

Benefits Insights

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6 Ways to Capture Employees' Attention at Open Enrollment and Keep It Year-round

Communication in the workplace is key. When it comes to employee benefits, proper communication helps employees recognize the true value of their benefits, which can lead to an appreciation of the company's investment in their health and well-being. Employees who understand and value their benefits are more likely to utilize them. Not only can that help employees live healthier lives—in and out of the workplace—but it can also boost morale and keep them happy. As employers persistently compete for talent, year-round employee benefits education and communication could be a winning strategy.

This article highlights strategies for grabbing employees' attention during the open enrollment period and keeping them engaged throughout the year.

Year-round Benefits Engagement Tips

Although year-round communication is ideal, employers can amp it up for open enrollment by starting communication early and helping guide employees to make more active choices in their health plans. From there, employers have an opportunity to keep the momentum going after the open enrollment period closes and keep benefits top of mind for their employees.

Consider the following six strategies for informing, educating and engaging employees about their benefits throughout the year:

1. **Determine key messaging.** After solidifying benefits options, employers should plan their communication strategies. The first step is figuring out key messaging, focusing on new or updated benefits

offerings, and developing FAQs to address common concerns quickly.

2. **Select a mix of appropriate channels.** Just as many workplaces operate in a hybrid model, employee communications can be successful when done in a similar manner. Leveraging technology allows employers to communicate more frequently and effectively with employees than using only in-person and physical communication methods. For example, digital channels can help distribute and house information virtually, allowing employees to access it when and where they need it. Chat functionality with benefits vendors can also be a helpful digital tool to assist employees in figuring out which benefits they need. Yet, there's still a time and place for companywide on-site meetings and mail-to-home print communication. Postcards and other mailers are still relevant and can serve as a reminder to discuss and review benefits options at home. Every workplace is different, so it comes down to selecting various channels that are relevant and engaging to each organization's specific employees. It would be even better if the channels were accessible to employees during the entire year or built into platforms and tools employees already use so that resources are conveniently available for employees.



3. **Create a communication calendar.** Having goal-oriented, relevant, punchy and multichanneled communications is great, but attention must also be given to when to send them. A communication calendar could include important dates and scheduled messaging for those efforts. At the very least, having a calendar can help space out communications throughout the year to reduce messaging fatigue.
4. **Tailor messaging for employees.** Ultimately, employers want to engage employees with open enrollment information, and a personalized approach can help. Depending on the workforce and their working environments, employers will likely need to segment their employee audience and tweak messaging so it resonates. For example, open enrollment methods and communication would look different for remote, on-site and nonwired employees. Alternatively, reminders throughout the year could focus on various groups of employees, such as new parents or those nearing retirement. Benefits needs vary in a multigenerational workforce.
5. **Use real-world examples.** When possible, employers can put benefits offerings in context with real-world scenarios. Employees can relate to stories, so find ways to bring the options to life. For example, instead of describing telemedicine as a 24/7 benefit, highlight that an employee could get health care answers in the middle of the night when they or a child are running a high fever. The chances of employees needing to use health care benefits during the next year are highly likely, so help reiterate the importance of complete coverage.
6. **Leverage available resources.** Partners, vendors and carriers may offer resources and tools to help enrich the employee experience and boost communication efforts. Employers can review what is available to them and employees and promote them. Such resources could help enhance employee engagement efforts and actively help employees make health care decisions year-round.

Effective communication can help maximize the value of benefits by regularly reminding employees of their available resources and how to best leverage them.

Summary

Educating and informing employees about their benefits options is an important part of open enrollment. However, education can continue well past the open enrollment period. Effective employee communication is an ongoing process, but it comes down to helping employees feel well-informed about their benefits options and confident about their choices. When employees are reminded of their benefits and their associated value, they're more likely to use them and care for themselves. This not only results in a healthier and more productive workforce, but one that is also appreciative of the benefits and finds value in them. Those feelings can show up as increased employee retention for employers.

Reach out to us for additional employee benefits resources.