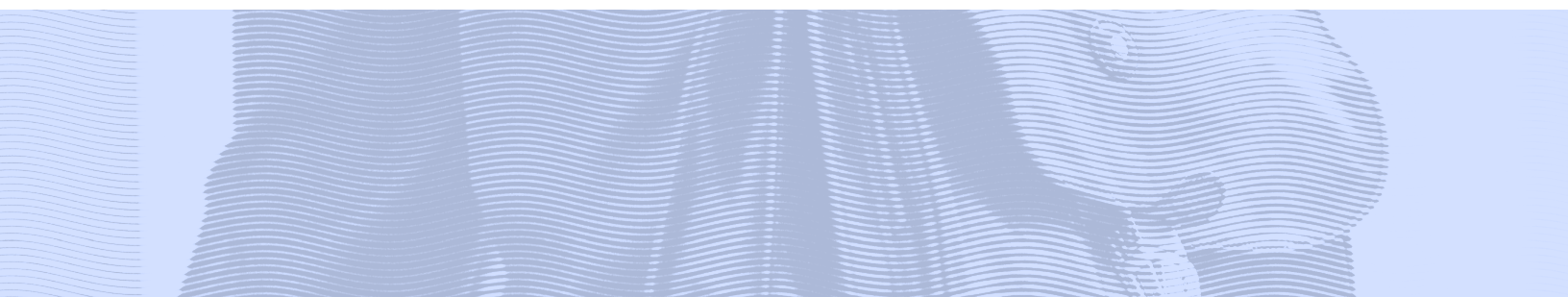
Crafting a winning *retirement and financial* benefits strategy.

A guide to building your workplace savings package
and selecting a provider that helps you stand out.



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The importance of *workplace benefits*.

The right benefits strategy can make or break your business. In today's highly competitive job market, talent is tough to find and even harder to keep. And without a strong workforce, you may be forced to turn down work or scale back operations.

When well-designed and fully utilized by your team, a holistic workplace benefits package can be a true game changer for your business. It can help you:

- ✓ Attract and retain top talent
- ✓ Foster a more engaged, productive, and satisfied workforce
- ✓ Build a strong company culture
- ✓ Support employee financial stability

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94%

of businesses find it “difficult” or “very difficult” to hire workers.¹

0.76

workers are available for every job opening, indicating there is fewer than one worker per role.²

3M+

Americans quit their job each month.³

200%

of an employee's salary is the potential cost to replace them.⁴

¹ Quantifying the Nation's Workforce Crisis – State of American Business 2022 Update | U.S. Chamber of Commerce

² Quantifying the Nation's Workforce Crisis – State of American Business 2022 Update | U.S. Chamber of Commerce

³ Table 4. Quits levels and rates by industry and region, seasonally adjusted | U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁴ 42% of Employee Turnover Is Preventable but Often Ignored | Gallup

The state of *workplace financial wellness*.

Today's workforce is *more financially stressed than ever before*. Inflation, high interest rates, and economic uncertainty have pushed many workers into financial distress, and the impact is making its way into the workplace.

75%

Over 75% of employees are stressed about their finances.⁵

5x

Employees who are financially stressed are five times more likely to be distracted by finances while at work.⁶

2x

Employees with high financial stress are twice as likely to report poor health overall.⁷

At the same time, workers are more financially diverse—each juggling their own priorities, challenges, and goals. While some are focused on retirement, others are managing student debt, saving for a child's education, or working to build a basic emergency fund.

So, what exactly are today's employees looking for? In short, they are seeking benefits that support their complete financial health.

This guide will walk through the steps to building, implementing, and measuring the success of a modern financial wellness benefits package—one that supports your employees, strengthens your culture, and sets your business up for long-term success.



⁵ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

⁶ TIAA Institute report finds ties between financial stress and mental health | TIAA

⁷ 3 Vicious Cycles: Links Among Financial, Physical And Mental Health | Forbes

An overview of employee demands.

BENEFIT	MARKET DEMAND
Retirement Savings	Employees view workplace retirement savings as essential—85% of workers expect their employer to offer a retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k). ⁸
Emergency Savings	Nearly 60% of individuals don't have enough savings to cover an unexpected \$1,000 expense. Over half of employees would like access to an Emergency Savings Account (ESA) through their workplace. ⁹
Education Savings	With the cost of higher education up by 141% over the past 20 years, employees are looking for ways to plan ahead. ¹⁰ Nearly 75% say a 529 education savings account is important in a workplace benefits package. ¹¹
Student Loan Repayment	Over 40 million Americans carry student debt. ¹² 74% of borrowers agree that they would be more likely to continue working for an employer that offered student loan-related benefits. ¹³
Health Savings	Spending on healthcare has grown by more than 250% over the last 20 years. ¹⁴ Nearly 90% of employees value having a Health Savings Account (HSA) in the workplace to help them tackle medical costs. ¹⁵
Disability Savings	Since launching in 2016, ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Accounts have grown significantly. ¹⁶ 77% of employees who have a family member with a disability say that having a disability savings account is at least somewhat important. ¹⁷

91%

of employees say they would feel more inclined to stay with their current company if it offered financial benefits that met their specific needs.¹⁸



⁸ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

⁹ Most Americans can't afford a \$1,000 emergency expense, report finds | CBS News

¹⁰ Average Cost of College Over Time: Yearly Tuition Since 1970 | Education Data Initiative

¹¹ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

¹² Student Loan Debt Statistics: Average + Total Debt | Education Data Initiative

¹³ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

¹⁴ How has U.S. spending on healthcare changed over time? | Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker

¹⁵ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

¹⁶ ABLE Act – 10 Years of Progress for People With Disabilities | SSA

¹⁷ 2024 Saving Trends Report | Vestwell

¹⁸ State of the Workplace Study 2025 | Morgan Stanley at Work

How employers can meet employee demand.

Employers are being called to expand their benefits package to meet evolving employee financial goals.

The message is clear: when benefits align with what employees value most, loyalty and engagement follow.



“When employees *have access to* a financial wellness package that *supports every stage* of their financial journey, it *makes a real difference* for businesses’ bottom line.”



Kevin Gaston

CPC, QPA®, QKC, QKA®,
TGPC, Head of Strategic
Retirement Consulting

Determining *the right benefits* for your team.

It's clear that the right benefits can make a huge impact on your team and your business as a whole. But how exactly can you determine which perks will be most valuable to your employees?

Gather data about your employees, business, and industry

By taking a closer look at your workforce, business, and industry, you can uncover key insights needed to make informed benefit decisions. Use the following guiding questions to help you get started.

1

Consider the industry your business operates in

Start by considering the specific characteristics of your industry. Ask yourself:

Does your field require advanced degrees or certifications?

Is ongoing education or professional development a norm?

Are wages in your industry traditionally lower or variable?

Does your field include tipped wages for your employees?

2

Review your company census data

Next, take a close look at your workforce demographics. High-level data points can reveal important insights.

Age range and/or career stage

Income levels

Job roles or departments

Family status, if available

3

Survey your employees directly

Employee surveys are an effective way to get actionable insights into what matters most to your team. Consider asking questions like:

What are your top financial priorities today?

Are there any savings options you wish were available to you as an employee?

Where do you currently experience the most financial stress?

What kind of benefits would help you feel more financially secure?

Tip: Many payroll and HR platforms offer built-in survey tools that make it easy to poll your employees. Consider setting up a short survey to gather feedback and identify trends.

Matching the solutions available with the needs of your team.

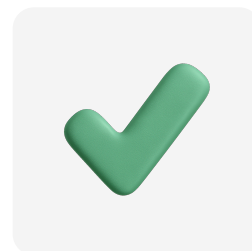
Not all benefits are equally important to every employee. Here's a breakdown of common financial wellness perks and the employee groups they typically serve best:

BENEFIT	MARKET DEMAND
Retirement Savings	Retirement benefits are valuable for employees of all ages. However, it's often a higher priority for mid- to late-career employees, where retirement is on the horizon.
Emergency Savings	Emergency Savings Accounts are beneficial for employees living paycheck to paycheck, hourly or lower-income workers, and those in industries with variable income or off-seasons.
Education Savings	Education Savings Accounts are valuable for employees who are saving for their child or grandchild's education, or for employees in fields that value continuing education and certifications.
Student Loan Repayment	Student Loan Repayment Assistance is relevant for early- to mid-career employees who are facing student debt, particularly in sectors with high education costs, such as law, healthcare, education, and STEM fields.
Health Savings	Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) are well-suited for employees with high-deductible health plans (HDHPs), those with dependents, and individuals managing significant healthcare expenses.
Disability Savings	Disability savings are vital for employees living with a disability or employees who have a family member with a disability. Check to see if you have disability information available in your company census.

Your benefits provider checklist.

The next step in bringing your benefits package to life is selecting the best provider to help you meet your goals.

Here are a few questions to keep in mind as you explore your options, whether you're starting a new plan or making a switch:



● Holistic Benefits



Does the provider have a comprehensive, multi-benefit platform?

A single platform and login for all your workplace savings solutions streamlines the experience for you and your employees and can make offering multiple benefits more cost-effective.

● Payroll Connections



Does the provider offer an integration with your payroll provider?

Payroll integrations streamline administration and save you time by automatically syncing data such as employee contributions and eligibility changes. Verify that the provider offers an integration with your existing payroll system.

● Platform Experience



Does the provider offer an intuitive and user-friendly experience?

Choose a platform that makes it simple for employees to start saving and for you to manage your benefits. When your employees can manage their accounts effortlessly, engagement rises.

● Pricing and Fees



Is pricing transparent and straightforward?

Some platforms make their money off your employees' savings with hidden fees, or they offer teaser terms that increase fees after the first year. Choose a provider that makes their fees known upfront, offers predictable pricing, and grows with you—not against you.

● Service and Support



Does the provider offer personal and responsive support for you and your employees?

A top-tier provider should offer more than an automated helpline. Select a partner that provides dependable, human support and expertise for you and your employees as well as quick access to chat when you need instant answers.

Your benefits provider checklist.

● Administration and Compliance



Does the provider handle day-to-day administrative and compliance tasks as part of their services?

An important consideration is whether the provider offers 3(16) fiduciary services for your plan. This means they take on much of the oversight, accountability, and execution for plan document maintenance, distributions, compliance testing, form filings, and other administrative tasks.

● Employee Education



Does the provider offer comprehensive employee education tools?

Employee education drives participation and engagement. Select a provider that offers robust educational resources, tools, and support for your employees.

● Flexibility and Long-Term Growth



Does the provider make it simple for your plan and benefits to evolve as your business grows?

As your workforce grows, your business expands to new locations, and your needs change, you need a provider that can keep pace. Your provider should offer flexible plan design options and make it easy to add on new benefits and features as you scale.

● Plan Transition



If you're switching providers, will they handle the plan transfer process alongside you?

Changing providers requires coordination between your old provider, new provider, and employees. Choose one that handles the heavy lifting, from managing asset transfer to updating your plan documents, setting up investments, and communicating with employees.

● Investments



Does the provider offer a wide range of investment fund options, or do they limit you to sponsored funds?

Some providers require that your investment lineup include their own funds. You may want to look for a provider that offers investments from multiple financial firms to better diversify and reduce overall costs. Providers who are 3(38) fiduciaries will select and monitor investments on your behalf.

● Data Security & Protection



Will employee data be protected?

Look out for a provider with a track record for prioritizing security. That includes strong regulatory oversight, encrypted data, regular third-party audits, and rigorous internal controls.

The ultimate provider cheat sheet.

There are many factors to consider when selecting a retirement and benefits provider. Get a head start by using the cheat sheet below during your research.

FEATURE	VESTWELL	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU	OTHER PROVIDERS
Service & Support			
Dedicated & Live Support	✓	Always-on support with access to dedicated service specialists via phone, email, and live chat, plus 24/7 AI chat assistance for instant answers.	
Multilingual Accessibility	✓	Vestwell's savings portal is available in 20 languages, and employees can get live call support in 240+ languages.	
Employee Education Resources	✓	Employees can access a help center with over 375 support articles plus curated blogs, enrollment materials, and interactive learning modules within their portal.	
1:1 Onboarding Contact	✓	A dedicated onboarding specialist guides you through plan setup and a smooth launch.	
Accredited Plan Expertise	✓	Our team holds advanced retirement plan and securities industry credentials such as Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) licenses and Qualified 401(k) Administrator certifications.	
Plan Management			
Mobile App	✓	Employees can manage savings on the go, from setting contributions to tracking progress.	
3(16) Fiduciary Administration	✓	Every plan includes full administration services and 3(16) co-fiduciary management with you as the plan sponsor as part of our core services.	
Form 5500 Assistance	✓	Vestwell prepares, signs, and files all government filings for the plan, such as the annual Form 5500.	
Compliance Testing Tools	✓	Plan specialists and portal tools help you streamline compliance, from trackers and mid-year testing simulations to guidance on the latest regulations.	
Robust Payroll Connectivity	✓	Vestwell has deep connectivity with nearly 200 payroll providers, automatically syncing data between your payroll system and retirement portal.	
Third-party Administrator (TPA) Support	✓	Vestwell can support many plan features in partnership with Third Party Administrators (TPA)s for employers with more complex plan needs.	
Data Security	✓	We follow the highest standards to protect employee data and undergo System and Organization Controls (SOC) audits with regulatory bank department oversight.	

FEATURE	VESTWELL	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU	OTHER PROVIDERS
Plan Design			
Safe Harbor Plan Options	✓	These plans allow employers to automatically satisfy certain compliance tests by making required contributions for all eligible employees.	
Profit-sharing & Discretionary Matching	✓	We support flexible options dependent on plan type.	
Student Loan Retirement Match	✓	We allow you to match employee student loan payments with contributions towards their retirement accounts.	
Multi Employer Identification Number (EIN) & Controlled Group Support	✓	We support plans that cover multiple business entities under different EINs and legally related businesses treated as one employer for plan purposes.	
Investments			
3(38) Investment Fiduciary	✓	If Vestwell is the 3(38) fiduciary, we'll act as the investment manager to monitor investments and select plan funds. If you work with a financial advisor, they may take on the 3(38) fiduciary role instead.	
Goal-based Managed Accounts & Self-Directed Brokerage Accounts	✓	These options allow more personalized asset allocation based on retirement goals and investment in a broader range of assets via a linked external brokerage account.	
Pricing			
Employer Base Fee	✓	Vestwell charges a predictable, fixed platform fee as low as \$39/month, making it easier to budget.	
Eligibility-Based Participant Fees	✗	Some providers charge you for every eligible employee, even if they're not participating in the plan. We only charge employees a fee if they have a balance.	
Mandatory Asset-based Platform Fees	✗	Plans may appear free to the employer, but participants often bear the cost through variable asset-based fees that compound as balances grow.	
One-Year Contract Terms	✗	We guarantee a three-year price lock. Some providers may offer teaser terms that increase after the first year.	
The Extras			
Broad Suite of Savings & Benefits	✓	With Vestwell, you can offer many savings benefits—from retirement plans to student loan repayment, education, disability, child, and emergency savings—all on one platform.	
Voluntary Customer Reviews	✓	At Vestwell, all customer reviews across Google, G2, and other websites are voluntary and never paid.	

Why employers *choose Vestwell*.

You need benefits that work with your schedule—not against it. Vestwell helps you launch and manage savings plans with less time, less hassle, and more support.

95% of plans that switch to Vestwell *stay*.¹⁹

Intuitive technology designed for simplicity.



Vestwell's employer portal lets you track contributions, monitor participation, and review eligibility changes in real-time. Plus, employees can enroll in minutes, adjust savings, and access resources—all on the go via mobile app.

“Vestwell has innovated and used technology to make things straightforward and simple. *That's how it should be.*”

Kelli Bagby, Owner, Truly Bookkeeping

Seamless payroll integrations, built to save you time.



Our platform integrates with nearly 200 payroll providers, connecting how your employees earn with how they save. This syncs data between systems, so contributions, eligibility changes, and new hire updates flow automatically.

“Once payroll is processed, Vestwell pulls the information it needs and makes sure everything goes where it needs to go. *I don't do anything! It's like it's on auto-pilot.*”

Sophie DeHenzel, Co-Founder, DeHenzel Training Systems

Support when and how you need it.



You and your workforce can access dedicated support whenever you need with multilingual call assistance and a 24/7 chatbot. Plus, our portal is available in 20 languages, ensuring your benefits are accessible to every employee.

“Any time I've had a question, I send an email, and *I don't think it's ever gone more than 24 hours* without getting a concise, clear answer to my question, which I love! It checks all my boxes.”

Krista Hasinger, Director of People, Row 34

Partner with the platform *built for the future of saving.*

At Vestwell, our mission is simple: to close the savings gap by making saving easier and more connected—so you and your team can focus on what matters most.

350,000+

BUSINESSES POWERED

\$35B+

ASSETS SAVED

1.5M

SAVERS

The partner
you can count on.



From startups to Fortune 500s, employers choose Vestwell for technology that simplifies savings and service that feels like an extension of your team.

“I had a few key partners that contributed to the success of my business, *and Vestwell is definitely one of them.*”

Kelli Bagby, Owner, Truly Bookkeeping



2025 Wealth Management.com
Industry Awards
Winner



Built for the future of saving.

Vestwell combines modern technology with deep industry expertise. Together, we help you offer benefits that work harder—for your people and your business.

Get started →

<https://save.with.vestwell.com/book-a-call>



Vestwell. For the Future.