

Will the gaming room continue to be employers' "key resource" or thanks to coronavirus we can expect new benefits and perks?

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The pandemic has changed a lot of things, including the way employers and employees see company benefits. Below we reveal which benefits will IT employees be able to expect now, when working from home is no longer "something special".

Before the whole situation with the coronavirus, working from home was not an option for some employees, or if they had it they could only use it several times a month. However, that benefit and many other perks that employers were especially proud of have meanwhile ceased to be a benefit and have become a new normality.

On the other hand, numerous so-called perks such as table tennis, lunch at work and team building trips have completely lost their value, and employers have found themselves in a situation to rethink what additional benefits and perks can be offered to their potential and current employees.

So, in this situation, what will companies do to attract new candidates? Below, we reveal the employers' "key resources".

If you base your offer on benefits, not on projects, you can't expect positive results in the long run.

The story of benefits and different types of perks begins when companies, in an attempt to attract candidates, realize that they have too many competitors and have to find a way to attract (and retain) top talent.

In that process, each period had its own "key resources" and, as Marko Vidović, Employer Branding and Communication Manager at Engineering Software Lab, adds, the number of IT competitors grew very quickly:

In the first phase, the key was the socializing of employees outside working hours - bowling, rafting, going out. This approach was sufficient when the companies were very small, where in fact all the members know each other. With the expansion of the teams, there was a need for a modern, well-equipped workspace, as well as accompanying facilities such as drinks, fruit, cakes, coffee, etc. Of course, parking spaces were important, too. These initial phases were aimed at creating a space where you don't feel like you're at work.

The next step were definitely "wellbeing packages" - from private health insurance, membership in fitness centers, to private pension funds. With the flexibility of work organization, a work-life balance became a focus. This quickly became the standard, which simply has to be met.

All this, he adds, has effects if the basic needs of the employees are met, i.e. the need for a good project with an appropriate compensation package. If, on the other hand, companies base their offer exclusively on the aspect of benefits, it is difficult to expect positive results in the long run - with which Jasna Novović, HR Specialist at Holycode, agrees. *"It is quite natural that it will be attractive for every employee to have a package of benefits in addition to the salary, but I do not see that as the basic value of an environment,"* she explains and adds:

I will describe it a little more vividly: it is not enough for a student to go to the most popular school where they wear uniforms, organize interesting excursions and provide snacks and lunch every day, if on the other hand the complete curriculum is not good or the student has no one to share snacks with, go on vacation with or have a friend with whom it can achieve great things with.

An example may not be ideal, but the essence should be seen. I believe that the real benefits are in good organization, good distribution of work among employees, in a good and healthy team where there is exchange, understanding and trust, where a person has the opportunity to improve and develop business, where there is care for employees...

On the other hand, as Vedran Opačić, Senior Software Developer at Sysdig, adds, job ads where companies boast of table football, arcade games or Playstation consoles are aimed mainly at the junior market segment, while, in his opinion, most experienced developers do not even read job ads.

Jobs are changed through recommendation or less often, if it happens that the recruiter offers a job that is especially interesting. But, I understand that for someone who has just graduated and is not yet on the recruiter's radar, an ad that says Playstation or table tennis at work is still great.

Experienced are more interested in extra days off, paid private insurance, and I've even seen paid vacations. Even fresh fruit or a paid lunch in the office, in my opinion, improves the quality of life much more than the presence of the Playstation. Or is it just a sign that I am getting old.

What are the benefits and what are the perks?

In that process of market development, companies often mixed benefits and the so-called perks, so we asked our interlocutors how would they make a difference between the two. Vedran explains:

The real benefits would include all the things that can simplify or improve my life during and outside working hours. For example, private health insurance for employees and family members makes people feel safer. Paid parking or garage, if the company is in a zone where parking is otherwise difficult or impossible to find, saves large amount of time and money on a monthly basis. Additional days off certainly contribute to greater rest and thus to employee productivity.

On the other hand, paid workouts or gym, team building activity, team lunches or dinners in restaurants are nice things that certainly contribute to employees feeling that the company cares about them, but do not significantly improve the quality of life.

And indeed, as Jasna adds, additional perks can make a lot easier for an individual, and they can also contribute to the differences of one environment in relation to another. "However, the whole package of attractiveness, which is the part of job offer or presented on platforms where companies are subject to evaluation, only makes sense when we know that it is based on listening to the people we work with," added our interlocutor.

However, all these perceptions of the benefits have changed from the roots with the appearance of the coronavirus, and Marko adds that the pandemic has brought us back to Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs. "The most important thing for us is that our basic needs are met, that we are healthy and capable of creating. Not only us, but also members of our family ", he explains and adds:

In addition, the need for stability and predictability of the situation has been further strengthened. In that sense, numerous standard benefits (such as modern space, coffee, teas, juices, fruits, team building) do not play as important a role as in regular conditions.

The fact is that the pandemic made work from home come on the agenda much earlier than many had planned. The question of the relationship between control and trust was opened, which is why a number of companies used the opportunity to measure the productivity of employees in the new circumstances. Many noticed positive results, which triggered considerations of further work flexibility. In that sense, the pandemic has certainly affected changes of company cultures.

From now on, what will employers focus on when it comes to attracting new candidates?

What could be the key selling point for companies in a pandemic era in trying to attract new candidates or retain employees? Jasna explains:

Personally, I prefer to say "having satisfied and accomplished colleagues", than "to keep an employee", and in this regard I do not think that the key selling point should change if we understand the following essence: people are the core of every system and everything we do

and build with the goal of their satisfaction and fulfillment in the environment in which we welcome them and in which we nurture and value them.

It all has to do with the culture we build, which we really live and we are consistent with the image we strive for, with the opportunities for development we offer, as well as the stability we provide, no matter what we are surprised by. So, from my point of view, a key selling point is something that should not have anything to do with a pandemic, because then the existence of all essential values would be questionable.

Marko also does not expect a drastic change in the company's strategies in the coming months, and considers what follows in the long run to be much more important. "I am convinced that the next step is to personalize the approach towards candidates," he says, explaining:

As e-commerce has transformed the shopping experience, the same is expected to happen in the area of employment. The digital transformation of HR, the growing role of HR analytics, allows us to measure the satisfaction of each individual employee and make data-based decisions. If we apply this to the benefit system, it means designing personalized forms of benefit packages that will meet the needs of each employee. In addition to personalization, the digitalization of business is leading to abandoning traditional ways of organizing work in favor of new, more flexible models.

All together, it will lead to a change in the culture of the companies, i.e. an upgrade of the existing ones. The new culture will have to respond to the challenge of how to maintain a quality relationship between the company and employees even in situations where employees do not share the same physical space.

Until that period comes, Vedran believes that above-average flexibility of work is the best that companies can offer now, as well as additional days off.

"More flexible working hours, where the eight-hour work is not insisted upon, but freedom is given when and how much time the employees will dedicate to work on a given day," he explains and adds:

The lack of perks, on the other hand, can be compensated by salary additions that can be freely used for hobbies and interests, or for various services such as apartment cleaning that bring more free time for the family.

In addition, from the point of view of employees, the weakening of control by companies is definitely a plus if the company is already striving to attract top talent- because responsible and experienced IT professionals will not have much trouble completing all their tasks without control when and how many days worked. Of course, not every company employs exclusively seniors. For beginners who still need advice and guidance, the situation is a little different, but by setting aside and defining regular terms for consultations and progress control, instead of constant communication, it is possible to overcome that to some extent.

In addition, Marko adds, employees will primarily expect stability of projects and companies and transparency in internal communication. "Good projects and technologies, as well as a satisfactory compensation package with private health insurance, will certainly remain important, but will now be joined by flexible work organizations", he explains.

Also, as Jasna adds, in the future, we should find appropriate mechanisms on how to keep that culture and togetherness, even though we are not together in the office, and that, she concludes, will be a challenge for ourselves.