



Want more loyal and productive employees?

While many businesses promote the value of exhibiting a customer-centric approach to business, it is actually an approach which too often neglects the most important audience – the employees. One important way to make this shift is by providing a coveted company-supplied benefit – financial education – to help employees and their families gain understanding and build confidence in their financial future. Providing employees with financial education can help them thrive – and help the company’s bottom line at the same time.

Did you know that one in four employees is under serious financial distress? Now imagine how this distracting dilemma affects their performance, focus, attendance, and morale. Many studies show that employees who are financially distressed at the workplace are less productive and spend time worrying about their stressful personal financial situation which adversely affects their work production. Financial fears can also be exacerbated by an acquisition event, job transition, or savings concern. By simply providing basic financial literacy education to employees, their productivity is more likely to increase along with their happiness and sense of well-being.

Providing easy to understand financial education can lay the foundation for individuals to gain tools and resources that can help improve their situation. Ultimately, employers can see improvements in turnover, company loyalty, lower medical claims, and employee state-of-mind. This makes a strong case as to why financial education can and should be leveraged as a cornerstone for optimizing employee performance.

Another benefit to providing a quality financial literacy program is that it helps employees develop good financial behaviors over time. The result of these positive changes in their financial lives includes increased assets, decreased liabilities, increased net worth, and confidence that they can transition smoothly into retirement. To be successful, employees must

have on-going education and a blueprint that outlines the action steps or changes that need to take place, and one that keeps them accountable to achieving their goals and objectives.

Employers are also mandated that they must meet their compliance obligations under ERISA 404(c). In order to meet the ERISA requirements, *financial education must be provided that is generic and non-proprietary in nature*, which means that the education provided by plan sponsors or money managers is not always sufficient to satisfy ERISA requirements. In a nutshell, employers need to provide basic financial education once per year to avoid meeting ERISA in court.

The Society for Financial Awareness (SOFA), is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that exists to promote financial education year-round in the community. Not only does SOFA's work improve financial literacy, but for organizations with retirement plans, SOFA's workshops do help satisfy the ERISA 404(c) requirements.

SOFA is comprised of financial professionals who volunteer their time pro bono to their communities by conducting no-cost, on-site financial educational workshops and seminars to companies, churches and other organizations on 30+ financial topics, tailored to the needs of the audience.

These seminars are conducted absolutely free of charge, and no products are ever discussed or sold. In fact, it is prohibitive for the member/presenter to display or distribute any material that represents any affiliation or firm other than SOFA. All of the presentation slides and handout materials are branded by SOFA and contain basic and constructive information. Under no circumstances is there an option to solicit business. This behavior is prohibitive and would be a conflict of the SOFA ethics and guidelines. These are not sales events, but rather educational events that provide a foundation for individuals to assess their financial situation so that they can make proactive changes to improve their chances for financial success.

At the conclusion of the presentation, participants are offered an opportunity to meet with the SOFA presenter to discuss their personal financial situation should they wish to do so, and because of their nonprofit status, offered free of charge. This is an opportunity for the participant to ask specific questions and gain resource options. There is no obligation on their part to proceed with any future meetings, however, should the participant request such, this is available at their discretion.

SOFA is funded by the dues of its members and through philanthropy by inspired individuals, companies, and organizations who wish to make charitable donations to SOFA. Why do they do this? Take a good look around America! Our schools do not provide financial literacy as a requirement or core curriculum. Our mounting debt in student loans, credit cards, and automobiles is skyrocketing. Divorces over "money issues" are increasing. While the issues continue, the results of continued financial literacy grow every day! What's in it for them? Various things:

- Gratitude in giving back to people who need their program, their content, their mission, and their presenters;
- An opportunity to possibly, on a first-hand basis, step-up and be available for the many Americans who have no idea where to go, or who to see for their financial needs;
- The experience of being part of a much needed “movement” bringing into the light help and financial assistance by providing to their attendees the answers to their needs and solutions to their financial issues;
- The start or enhancement of a solid plan that includes effective financial decision making.

If you would like SOFA to host a FREE workshop(s) at your company or organization, or if you would like more information about the SOFA organization, please visit www.sofausa.org or contact Kristen at klomax@sofausa.org or at 425-615-1114. A direct link to all of the current presentation topics (30+) can be found at www.sofausa.org/education/seminars (i.e. budgeting, Social Security, retirement preparedness, etc.).