



Whitepaper

The deskless dilemma:

engaging the “hard-to-reach”
workforce



Introduction: it's time to engage the deskless worker

Long before the pandemic, organisations depended on a remote workforce that has often proved difficult to engage. They typically have less access to email. Their working patterns vary. Too often, they feel voiceless within their organisation. It's time to connect with this "deskless" workforce.

Remote working is here to stay. And new working arrangements create new challenges around engagement and culture.

But for many organisations, a dispersed workforce is nothing new. From salespeople to engineers, from retail assistants to HGV drivers and from factory workers to fruit pickers, a vast number of crucial roles are occupied by people who rarely, if ever, step foot in headquarters.

These "deskless" workers have long been hard to engage. And the fact that other colleagues are increasingly joining the ranks of the remote workforce won't automatically solve the problem. There are long-term issues with disengagement that employers must grapple with.

Nor will one solution work for all. A hybrid worker, who splits their time between home and headquarters, is likely to have a home office with a company laptop. But a fruit picker probably won't even have a corporate phone. A salesperson might be well equipped with technology, but their access to it is often limited for much of the day. But despite the challenges, creating the right engagement strategy remains crucial.

This white paper explores the challenges with connecting a deskless workforce. It demonstrates how employers can build a sense of cohesion, boost engagement and aid retention levels. It shows how this is supported by developing a relevant, fair and compelling employee benefit programme, and delivering it through an easy-to-use app. This itself helps with communications and engagement.



Challenges with creating a relevant benefit programme

Engaging the front line: why it matters

Deskless workers are critical to their employer's success. They are often a customer's first point of contact, or they are central to producing or distributing the product.

They play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of the brand. But despite their importance, deskless workers are often:

Less engaged

Poor communication from head office can give workers the impression that they are out of mind, as well as out of sight.

More likely to leave

In industries dominated by deskless workers, such as retail, staff turnover can reach 100% a year.¹

Less likely to feel they have a voice

A survey found that just 22% of deskless workers feel their boss devotes significant time to listening to their ideas.²

Relevant and compelling employee benefits, if done well, can be at the heart of engagement. They can help shape a prospective employee's job choice. They make workers more likely to stay.

But creating a programme that is fully inclusive of deskless workers can be challenging.

Access to technology

People on the road most of the day rarely have time to check their phone. Some deskless workers don't have a company email address. A fruit picker is unlikely to have a corporate phone. Technology is still likely to hold many of the solutions to engagement. But employers must think seriously about how they use it. One size will not fit all.

Diverse needs

Those that work differently may have a radically different need. Benefits designed to suit the needs and wants of head office staff simply might not translate to the deskless.

Onsight benefits are irrelevant

Many employers offer a range of benefits that depend on access to the office or headquarters. These can range from a creche to a yoga class. But these are irrelevant to those who are not frequently in the office or at a physical location. And this lack of access can create a sense of unfairness, rather than the spirit of togetherness that these benefits are designed to foster.

¹ <https://blog.smarp.com/deskless-workers-challenges-how-to-solve-them>

² <https://smallbiztrends.com/2019/05/remote-workers-feel-disconnected.html>

Creating solutions with Zest

Personalised benefits

With Zest it's possible to create a personalised benefit experience for each and every person in the workforce. This can increase an employee's sense that their employer understands them, regardless of where they are based.

Quick and easy to adapt and change

Needs evolve. With Zest's Benefit Builder it's easy to adapt and update benefits quickly so that the programme always remains relevant to the workforce.

Adapt workplace-based benefits for remote workers

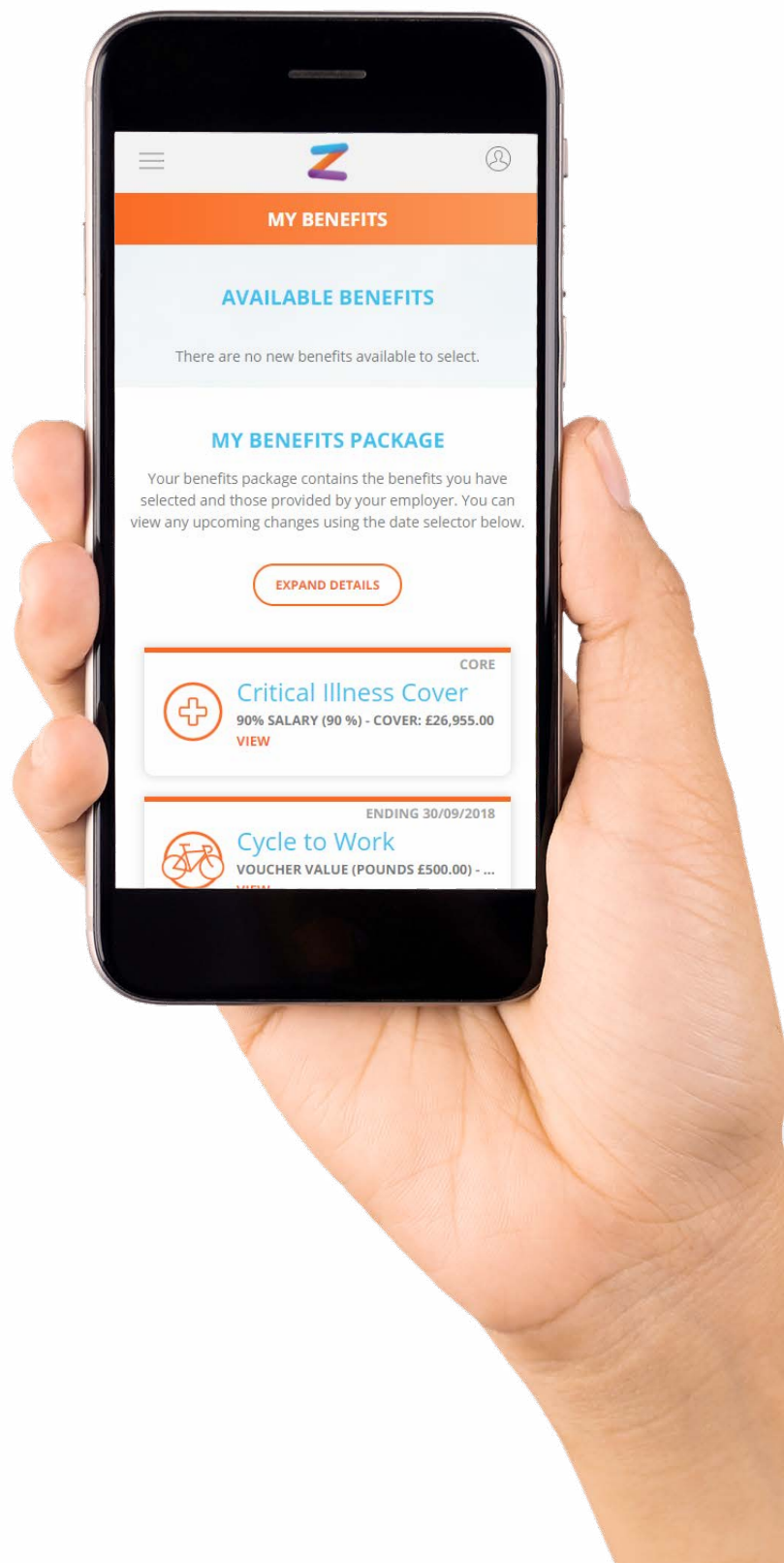
Remote workers may feel short changed if those at headquarters have access to a range of onsite benefits such as a creche or exercise classes. The Zest Claims Centre enables employers to establish accessible benefits for remote workers. For example, they could invest in a "health and wellbeing" fund and allow employees to claim against gym classes or counselling services that are local to them.

Create the right working environment

Through Zest, employers can provide kit for a home office or discounts on relevant tech. This won't be appropriate for all. But even many deskless workers require some time in front of a computer screen and it's important that employers support them in getting the right set up.

Create personalised communication

The Zest Engagement Centre enables employers to finely-target emails and bespoke content to individual employees based on the criteria that employers set. For example, managers can use the platform to communicate shift patterns and ensure that workers receive information on the benefits that are relevant to them and their life stage.

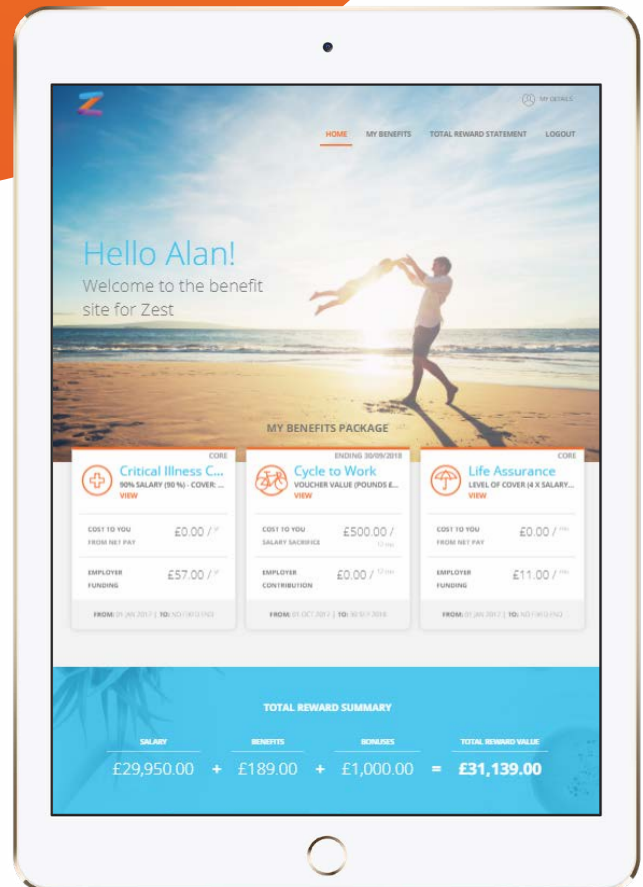


Conclusion: a truly inclusive benefit programme

The deskless workforce is essential to the business. But too often, employers are struggling to engage them. Without that engagement they will be unable to maximise the potential of their people, and their own business performance.

As the world adjusts to new post-pandemic working arrangements, employers are giving serious thought to how to address a hybrid workforce that will involve more people than ever working from home.

Without due consideration, these strategies risk failing to address the needs of the deskless. Their needs are different and their set up is unique. For too long, they have felt disconnected from headquarters and fear that they have little influence over the direction of their organisation.



By creating a benefit programme that is relevant to and fully inclusive of the deskless worker, employers can demonstrate their commitment. This can boost engagement, increase retention and motivate employees. It can create a greater sense of belonging and build team spirit and organisational culture.



Please get in touch with us to find out more about creating a compelling and diverse flexible employee benefit programme with Zest.

Get in touch

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