

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

# Realizing the Full Potential of Enrollment Communications

## Five Ways to Reintroduce Employees to Your Full Offer

By Jenn Sofield, *Managing Consultant, Communications*



Anyone working on a human resource benefits team knows there are two types of open enrollment seasons. During the first, an employer makes substantial benefit changes that require employees to take action, and every team involved focuses on the changes and how to best communicate them to workers and their dependents.

The second kind of open enrollment season is the “status quo” year, with minimal benefits plan changes. It is often assumed that HR can reduce open enrollment communications for the status quo years. **However, a status quo year is an opportunity to make a real difference in benefits engagement.**

Why? Most organizations have a wide variety of benefits, programs and resources. Employees in every industry often state that they aren’t aware of all available offerings or where to find benefits information. Take advantage of the fact that most employees pay some attention to enrollment communications to reintroduce them to what your organization already offers.

Here are five ways our customers make sure their benefits communications cut through the noise, allowing messages to reach the people who need them – even when changes are minimal.

In Brown & Brown’s experience with our customers, our teams see strong correlations between increased awareness, utilization and appreciation of benefits, resulting in:



Increased engagement and retention



Better return on benefits investment



Improved health and well-being outcomes



Enhanced employer reputation



## 1 Tell a compelling benefits story

A well-told story creates an emotional response to help employees connect with their benefits. Ground the story in a benefits philosophy and let employees know how and why you're committed to giving them the resources they need. Make it "edutaining" to keep them engaged.

## 2 Bring benefits to life with realistic scenarios

Providing helpful context with real-world scenarios can help employees see themselves in benefits.

- **Show what a personalized benefits package looks like.** Illustrate how employees choose benefits (core, supplemental and voluntary) that fit their priorities, situation and budget. For example, a recent college graduate focused on getting their first apartment and starting a career will choose very different benefits than a mid-career employee with two teenagers and a goal to retire as soon as possible.
- **Stitch programs together based on an event.** Demonstrate how different programs work together to provide 360-degree support through specific events. For example, if an employee is interested in continuing education, highlight tuition assistance, daycare opportunities and discounts. On the other hand, an employee caring for an aging loved one may need caregiver resources, mental health benefits, group legal coverage and financial planning.

## 3 Pull in employee testimonials

Use employee testimonials to validate the value of benefits and encourage others to take advantage of them. Real-life experiences from fellow employees add authenticity and trust to a message. In addition, employees can relate to colleagues' stories, making benefits feel more personalized, accessible and relatable.

## 4 Make messages relevant

The best way to help ensure any communication hits the mark is to make it as relevant as possible. Use data to target messages by understanding the intended audience and their behavior with existing benefit offerings. Consider what is known about demographic and generational preferences and ensure the messaging reflects your diverse workforce and feels inclusive.

## 5 Dust off your delivery method

There can be a disconnect between how benefits are traditionally communicated and how society consumes information. Accounting for this disconnect could lead to developing an entertaining video series or an on-demand podcast. It is also helpful to ask employees how they prefer to receive communications and act on the feedback.

If an employer wants employees to think differently about their benefits, lead them there. Open enrollment, even in a status quo year, is the once-a-year event when all employees are thinking about their benefits at the same time. Maximize that opportunity by engaging in a conversation broader than enrolling in basic health and insurance coverages. This can become the springboard for ongoing communications throughout the year. Continue to promote the full value of everything offered to help employees connect with the benefits they need when they need them.



## About the Author



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Jenn Sofield is a Managing Consultant and responsible for leading customer communication strategy and execution. She has more than 26 years of professional communication experience, including Alight Solutions, Hewitt Associates (now Aon), Mars Information Services and Merck. As a consultant, Jenn has worked with organizations across various industries including pharmaceuticals, technology and telecommunications, financial services, consumer goods and health care. She earned a B.A. in Literature from Stockton University in New Jersey.



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