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OPEN ENROLLMENT COMMUNICATION GUIDE: 5 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION

Creating a better employee experience is a top priority for many companies, yet one key area that often causes stress and confusion is the open enrollment process. Employee benefits are more than a box to check—they're a crucial part of the compensation package and can make or break job satisfaction and retention. But let's face it: navigating the complexities of benefits packages in a narrow time window can be overwhelming for employees. The result? Missed opportunities and unnecessary stress.

To turn this around, businesses need to move beyond just ticking the box. It's time to craft clear, effective communication strategies that not only inform but empower employees to make choices that truly benefit their lives, both at work and at home.



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1. DIVERSIFY YOUR COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In today's multi-generational workplace, reaching employees where they are is key. To effectively reach employees, companies must utilize a blend of communication channels, including emails, in-person meetings, and digital platforms. This multi-channel approach ensures that all employees, regardless of their preferred method of communication, receive the information they need.

Email is still a powerful tool, but relying on it alone isn't enough. Complement your email strategy with webinars, instant messaging platforms like Slack, and in-person meetings where employees can ask questions and receive immediate feedback. Additionally, leveraging digital platforms, such as dedicated benefits portals, allows employees to access information at their convenience, creating a more user-friendly experience.

Why? Because different employees have different communication preferences. Some might prefer the depth of an email, while others might appreciate the immediacy of a quick chat or the personal touch of a face-to-face meeting. **35% of employees** feel the benefits information provided by their employer leaves them with more questions than answers, but by offering multiple ways to engage with benefits information, you make it easier for everyone to stay informed.

2. PROVIDE CLEAR, COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCES

Information overload is real, especially during open enrollment. To combat this, provide employees with easy-to-digest resources that break down their options. Think FAQs, comparison charts, and step-by-step guides. But don't stop there—videos are a game-changer. They offer a dynamic way to explain complex benefits, and **studies show** that people retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video, compared to just 10% when reading it in text.

Make sure these resources are accessible through various platforms—whether on your company website, a dedicated benefits portal, or even through direct email links. The easier it is for employees to find and use these materials, the more likely they are to make informed choices.



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3. TELL A STORY

Storytelling is a powerful tool in any communication strategy. We're wired to remember stories, not statistics. And open enrollment is no exception. When it comes to explaining benefits, storytelling can be incredibly effective. Use real-life examples and testimonials to illustrate how different benefits have positively impacted employees' lives. Whether it's a story about how a particular health plan saved a colleague money or how a retirement plan can secure a family's future, stories make abstract concepts relatable.

Empower your team by turning passionate employees into benefits champions who can share their stories and insights. Finally, clarity is everything. Use decision support tools to lay out benefits options and pricing in a way that's easy to understand, helping your employees make the best choices for themselves and their families.

4. CUSTOMIZE FOR GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Your workforce likely spans multiple generations, from Boomers to Gen Z, and each group has unique preferences when it comes to communication. To take your benefits communication to the next level, it's crucial to customize your approach for different employee groups. Boomers might appreciate traditional methods like printed materials or one-on-one meetings, while Gen Z might prefer digital communication via apps or social media. Forget the one-size-fits-all mentality—use various channels to ensure your message hits home.

In a [recent Forbes survey](#), 40% of respondents between 59 and 77 preferred in-person conversation while that was only true for 17% of people ages 18 to 26 and 16% of people ages 27 to 42. Understanding and catering to these preferences will help you reach everyone in your organization.

Boomers: Focus on Face-to-Face and Email Communication: Boomers still value face-to-face interactions and prefer detailed email communications. They appreciate having an extensive selection of benefits, even if it's not personalized. While they're open to embracing technology, they prefer maintaining opportunities for direct, in-person communication and tend to avoid text or social media channels for work.

Gen X: Leverage Text and Email for Professional Growth: Gen X is comfortable with using technology in the workplace, especially when it supports their professional development. Text and email are their go-to communication methods, while social media remains mostly for personal use. They value straightforward communication that helps them grow and succeed in their roles.

Gen Y (Millennials): Quick, Mobile-Friendly Communication is Key: Millennials thrive on fast, concise messaging through text, chat, and email. They expect interactions to be mobile-friendly and are adaptable when using social media for business purposes. Collaboration and teamwork are important to them, so mobile technology that facilitates these aspects will resonate most effectively.

Gen Z: Deliver Personalized, Visually Stimulating Content: Gen Z expects short, visually engaging communications that are tailored to their needs. They're highly active on social media for both personal and business use but shy away from traditional methods like phone calls or lengthy emails. Seamless technology integration is crucial—they prefer a workplace that allows them to use their own devices and expect digital interactions to be smooth and intuitive.

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5. SIMPLIFY THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Open enrollment can be daunting for many employees, but it doesn't have to be. Simplifying the process—from pre-enrollment education to post-enrollment follow-up—can greatly enhance the employee experience. The easier it is for employees to enroll in their benefits, the more likely they are to participate.

Start by providing clear, concise instructions that guide them through each step of the process. Visual aids, such as infographics or video walkthroughs, can be particularly helpful in breaking down complex steps.

Begin with pre-enrollment education to ensure that employees are fully informed before they make their choices. During the enrollment period, keep communications straightforward and focused on action. Afterward, follow up to address any remaining questions and confirm that employees are satisfied with their selections. And don't limit your communication to just open enrollment; keep the conversation going all year long. Major life events are prime opportunities to reinforce benefits information when employees are most tuned in.



ABOUT OUR EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE PRACTICE

Now that you've read the five ways to maximize employee participation during open enrollment, you may decide you'd like the help of a benefits advisor. When you partner with us to craft your business's open enrollment benefits strategy, you gain access to a comprehensive suite of resources, from educational videos to survey tools, designed to enhance the experience of you and your employees. Our teams are there to assist you every step of the way, making the open enrollment process as seamless as possible for your team and your employees.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

Open enrollment doesn't have to be a stressful time for your HR team or your employees. By diversifying your communication channels, providing comprehensive resources, utilizing storytelling, customizing communication for different generations, and simplifying the process, you can transform open enrollment into a seamless, engaging experience for everyone involved.

Remember, effective communication isn't just about delivering information—it's about ensuring that information is understood, appreciated, and acted upon. When done right, your open enrollment communication strategy can empower employees, boost participation, and ultimately contribute to a more engaged and satisfied workforce.



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