

# Why this tech company gives employees \$1,500 to “try something new”

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Research has shown that experiences are worth more than objects, so Qualtrics gives employees money to cross something off their bucket list.

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[Video: [frycyk01/Pixabay](#)]

*By Stephanie Vozza* 3 minute Read

Diving with sharks, delivering books to children in the Philippines, taking a trip to the Great Wall of China and getting third-row tickets to see the musical *Hamilton*. These things don't seem to have much in common, but they're examples of the experience bonuses provided by [Qualtrics](#). The customer, employee, brand, and product experience software provider launched the perk in January, giving each of its 1,700 employees \$1,500 to have an experience they wouldn't normally be able to have.

“It's a chance to cross something off your bucket list,” says Mike Maughan, head of global insights. “There's no evaluative construct on our end. It's your experience; you choose.”

The bonus is intended to support Qualtrics's mission, which is to help organizations give employees and customers the best experience possible. “We don't just talk about it; we eat our own dog food to understand what we're trying to build as we consult and help customers do the same,” says area vice president Craig Cusick, who used his to see *Hamilton* in Chicago. “My experience made me think about what we are trying to accomplish; what it means to deliver a great experience.”

The experience bonus is tailored to millennials, who make up about 80% of Qualtrics's workforce, says Maughan. “They're the first group that specifically said they want more experience rather than things,” he says. “They're a connected generation, always social sharing their lives and getting instant feedback. People want memorable experiences they can share.”

## How it works

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To qualify, employees must have been with the company for at least year and work full time. They simply provide the HR department with a note that says what they're doing and when, and payroll puts the money into their account. The experience is used as part of an employee's normal vacation days. So far, 668 employees have taken advantage of the experience bonus.

## ADVERTISING

"We are collecting a lot of stories and plan to bring them together by starting a new part of our blog," says Maughan.

Qualtrics's bonus is similar to a perk [Airbnb](#) gives employees: an annual \$2,000 stipend to travel and stay in an Airbnb spot anywhere. The SEO software provider [Moz](#) offers a paid vacation plus \$3,000 to spend while you're away. And financial services provider [United Shore](#) offers employees who've been with the company 10 years an extra 10 days paid time off plus \$2,500 to live their dream. So far, team members have taken trips to Disney World and the Bahamas, and one lived the dream of remodeling his kitchen.

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## But is it a good idea?

Offering employees a chance to have unique experiences fits with research from [Glassdoor](#) that found that 57% of job seekers consider benefits and perks as a major factor in accepting a job offer. The most sought after, however, are health care, flexible working hours, and paid time off, according to [Harvard Business Review](#).

Before you offer a unique perk, it's important to know why you're doing it as it won't necessarily improve culture, says Denise Lee Yohn, author of [Fusion: How Integrating Brand and Culture Powers the World's Greatest Companies](#). "Qualtrics may be an 'experience management software platform,' but it seems offering an 'experience bonus' has little to do with equipping and empower employees to deliver better customer experiences and enable success for its customers," she says.

Since employees are free to spend the money as they wish, Yohn says it sounds more like an extravagant perk instead of a benefit or experience that ultimately improves their contribution to the organization and its customers. "It seems there might be better ways to align employees with the company's vision and values," she says. "Since Qualtrics's customers include companies such as Marriott and JetBlue, why not partner with one of them to tie a travel experience benefit to them or at least require employees to use the bonus money with a customer? This would connect employees and customers more directly and align with the company's priorities more closely."

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While the perk may not empower employees, Yohn says it should help Qualtrics attract and retain top talent, “which it needs to in part because their offices are in sites like Provo, Utah, and Dublin, Ireland,” she says.

Maughan says it’s too soon to have data on the experience bonus’s impact on recruiting or retention, but he believes it has helped with engagement. “So far, feedback has been positive,” he says. “There is groundswell and employees are excited.”