

Nina Krammer ([00:01](#)):

From Via Benefits by WTW. Welcome to Eye on 65, a podcast for employers and plan sponsors looking to elevate their retiree healthcare benefits. Last season, we finished off with an episode where I interviewed Marianne Steger, who was just about to start her retirement. The feedback we received on Marianne's episode was so good that we decided to interview more retirees for this upcoming season. We hope that you stick around and stay subscribed. As we listened to some great stories from our member retirees. For this episode, I spoke with David Sauter, a former university registrar from Ohio, who did a video testimonial for us a couple of years ago, and I was so excited to check back in with him and see where he is today. Dave, it's so great to see you again. What's it been? Three years?

David Sauter ([00:54](#)):

I think it's been three years. Time has flown. It's great to see you as well. So thanks for, thanks for having me on a repeat.

Nina Krammer ([01:00](#)):

I'm so glad to have you on Eye on 65. When we last spoke three years ago, you had just retired, I think you said two and a half years before that. So now you're going in five and a half-ish years.

David Sauter ([01:16](#)):

Wow. Yes, yes. Yeah.

Nina Krammer ([01:18](#)):

And were you, remind me, were you an early retiree or were you already 65 at that time?

David Sauter ([01:25](#)):

I Was, I was, I was almost 63, so I

Nina Krammer ([01:27](#)):

Was, yeah, I thought you were

David Sauter ([01:28](#)):

Retire pretty early, but you know, in the state system I had done 30 years and then other private and things. So altogether I had about 37 years of working post-graduate school. So it was good.

Nina Krammer ([01:38](#)):

And so for those of you who haven't had a chance to connect with you or who might not have seen the video before, your previous employer provided you with retiree benefits as an early retiree. So you were not on a group plan as an early retiree, is that correct?

David Sauter ([01:57](#)):

Correct.

Nina Krammer ([01:58](#)):

Can you talk a little bit about what that process was like at that time to transition away from your group into an individual marketplace?

David Sauter ([02:05](#)):

Well, it would normally be nerve wracking, a little bit and anxiety producing. And I'm a retired university registrar, so that means I'm into record keeping and all sorts of details. And I was a little apprehensive, but from the get go, working with Via Benefits has been nothing but easier. Very clear, very calm. So I tell my contemporaries, there's no angst, there's no worries. Just let the process unfold. So every year it's sort of look forward to just, you know, how's it gonna be this year? What are the updates, what's, you know, what's new and so forth. So,

Nina Krammer ([02:36](#)):

So that leads me to a question you, do you connect with the Benefit advisor every year during annual enrollment?

David Sauter ([02:43](#)):

Yes. Yes. And I would encourage everyone to do that. I, I think there may even be a sidebar where to get the HSA or some other benefit, we must connect. But even if I didn't have to, it just makes sense. I end up doing my own little independent research, but then I wait for that information to flow down. And then the conversations we have are always spot on and, and easy and kind of a match to what I'm was thinking, to what they've come up with. So, yes.

Nina Krammer ([03:10](#)):

And I think you were talking about the HRA, which for listeners who might not be familiar with that, that's a health reimbursement arrangement that your employer provides you as a benefit. Yes. And it's a very nice benefit. You've, it's, you worked, you said you put in about 30 years with your employer, so very loyal as an employee, and that's how they reward you. Right. Can you talk a little bit about, you don't have to talk about the amount or anything like that, right? Can you talk about the benefits that, that HRA has given to you?

David Sauter ([03:36](#)):

It's, it's kind of a surprise benefit. So every once in a while a nice little surprise comes along and the HRA was exactly, you know, what, what that was. It's just a nice benefit the way we budget in my family, the way I've always done that is kind of separate buckets that HRA goes, its in its own little separate bucket. It's, it's, it's a substantial amount, enough that it's, it's not \$10, it's not a thousand dollars, but it's a nice amount. It clearly used to pay for all of my healthcare monthlys now because of Via Benefits that monthly cost to me has gone down. It's just sitting in this nice little fund, we're back doing some CDs again because they're greater than 0.1%. So it's, it was a nice surprise that I wasn't really expecting. It's a nice addition to the bottom line.

Nina Krammer ([04:23](#)):

One thing you said that I still repeat this to this day, to other people when they ask me about what I do, what, what is my job? And you said it's what you spend, not what you make.

David Sauter ([04:38](#)):

Absolutely.

Nina Krammer (04:38):

Tell us about that.

David Sauter (04:39):

<laugh>. We're fortunate. We've, we've both retired from, you know, state service and so forth with no mortgage and, you know, two pretty new cars and we just have to budget a bit differently even these days with the crazy prices of some things. But it's nice to be able to count on that state pension. It's nice to be able to count on that, that, that HRA coming in. We're making less in retirement, but expenses are easier to control. They're just manageable. We're still do vacations. We've got grandchildren that week. We help buy birthday presents and some different things for us. So it's all, it's all worked out really, really well. So, yes.

Nina Krammer (05:19):

Uh, you mentioned vacations, and I recall you, you like to travel?

David Sauter (05:23):

Yes. We've, we've been fortunate throughout those, those years we've done some, me, quite a few down to Cancun and quite a few over Europe. And now it's a little bit more domestic, just what's going on in our, and our kids have spread out and having grandchildren. In fact, yesterday we just got back from Charlotte and then tomorrow other grandkids are coming. So, you know, that's that little, um, extra fund that's sitting there is, it's a fun fund almost for just for, for all sorts of things.

Nina Krammer (05:49):

Indeed. Now you mentioned Cancun years ago I was in Cancun myself and had broken my leg and found myself at the hospital. And can you talk a little bit about what, when you're selecting a plan, do you look for a plan where you can go outside of your network, where you live? You mentioned being, visiting family or traveling. Is that important to you?

David Sauter (06:13):

Very important. In fact, what's, what's nice about the whole process is there's a series of guided questions, which we go through. And for us that's very important because traveling, we retired, we kind of did some fix up on the house, get the electric fixed, and, you know, do all sorts of things so we could turnkey it. So we had to find something that we wouldn't be worried if we're sitting in, out on Lake Como in Italy, or we're sitting down in Charlotte or we're somewhere else. So that's a key is you just have to look at your lifestyle. And even if someone says, well, I don't travel very much still, if you travel across state lines down where I am, I'm 35 miles from the Indiana border. So it doesn't take long. Or even the Kentucky border, it doesn't take long to be potentially out of, you know, southwest Ohio. So very, very important, great issue to raise. Yes.

Nina Krammer (06:59):

Would you say that's the most important factor? Being able to have variety of doctors in selecting a plan?

David Sauter ([07:07](#)):

Yes. And whatever the cost is for that, that's worth it because we don't wanna run the risk of having some issue when we are not sitting at home or, you know, somewhere around here. So again, it's, it's a lifestyle and you have to also look ahead to what you anticipate your lifestyle to be like. Now there's gonna be a little broken leg or something <laugh> that may admit every, every once in a while or a little spinal surgery like I had in February. But you just have to look ahead to see what, what's your goal and what do you want to be doing down the road, and how can Via Benefits help get that healthcare plan that's going to be a, the best match.

Nina Krammer ([07:42](#)):

That makes a lot of sense. So it sounds like now that you've been doing this five years, you have more experience and looking at the plans. If you could go back, would you change anything early on? And then the second follow up question to that is, is there anything that you would change year over year or have changed year over year?

David Sauter ([08:00](#)):

I probably would've dug a little bit more into understanding some of the advantage plans. Now, what's interesting is that this year, going into 2023 Via Benefits recommended an entirely different, I call it sort of a suite for us. I went from original Medicare and a supplement to an advantage plan, which is oh my gosh, so incredible. And from paying 120 some odd dollars a month for a supplement to paying zero. So I, I think I would've learned a little bit more about that advantage plan. In fact, I was talking to someone who's, who's turning 65 in March, uh, when we were down in, down in Charlotte. And I was saying, Margaret, start now and just learn the ABCDs. You, you just have to get that under control. Ideally before the Via Benefits conversation. In fact, I went for a checkup not not long ago, and, and the staffer at the desk says, oh, we're seeing a lot more of this particular plan lately. I went, well, this is a great plan. So I am not surprised. I'm not surprised at all.

Nina Krammer ([08:59](#)):

And when you were talking to this friend, is this now a former colleague? Would you say that it is your colleague conversation specifically about your plan benefit? Or is this outside of that network?

David Sauter ([09:11](#)):

I actually have, have both because I'm, where I did my 30 plus years is, is a, a geographic radius about 25 miles around my house. It's a pretty broad network. I've a network. I've got a younger brother who's, who's, uh, on the verge of retiring. My older brother retired from, from healthcare industry up in, up in, you know, Massachusetts. But the woman that I was talking to is actually one of my daughter-in-law's mother. And she's, she's, she had kind of the deer in the headlights a little bit first about, I said, well, just, you know, take a breath, go and understand. But then my colleagues, they're almost at my age, and so they're looking at, at that plan, I said, just take advantage of it Via Benefits. We'll steer you in the right direction. It's still still choice that you have. That's what was nice about it. It still gave me choice. I'm part of a, I'm part of a group with mostly retired, you know, faculty and there's a, some administrative staff, you know, like us, and, and they want me to do the retirement conversation again because it's, it's those things like stop buying clothes two years before you retire. You know, you don't need all soap <laugh>. So it's, it's more than you know, the finances and learn what you can about the healthcare options and all that.

Nina Krammer ([10:16](#)):

Yeah. Did they bring you in to have this like a presentation?

David Sauter ([10:19](#)):

Well, there's about 50 of us that are, and, and part of the merits of this group is that we take turns making presentations. So if there's an English prof, they may speak on a particular topic, but I had recently retired and so I, I was just gathering all these notes, like four pages of, of notes, and a lot of it's humorous and a lot of it's, you know, things do not get caught at. I had lunch with a colleague who was just thinking about it. I said, Dave, come on over early and let's have lunch, and I, I still have your speech, so I want you to go through that. You know, so it's just sharing, it's, it's, it's much like this. Get some good information out there and get, uh, from those that have already gone through it.

Nina Krammer ([10:53](#)):

What would you estimate the percentage of your peers receive retiree medical benefits from their employer versus out there doing it their own?

David Sauter ([11:05](#)):

I would divide it actually in, into two segments. So even among the colleagues across the state where I've been, not all are in the state system, so they're independent anyway. So they've gotta be doing their own thing. And if I go back to my staff that I spent the last 12 years with, it's about a 50 50 split. So about half of them will follow the path that I did. The other half are gonna be on their own. And I, I'm not sure if as an employee of the university, they can still take advantage of, of Via Benefits, but boy, they really should if they can. And then for everyone else, my family members, they're, they're pretty much on their own and they've gotta do those searching and they've gotta understand it and, and, and see what's going on and try and manage, again, it's looking ahead to figure out what do I think my life's gonna be like, because it's gonna be different than it is now, for sure. And hopefully all good ways. So

Nina Krammer ([12:04](#)):

Yeah, it certainly is. And I'm thinking about something that you just said, how there's these other categories of people who maybe even within the same employer system who you said it would be great if they could take advantage of Via Benefits, even if they might not get subsidy dollars, HRA dollars. Right?

David Sauter ([12:24](#)):

Right.

Nina Krammer ([12:25](#)):

Why do you say that?

David Sauter ([12:27](#)):

So we spend our life coaching and sometimes we are the coach and sometimes we are being coached. And, you know, healthcare, I think the last round there were hundreds of choices that I could have had. And you look at this list and you go, can't deal with this today. So, so if there's a way that others can have some neutral third party who knows enough of your background, knows enough of the systems to then join those two together, that would be a perfect match. I would tell folks to pay for that service. I

think we pay what, \$2 and some odd cents a month or, you know, something, something totally, totally small and, you know, totally reasonable. But it'd be nice. It's, it's almost like if Via Benefits could adopt itself as the, as the national healthcare conduit for everyone, wouldn't that be nice? <laugh>

Nina Krammer ([13:16](#)):

That would be nice. <laugh> Remember what I said from your lips to president's ears. Okay. <laugh>,

David Sauter ([13:22](#)):

You can quote me on that one. And it's not a political statement.

Nina Krammer ([13:25](#)):

Would you consider yourself a person who is resistant to change?

David Sauter ([13:30](#)):

No, but I think that's, that's changed over time. I think in the environment, the retiring environment that I'm in now, it's, we've learned to go with the flow more than ever before. Things will happen, good things will happen. So not so good things will happen, but it's all about change. You know, families change, friends change, locations change. So I think as we move forward, I'm sort of anticipating, okay, I wonder what it's gonna be like this year. My guess is it's gonna be stable. I'm in such a good plan, it will be hard to find anything better. And I think that's what's been interesting about the process, is I was stable for so many years and all of a sudden it's almost like something out there in the, in the industry changed with these advantage plans or something went on. But I didn't have to worry about that. All I knew is to look at the bottom line, which they presented me with, and I went, well, that's a no-brainer. That's a no-brainer.

Nina Krammer ([14:20](#)):

Some notion out there among employers that I've heard that retirees are very resistant to change. But what I'm hearing from you is that that changes, or, or I'm seeing you shaking your head for people who can't see you but can hear you, what does that shake mean?

David Sauter ([14:38](#)):

So that shake means, I think the more flexible we, we can stay within reason. We're not gonna throw caution to the wind or anything, but, but I find that as I'm, as I'm getting older and you get those little things that start to happen with you and so forth, today's a great day, then may may change tomorrow we'll be doing things and, you know, I'll go back to my yoga classes and which by the way is my YMCA membership is a benefit of my healthcare plan. Hello. That's about \$75 a month. So a little segue, the only choice that I made a little bit different from what was presented to me is, is I, I knew I had a YMCA and not silver sneakers, and so like the top five. And so I think it was like a dollar more. Well, if, if anything, now I'm not paying anything, how could be a dollar more <laugh> anyway, but it, you know, so things like that are important to me. I mean, I didn't do yoga, I didn't do any, I didn't bike before. So change for me has been more about just, you know, more of a healthier lifestyle. So why not have a great healthcare package behind all of that. So when you do bump and fall, you can get, you know, taking care of

Nina Krammer ([15:47](#)):

That is interesting to me that, that you didn't have those types of habits or hobbies prior to retirement. Would you consider yourself an anomaly? Would you say that most retirees that you know, have that same kind of transition that they experience?

David Sauter ([16:06](#)):

You know, my circle of retirees has is actually pretty broad. Because when you bike with folks, when you yoga with folks, and I, I think they, I think when you retire, you fall into two categories. I mean, I, you know, I I've told my family members this 'cause I was the, the youngest and the earliest to actually retire. I said, you've gotta start planning for it. You've gotta start taking care of yourself, taking care of some different, different things. So I I, I think the retirees fall into two categories. Some that just go, I'm gonna come sit home and take a nap and that's gonna be my life. And, and guess what? They're not gonna live as long as they should. And then there's this other group, our biker group, I'm 68 going on 69, and I'm the youngest of that group. Sometimes I'll go to this group that I talked about or with my employer and they say, wipe that grin off your face.

David Sauter ([16:58](#)):

You are always smiling and you look better than you did when you worked well. I, I, I think because it's less stress, we don't have to worry about the healthcare package. I mean, that's absolutely true. Don't have to worry about that. Don't have to worry about the bills. I, I, I think retirement's just an awesome, I I tell folks, don't wish your life away no matter what age you are, don't wish it away. However, when you can retire, go for it. 'cause it's a wonderful status to, to be in again, especially if you've got what's, you know, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, right? You've gotta have all those, all those met and not worrying about healthcare. Um, I had a, my, my surgery from back in February was a \$44,000 bill. That's just one little component of it, nevermind some other things that were going on. My healthcare is so good that my entire bill was \$700. Well, it doesn't take many months of my HRA to just cover that. And I had that sitting there and I, I just used that. So, I mean, I, I can't emphasize enough how taking the worry out of healthcare and that future, so

Nina Krammer ([18:10](#)):

That's incredible. So most of our listeners are employers. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative> primarily benefits administrators. Yeah. What would you tell benefits administrators about Via Benefits?

David Sauter ([18:27](#)):

I would tell them that there's nothing more important than taking care of employees pre-hiring during employment, and after it's that life cycle, when a Via Benefits comes along, take a really, really good look at that and not a one shot look, have a conversation, mull it over, come back. And what you're doing for your employees is just putting peace of mind. You're helping them, again, take that issue and take it off the burner and not worries. Not that you're not gonna have some issues and, and worries, but to be able to just put that aside and say, you know, for the remainder of your life on this earth, you will have an annual review. You'll have some good healthcare things, may costs may go up, but we're gonna try and, and work with each employee so that along the way, as they're exiting out to a, hopefully a nice long retirement plan, they don't have to worry about that. You know, how many of us, when we're looking for a position, what's, you know, there's the salary, but what's then, what do we say? What's the benefit package? Well, and the benefit package is before, during, and after.

Nina Krammer ([19:41](#)):

A hundred percent agree with you. And I'm curious, if you were to go back to your pre-hire days <affirmative>, when thinking about retirement, is your retirement something that you're thinking about at that point as a selling point from your potential employer?

David Sauter ([20:00](#)):

It always has been for me, but it just varies by degree. Well, what I would share with you is that, so I've worked 37 years total. Seven of those years were in, at a, at a private university. I loved working there, but one of the reasons I left as well as going to a state institution that had a little more, it was bigger, more complex medical school, was to go back into the retirement system for that healthcare. It was, it was under 10 years. I picked up all my sick time again. So when I talk with young professionals, and every once in a while I'll counsel someone who's now starting a job hunt and so forth. I say, yeah, you're looking short term on what this may be, but in the blink of an eye, you'll be out 10, 20, 30, you know, maybe even 40 years.

David Sauter ([20:46](#)):

So for me, I, I think in the back of my mind, I always had this future plan and how would it work out? And I remember first starting to talk about retirement. I was about 60 thinking, gosh, I'm gonna have 30 years. I, I had bought some graduate work back. I, I'm gonna 30 years when I'm 62, plus I've got, you know, a little bit of social security and I've got this surprise, HRA there. And I went, I'm registrar. So I've got a pretty good Excel spreadsheet of, of, of some things, including a spreadsheet that, that also has, this may sound a little morbid, but has a column for what if I predeceased Janet or she preces to me, what does it look like financially? Well, guess what? Healthcare's not an issue on there. It's, again, we've picked it up and we've, we've moved it to the side because that part's going to be taken care of, hopefully for

Nina Krammer ([21:37](#)):

<crosstalk>. That's wonderful.

David Sauter ([21:38](#)):

So,

Nina Krammer ([21:38](#)):

And I think that's something great for employers to hear too. Yeah. Yeah. Um, I appreciate that Dave, as always. It's been great. Thank you. Yeah.

David Sauter ([21:47](#)):

You know, just, and I have some notes to the side here. Just, I wrote Seamless. No worries. No annual angst, huge money. Say,

Nina Krammer ([21:57](#)):

Oh, go on.

David Sauter ([21:57](#)):



I mean, I, I went, I went from spending 130 plus to, to to zero and having so much better. So, you know, the, the, you know, the process that Via Benefits went through this year on, on my behalf was just terrific. Absolutely terrific. The story,

Nina Krammer ([22:14](#)):

I'm really, that it continues, it continues to be a positive experience for you. Oh yeah,

David Sauter ([22:19](#)):

Absolutely. And it's a no brainer. And again, for the, for the employers, if you can do something that good and get testimonies from your employees as they exit, oh my gosh, they're gonna tell and, and, and share and, and make it even better.

Nina Krammer ([22:33](#)):

Well, best of luck. Uh, congratulations again on the soon to be new addition to the families. Yeah.

David Sauter ([22:39](#)):

All, all exciting change. Yeah, change,

Nina Krammer ([22:42](#)):

Change is inevitable. Whether

David Sauter ([22:44](#)):

It's changing diapers or whether it's change. <laugh>, it's change.

Nina Krammer ([22:49](#)):

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