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WHY STAFF BENEFITS ARE GOOD FOR EVERYONE

Many of our clients around the Bay of Plenty work in small to medium sized companies, and the subject of employee benefits has been coming up in conversations quite often recently. Those of us who've lived and worked in other parts of the world are surprised how little this area has been developed in New Zealand – but it feels like things are starting to change.

It's often the case that one employer can't pay a lot more than another to attract and retain staff to do the same kinds of work. Something besides wages needs to be added to the mix. Employee benefits, such as group medical insurance, life insurance, income protection and Kiwisaver schemes can be a cost-effective way for a company to add value to their staff's overall package. Staff members can be provided with considerable peace of mind if they know they can access the best medical treatment available as and when they need it. Especially in cases where public sector waiting lists are lengthy, private medical care not only has particular value to the employee concerned, but from an employer perspective it makes business sense to have a recovered, productive staff member on the team, rather than an ailing employee who is waiting to get to the top of queue.

Retirement comes much more into focus among employees in their forties and fifties. Again, a company-sponsored scheme offers the opportunity for an employer to add value to staff packages, while also benefiting from economies of scale.

One staff benefit often overlooked is that of financial literacy. I'm always amazed how little emphasis is placed on this, both by the education system as well as the corporate sector. Everyone needs to understand the basics of financial planning, risk management and investment if they are to make the most of their incomes – but how many employers ever arrange for information sessions on this vital subject for their staff?

There are, of course, staff benefits which have nothing directly to do with money, including professional development, health and fitness and crèche facilities. Whether you're an employer or employee, bringing up the subject of staff benefits could open a conversation that benefits everyone.

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