

The DOS + DON'TS Of Open Enrollment



As we approach open enrollment, HR professionals are working hard to organize benefit offerings, so employees can understand their options and get what they need. There is a lot of information to communicate, which can feel daunting for the HR team and employees as they sift through new benefits and consider potential changes to their elections. How do you communicate clearly and answer employee questions without overwhelming them? Here is a simple list of *dos* and *don'ts* when it comes to your strategy and communications that will help you prepare for the best open enrollment season yet!

DO

Assess last year's results. If possible, survey your employees and understand what they liked about last year's benefits and what they would change. In addition, ask more about the process. Did they have enough information and enough time to make good decisions? Were they happy with their decisions from last year? Make sure you ask not only about the healthcare options but also other supplemental wellness benefits and perks. Do people care about the gym reimbursement? Or would they rather have an FSA match? The best way to be successful is to listen to what your employees want.

Communicate, communicate, communicate! As a general rule of thumb, you should start communicating several weeks in advance of open enrollment, with all the information your employees need to take action. Make sure it's clear when and how they can select benefits and where to ask questions if they have them. You'll also want to send out reminders throughout the period, to stay top of mind and resolve concerns as they come up.

Communicate using a medium that resonates with your employees. Are they likely to delete a text as spam? Will your messages get buried in an over-stuffed email inbox? Change up the mediums through mailers, apps, or videos—whatever will stand out to your employees when they sit down at their desks each day or get home from work in the evening.

Make it fun! When you can, add in a game to keep people interested and add a little spice to what is otherwise a boring process. Try including a trivia question in email communications or playing a “myth-busting” game during info sessions. Present common myths about benefits and have employees answer true or false. Make sure to have a prize to incentivize participation and encourage a little friendly competition.

Include family members in communications. Since spouses are often heavily involved in benefits decisions, you'll want to make the information easy for them to access. This can be accomplished through at-home mailers or apps available for download by anyone covered by the plan.

Share lesser-known perks about your healthcare plan. Some plans incentivize healthy habits (like taking a certain amount of steps each day) with gift cards, points, or cold hard cash! Do some research so you can create a little buzz about ways employees can earn even more rewards from their plan.

DON'T

Be surprised if people are confused! Statistics show that 85% of workers find their coverage options confusing but 92% of employees rate this as important in picking where to work (Walker, 2024). To support retention, people must understand the benefits they're being offered and feel cared for and heard during this process.

Use jargon or text-heavy messaging. Keep the copy concise, the headers clear, and the call to action clearer. Use friendly images of families and individuals that will create feelings of warmth and care. Instead of saying that your benefits are “top-notch” or “generous,” explain how they were selected to care for your employees and their families.

Try to include every possible scenario in each communication. Reading about edge cases will bore your employees and keep them further from the immediate priority: enrolling in benefits. Instead, tailor your content to reach 80% of your audience, and then include links with resources to help the rest.

Cram an entire year's worth of benefits education into one month. Take advantage of the whole year to educate your employees on best practices when it comes to primary care and in-network providers, screenings, and other health priorities. Otherwise, the barrage of information will be white noise during open enrollment.

CONCLUSION

Open enrollment is a crucial part of supporting your employees. With a carefully executed strategy, your team will feel that intentional care and feel confident in their long-term future at your organization. With these simple tips, you'll be perfectly poised to walk alongside your employees and help them see open enrollment as an exciting time, not one to dread.

Walker, E. (2024, August 13). *How to prepare for open enrollment as an employer*. PeopleKeep. <https://www.peoplekeep.com/blog/how-to-prepare-for-open-enrollment>

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