



Small Company Perks on the Rise on LI

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Even as consumers confront rising food and gas prices, some employers have increased the small perks and benefits that can mean a little more money in employees' pockets.

Perks such as gas stipends or company-paid legal advice can act as "little weights to hook on to employees that slow their potential to move out the door," said David Lewis, president of Operations Inc, a human resources consulting firm in Stamford, Conn.

The annual benefits survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management found that the following perks/benefits are on the rise: company cell phone and other mobile devices allowed for personal use; smoking cessation programs; gym discounts and subsidies; referral bonuses, which can put \$1,000 in your pocket for simply referring a good job candidate who gets hired. The survey got responses from 996 human resources professionals.

On [Long Island](#) a recent informal poll of the human resources professionals in the Hauppauge Industrial Association found the following perks are being offered locally: free tickets to Ducks, [Mets](#) and Yankees games; discounts for defensive driving programs, which can lead to lower insurance costs; flu shots; gym memberships; and even a 10 percent discount at an assisted living facility, said Lucille Mavrokefalos, a human resources consultant and co-chairwoman of the HIA's human resources committee. And at least one area employer is adjusting perks based on the economic climate. At Carr Business Systems in Melville, birthday brownies

and jelly beans have been replaced by \$25 gas cards, and company picnic T-shirts will be replaced by something more useful, such as gift cards, said Victoria Barlin, director of human resources. "We feel like we have to do something above and beyond to help our employees."

Such an approach "shows our company is thinking of the little guy and saying we can spend this money in a better way," said Samantha Erck, 25, a service dispatcher. She was glad to receive her birthday gas card, as well as her choice of a clock or check for \$50 - she went for the check - for being named employee of the month in December.

Such efforts "make me want to stay with the company," said Erck, who lives in Deer Park. She said she "never got a birthday present from anybody" in her previous jobs. "They value me" here, she said, "and they make it known they value me."

With most employers offering "medical, dental, vision, life insurance, we have to be a little more creative," said Joseph Cabral, chief human resources officer at North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System. Among an array of value-added perks are a new weight management program and a new smoking cessation program, with costs of nicotine replacement therapies fully covered.

Rob Basso of Advantage Payroll Services, a payroll and human resources management firm in Hicksville, referred to such programs as "experiential benefits." He said reparation services in credit and identity theft cases are among those he sees on the rise.