Benefits 101: Decode the System

Full voiceover transcript - educational content only

Scene 1: Benefits aren't a side quest

Pixel Quest · Module 1 - Part 1

Employee benefits are compensation they hope you won't collect - full stop. Your employer might offer health coverage, retirement plans, paid leave, life insurance, and a pile of perks that never made it into your offer letter conversation. Federal rules like ERISA govern many private-sector plans, but you don't need to read the law. You need to know where YOUR rules live.

Scene 2: 3 documents that matter

Find these in your portal

Document one: the Summary Plan Description, or SPD. It's the how-this-plan-works bible for retirement and welfare benefits. Document two: the Summary of Benefits and Coverage, or SBC, for health plans. Standardized, comparable, actually readable. Document three: your plan certificate from the insurance carrier. Bookmark all three. Seriously.

Scene 3: When can you change benefits?

Timing is everything

Three windows matter. New hire enrollment - limited days when you start. Open enrollment - usually once a year, often in the fall. And qualifying life events - marriage, baby, loss of other coverage - that may open a special enrollment period. Miss a deadline and you might be stuck for months. Set calendar reminders like your money depends on it. It might.