

HEATHER BOULGER | INSIDE THE JOB MARKET
Let gratitude be your guide this holiday season



The holiday season offers a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on employees' well-being. Instead of a cocktail party, consider a wellness-themed celebration with yoga classes, chair massages and healthy treats.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas and no doubt the holiday party invitations are already in your inbox. It's time to deck the halls and celebrate the most wonderful time of the year.

Holidays are an integral part of our lives, providing us with valuable time to rest, rejuvenate and spend quality time with our loved ones. It's also the end of the year, when we typically celebrate our annual accomplishments. Be proud of what you have overcome and know that the challenges of today will pave the way for a brighter tomorrow.

'Tis the season to be jolly. But holiday cheer isn't a one-size-fits-all package of joy. For some, the festive season is more like a rollercoaster of emotions, with loops of sadness, anxiety and the occasional stomach-churning drop of depression. For those of us navigating the holiday madness feeling a bit lost or overwhelmed, science has a little nugget of wisdom for you — gratitude.

The term "gratitude" originates from the Latin word "gratia," involving grace, graciousness and gratefulness. And gratitude manages to encompass all of these meanings. Flexing your

gratitude muscles is about navigating the past, present and future with a thankful twist. Reflect on the past, appreciate the current strokes of luck as they come, and maintain a hopeful attitude for the future. Gratitude is a quality you can cultivate like a fine wine or a questionable indoor plant.

Let gratitude be your guide, and in recognizing the beauty woven into everyday existence, watch as the ordinary transforms into the extraordinary.

Ahh, the holidays are upon us. A time of joy, reflection, and, let's face it, a lot more stress. For employers, this season offers a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on employees' well-being by offering thoughtful holiday benefits that truly resonate. Don't let the end of year deadlines and stress make you miss this prime opportunity for fostering connection, showing gratitude, and setting the tone for the year ahead.

Here are a few things to consider for your holiday checklist – to ensure your team feels appreciated, supported, and ready to thrive as the calendar flips to a new year.

- **Mental wellness support:** The holidays may be joyful for many, but they can also be a challenging time for employees balancing personal commitments, financial pressures, and work deadlines. Investing in mental wellness benefits not only helps employees navigate seasonal stress but also demonstrates your commitment to their overall well-being.

- **Seasonal PTO or remote work options:** The gift of time is priceless, and for many employees, time is the most valuable holiday resource. Being creative with work arrangements can help your team handle personal responsibilities while maintaining their work commitments. Consider holiday flex days and customizable schedules to allow even a few extra hours for errands, travel prep, or family time.

- **Winter wellness perks:** Winter brings its own set of challenges – shorter days, colder weather and an uptick in illnesses. Show you care by offering seasonal wellness perks. Sponsor flu shots, provide stipends for gym memberships, or even distribute cozy care

packages with blankets, tea and wellness essentials. Or start a teamwide winter wellness challenge with incentives for hitting hydration goals, taking daily steps, or prioritizing sleep.

- **Giving-back opportunities:** The holiday season is a time for generosity, and employees love working for companies that give back. Sometimes, the most impactful “benefit” is a simple thank you. Consider distributing handwritten notes of appreciation or personalized holiday gifts. Pair these gestures with an end-of-year team lunch or virtual celebration to reinforce the sense of community and connection:

- **Holiday party ideas with a twist:** The traditional office holiday party is great, but why not add a modern twist to make it more memorable? Skip the fancy ballroom and opt for something like an escape room challenge, paint-and-sip, or cooking class. Sponsor a food truck or bring the office to pop-up markets or cultural venues during the holidays. Instead of cocktails, consider a wellness-themed celebration with yoga classes, chair massages and healthy treats.

- **Professional development for the new year:** Help employees start the year strong by investing in their growth. Provide end-of-year access to online learning platforms, skill-building courses, or career coaching. Framing this as a holiday gift emphasizes your commitment to their long-term success.

- **Recharge time for January:** Consider a post-holiday wellness day or half-day in January to help employees reset for the year ahead. A collective day of relaxation can be an energizing gift for the entire team.

Employees are the heartbeat of any organization, and if you act on even one of these suggestions, your employees will be grateful, and you will enter the New Year more fulfilled and optimistic about the future.

The holiday season usually offers time for thoughts about family and the future as we celebrate religious festivals and begin a new year. For people who are unemployed or are concerned about company downsizing, the season can be filled with great uncertainty.

For those who are challenged by unemployment, please know that opportunities can be found during this season. Visit MassHireBerkshireCC.com for assistance on virtual job searching, career planning, job listings, job clubs, workshops on job-search techniques, data on labor market trends, resources to help find the right training opportunities, and tools to help you conduct an effective job search.

Everyone approaches this time of year differently, and dealing with the holiday season at work, as well as at home, can be a strain. Probably the best gift you can give this year is to allow your colleagues the space to celebrate (or not) as they see fit.

Remember to thank your colleagues, vendors and customers for their support over the past year. Being grateful increases happiness and motivation. Take a moment and remember all the good things you accomplished, earned, experienced and discovered in 2025. Celebrate your awesomeness, and have a peaceful and bright new year!

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