

what's working

beyond the basics:
employee benefit programs to
elevate health and well-being



by | **Taylor Valée**

Providing Genuine Support in a Culture of Belonging: Tailoring Benefits to Meet Individual Needs

Amid the evolving landscape of today's workplace, prioritizing the needs and well-being of employees has never been more crucial. Corus Orthodontists, a North American network of orthodontic practices founded in 2019, aimed to enhance its benefits program to meet more of the unique benefit needs of its diverse workforce.

The decision to enhance the benefits program was driven by several factors. First, as the organization expanded and diversified, it became apparent that the existing benefits package might not adequately continue to meet the needs of all employees, with team members at different career stages and with varying personal circumstances. Additionally, Corus understood the importance of attracting, retaining and engaging top talent in a competitive market, and organizational leaders believed that offering an appealing benefits package would be integral to achieving this goal.

Corus employed a comprehensive approach to gather information and insights necessary for this revamp. In collaboration with a consulting partner, the company conducted thorough research, including analyzing industry trends, benchmarking against competitors and seeking input from their employees. This approach ensured that the benefits program changes were informed by both external best practices and the specific needs and preferences of the organization's workforce.

Given that Corus is owned and operated by doctor-partners, decision making regarding the benefits program involved a collaborative and

Call to Action

"As employers, it's imperative to lead the way in pioneering innovative benefits and well-being programs to meet the dynamic needs of our workforce. By embracing data-driven decision making, we can forge new paths that align with employee expectations and elevate their overall well-being, setting new standards and empowering employees to thrive in an ever-changing landscape."

Colleen Baker
Vice President, National Enterprise
Group Solutions
People Corporation

consultative process. Decisions regarding specific changes and implementations were made through a combination of leadership discussions, data analysis, and input from relevant stakeholders that included HR professionals and employees themselves. This collaborative approach ensured that decisions were well-informed, reflective of the organization's values and supportive of employee well-being.

To that end, Corus introduced a platform to enhance inclusivity and access to health care and mental health support (People Connect Total Health). The platform includes representation in over 20 languages and ten spiritualities, intelligent therapist matching, and affordable and culturally sensitive content. The content is provided across audio, visual and text-based mediums to accommodate diverse learning preferences and accessibility needs.

Corus' commitment to employee well-being also extends beyond the digital realm, with tangible initiatives designed to leverage the diverse

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talents within its workforce. For instance, Corus actively promotes well-being through initiatives such as its monthly wellness program tailored to different topics, gym membership perks, parental leave top-ups, and orthodontic care for its employees and their dependents.

Furthermore, Corus recognizes the value of its diverse workforce by fostering an inclusive work environment that enhances patient experiences. For example, having multilingual staff members and culturally aware health care providers can significantly improve communication and rapport with patients from various backgrounds, ultimately improving their overall experience and health outcomes.

Leadership Driving Progressive Change

Leading Corus' initiatives, Mary-Joy Mantzios, senior manager of people operations and M&A, and Shaun Childs, vice president of people, culture and communications, shaped the employee benefits and wellness programs to prioritize access to comprehensive health, mental health, and well-being services. They understood that successful implementation required a strategic approach, clear communication, and ongoing education and support.

"We want everyone who joins Corus to be better for it, and that starts with creating an environment where every doctor and team member feels supported, so that they can feel, give and be their best," explains Childs.

Together with the extended leadership team at Corus, Mantzios and Childs harnessed data-driven insights to identify key areas of improvement and tailor solutions to address specific needs within the workforce. For instance, analysis of health-related metrics and utilization patterns revealed areas where the plan was over- and underutilized, such as within paramedical practitioner categories. This approach ensures that the benefit plan design is not only effective but also efficiently allocated, maximizing the impact on employee well-being.

As Corus solicits feedback from its employees through various channels, such as surveys and regular check-ins, this open dialogue allowed the leadership team to gain firsthand

insights into the challenges and preferences of their workforce. For example, feedback regarding the desire for more flexible health care options led to the implementation of tailored coverage options. Employee input also led to the re-evaluation of the health and wellness spending account allocation formula to a tenure-based model, rewarding longer-serving employees with increased allocations to their accounts.

Mantzios and Childs also worked to keep a pulse on industry best practices and emerging trends in employee well-being to help ensure Corus provides solutions that align with the evolving needs of its workforce.

Empowering Employees Through Education

Recognizing the importance of informed decision making, Corus implemented proactive measures to improve employee understanding and engagement with their benefits program. Navigating the complexities of coordinating practices across Canada, Corus conducted multiple virtual education sessions for their nationwide workforce to help employees gain in-depth knowledge about their benefits. These sessions were supplemented by a carefully crafted communication strategy, including a series of teasers, reminder emails, webinar invitations, frequently asked questions and Benefits at a Glance documents, all branded with the organization's identity. The goal of these communications was to help employees make better health care choices based on their personal circumstances, including minimizing out-of-pocket costs while maximizing overall coverage.

Presenting benefits information to team members in a relatable and easily understandable format resulted in minimal questions about the specific plan design, Mantzios added, noting that this approach generated excitement for the array of new digital offerings.

Continuous Evolution

Through rigorous analysis of claims utilization data and insights gathered from employee feedback mechanisms, Corus has since identified other trends and areas for poten-

tial enhancement within its benefit offerings. For example, they noticed patterns indicating a high demand for mental health resources and affordable therapy. Armed with these insights, Corus can further refine its benefit packages to continue to meet the evolving needs and preferences of its workforce.

Embracing data-driven decision making helps companies ensure that their benefit offerings remain relevant and competitive and demonstrates their commitment to improving employee well-being. This proactive approach also enables companies to anticipate and adapt to foster a culture of support and satisfaction.

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