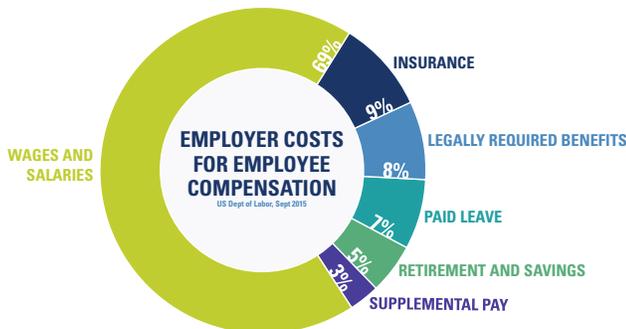


# IT'S NOT JUST WHAT YOU SAY, IT'S HOW YOU SAY IT:

## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COMMUNICATION

After wages and salaries, health insurance benefits are the largest employee expense companies incur. A robust employee benefits offering helps the recruitment and retention of top talent.



As a result, it is critical that benefits be communicated effectively so employees will appreciate all that the employer is contributing on their behalf. Benefit offerings play a major role in why people pick employers and their decision to stay or leave.

With the level of importance that employees place on benefit offerings and the cost to employers, it is alarming that plans are not effectively communicated to employees. More than half (53%) of employees say they are not completely knowledgeable of their options and have not had communication from their company about the impact ACA will have on the benefits they receive.

Companies have multi-generational workforces, making it important to use multiple channels, allowing each employer to receive information in the medium they most prefer. Employees would like a minimum of three formats and at least three weeks to make a decision prior to enrollment.

With companies looking to control costs and operate with a lean or outsourced HR department it can be challenging to implement and deploy an effective employee benefit education campaign. Partnering with a broker who has the resources and expertise to put your strategy into action removes the burden from an internal team, while maximizing the broker's value. Another benefit to utilizing a full-service broker for these value added services is the delivery of required notifications and other compliance materials.

An effective communication strategy will improve the culture of an organization by increasing both employee appreciation and the perceived value of the benefits offering. Unum's fifth annual Employee Education and Enrollment Survey showed that employees value employers who have effective benefits communication. The benefits of effective communication perpetuate as employees are happier at their workplace and are more engaged, resulting in increased company performance. The correlation between benefits education and workplace satisfaction is significant. In the Unum study, 81% of employees gave high ratings of their employer when they rated the benefits education highly. Only 23% gave high marks to their employer when highly rated benefits education was not provided.

### EMPLOYERS FIND THE FOLLOWING METHODS HELPFUL WHEN ENROLLING IN BENEFITS:

- Employer benefits website
- One-on-one In-person meetings
- Online decision-support tools
- Mailings sent to home
- Toll-free helpline
- Group in-person meetings
- Ongoing education after enrollment
- Personalized information
- Benefit fairs
- Benefits webinars

\*MetLife, Employee Benefits Trends Report

Benefit education is not simply providing a summary of the various insurance plans. Employees want to know the differences in these plans, and not just from a premium and coverage perspective. For example, quantifying a "worst case scenario" of total cost, including employee paid premium, goes a long way in educating the employee. Preparing the "worst case scenario" allows participants to see the dollar difference between a very rich high premium low deductible plan and a low premium high deductible plan. Communicating benefit coverages and the costs in a succinct manner with multiple touches throughout the year will increase plan knowledge and employee engagement.

In the current environment of rising healthcare costs, implementing an effective benefits communication strategy is a low cost high return investment that can positively transform the culture an organization and increase engagement.

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