Benefits Insights

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Open Enrollment Communication Strategies Amid COVID-19

Open enrollment has always been a busy time for HR departments. Now, amid COVID-19, there are even greater challenges for employers to manage—one of the most significant being employee benefits communication.

Given that many employers are allowing telework, getting everyone on the same page about their benefits may not be easy. Below are some communication strategies to help.

Look Back on Previous Efforts

An open enrollment communication plan shouldn't happen on the fly. Employers should consider the previous year's efforts to help inform their plan—specifically, what went well and what didn't. This will help focus the approach. For instance, if newer employees (under 12 months' tenure) were found to have missed the previous year's deadline enrollment deadline more than others, the employer should be sure to target that group early.

Tailor the Message to the Employee Group

Employees encompass a diverse set of lifestyles. Open enrollment communication should be tailored based on what matters to each employee group. Instead of sending the same information to all employees, employers should consider tailoring the messages to each group. For instance, working parents may wish to receive more information on caregiving benefits whereas senior employees may be more concerned about their 401(k) plans.

Compile Resources to Keep Messaging Simple

Constant emails that gradually trickle information to employees may cause confusion and prove ineffective. Instead, employers should compile all relevant benefits resources in one location. This place might be a company intranet site, an employee portal or some other online library. Putting everything in one place allows employers to send simple messaging, directing employees to a one-stop shop. This approach doesn't have to replace sending print materials, but it may help to proactively address employee questions.

Identify a Contact for Questions

In all enrollment communications, employees should be directed to a single contact for their questions. In many cases, this contact would be a member of the HR team. In other situations, the employees' contact may be a supervisor who will relay questions to plan administrators. Having a single contact for enrollment-related questions will help prevent any confusion or mixed messages.

Don't Overdo the Messaging

Too many messages can overwhelm employees and cause them to disregard communications. Employers should be careful to plan their messaging across all channels to limit potential ambivalence.

Follow Up Afterward

It's difficult to make improvements if there's no baseline. Employers should consider surveying employees about their enrollment experience after the period ends. This can help shape next year's initiatives and pinpoint areas for enhancement.

Speak with Insure NW for more enrollment guidance.

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