

Benefits Enrollment Strategies for Better Financial Outcomes



Simplifying Benefits Enrollment for You and Your Employees

By 2030, there could be a global talent shortage of more than 85 million, resulting in approximately \$8.5 trillion in lost annual revenues.¹ That means finding and retaining the right people is more important than ever — but also increasingly difficult.

For many companies, the solution has been to increase value propositions through better benefits packages. Not every business gets it right; only 40% of employees were satisfied with their benefits packages in 2023, down from previous years.²

To address these challenges and improve hiring, retention, morale, productivity and more, it's crucial to understand what your workers really want.

Employees consistently say health insurance is the most important benefit. In fact, 51% said fully paid healthcare premiums are more important than 401(k) matching, gym reimbursements and free onsite food.³ But they don't just want basic offerings; 88% of workers said they give “some consideration” or “heavy consideration” to health, dental and vision insurance when choosing between higher- and lower-paying jobs.⁴ That means you may not win in the hiring market if you overlook dental and vision coverage.

Of course, providing the right benefits is only half of the challenge. You must also ensure that employees understand and use those benefits so they realize the real value — and so you see appropriate ROI. That's where enrollment strategies come in.

This whitepaper is your guide through simplified, improved benefits enrollment for you and your employees. You'll learn how everything from communication to digitization can create better outcomes for everyone — and why it matters.

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PREPARING FOR SUCCESS:

What Your Employees Need to Know

If you want to realize the full value of your benefits, you need to ensure that employees are taking full advantage of them. However, that can be a challenge — particularly as 85% of workers are confused about their coverage options.⁵

As an employer, your responsibility is to help workers understand their health benefits at every level. That means establishing two things:

- + what your teams are struggling with
- + what you need to do to support them

Here's a closer look:

Common points of employee confusion

It's important to consider your benefits from an employee's perspective to see where certain elements may be confusing or frustrating.

Costs

Workers need to know three things when it comes to their benefits coverage and cost:

- + what they're paying for
- + how much they're paying
- + when they need to pay

This includes all relevant information on copays, premiums and deductibles across all plan options.

Plan types and options

Employees may not be sure what different coverage levels mean in practical terms or how they should choose between various options. They may also need help understanding how your benefits fit with those offered by their spouse's employer.

Networks

Your teams need to understand what “in-network” means and how to verify whether their current healthcare providers are part of the network. That means comparing in-network and out-of-network coverage side-by-side to help illustrate the differences.

Value

Don't forget that workers may not know exactly why it's important to have health benefits. This information helps them make the right choices for their own needs and get the most out of what you're offering. Educational materials should show value in terms of cost savings and health outcomes.

Responsibilities

Perhaps most importantly, employees should know exactly what's expected of them, from enrollment dates and paperwork to provider research and healthcare expense reviews. They may need to re-learn this information if they switch plans or are new to your organization.

Solutions for Employers

If you try to address every possible question or point of confusion, you'll quickly get overwhelmed. Instead, focus on broad strategies to address a variety of issues and make sure to ask your benefits carrier for help:

- + **Provide clear information:** When it comes to benefits, clarity is key. Ensure that you provide the necessary documentation, but consider creating additional resources with “plain language” explanations or step-by-step instructions.
- + **Start with the basics:** Don't assume that everyone understands health insurance terms. A glossary that's easy to access and understand provides real-time help for those who need it.
- + **Answer FAQs:** Keep track of the most common questions and integrate the answers into your documentation or supporting material. Pay attention to themes and patterns, as these can tell you where you may need to improve.
- + **Encourage open conversations:** Hold in-person and virtual meetings where employees can ask questions in real time and make sure they know how to get more personalized support that helps tailor their choices.
- + **Know the top pain points:** Even when you do everything right, employees can still feel confused or frustrated by insurance. Find out what they're struggling with and build your approach around the most common pain points (even if you don't have direct control over them).
- + **Emphasize value:** Remember, employees need to know that healthcare benefits matter. For example, informing them about the connections between dental, vision and overall health can encourage them to take advantage of preventive care offerings like regular checkups.



Obstacles to Employee Understanding and Benefits Utilization

Although it's helpful to know exactly where employees are struggling with benefits, some obstacles are less specific and may point to broader opportunities for improvement. That's why you should learn [why workers are confused about benefits](#) in the first place. This doesn't just help you anticipate challenges; it builds the empathy and understanding you need for a better enrollment strategy.

Here are a few common obstacles that could prevent employees from understanding and using your health benefits:

Stress

Stress from work or personal issues can make employees feel like they don't have the time or mental energy to dedicate to fully understanding their benefits — especially given the added pressure of fast-approaching enrollment dates or information overload.

Over time, stress from multiple sources can lead to overwhelm which can prevent employees from seeing the full value of your offerings and may reduce their productivity and morale.

As an employer, you can't control every variable. However, you can anticipate different kinds of stress and offer support built around these considerations. In most cases, the answer is patience — understanding that employees are juggling things you may never know about and providing simple, stress-free paths forward.





Frustration

When employees are frustrated with benefits offerings, what they're likely feeling is a lack of confidence. This can be caused by:

- + incomplete or incorrect understanding of insurance terminology
- + real or perceived discouragement from asking questions
- + lack of access to specific, helpful resources
- + inexperience with benefits plans and options

To address this broad issue, be sure to cultivate a culture of teamwork and understanding. Employees should feel comfortable getting help and should know exactly whom to ask for support — all without judgment.

Apathy and misunderstanding

Employees may disregard benefits enrollment communications if they believe they can't afford premium costs or if they think it's good enough to just select the same plans they chose last year. Some may decide to pay out-of-pocket for healthcare because they don't think they will need it or they are not likely to seek preventive care.

Enrollment and education materials that are interesting, frequent and easy to read can help break through those barriers. Additionally, short educational meetings with inviting perks and a welcoming atmosphere encourage employees to learn more about what your benefits package has to offer.

Employer advantages

An effective benefits package creates numerous advantages for companies, including:

- + increased retention and reduced turnover
- + boosted morale and employee satisfaction
- + reduced absenteeism
- + improved company reputation in the workforce and hiring marketplace

Employee advantages

There's plenty of value for employees in effective benefits packages, including:

- + improved well-being through regular preventive care visits
- + increased job satisfaction
- + convenience of employer-offered plans
- + direct savings on healthcare

How to Build Your Benefits Enrollment Strategy

Communication, resource creation and employee support can feel disjointed without an [effective enrollment process](#). That's why you need to build a strategy that will check all the right boxes. Here's what to include:

A plan for digitization

Digitized information is easier to share and update. The right software can even help you track how employees engage with resources to provide insights and improvement areas. You'll also have an easier time entering and storing data, which helps streamline other parts of your enrollment strategy.

Opportunities for self-service

Self-service benefits enrollment can simplify the process for employees and your HR team. It also improves convenience, meaning workers are more likely to take full advantage of your offerings because they have the flexibility to work through the process on their own time.

Improved employee education

[Employee benefits communication](#) should be a year-round effort. Look for employee-focused post-enrollment materials from insurance carriers to help educate your workers about coverage, plan options, how to get cost estimates and more.

Omnichannel communication

Take advantage of all the ways you can communicate with employees, including email, group chats, intranets and more. Remember that you can design resources differently depending on the channel. For example, a PDF might work best in an email, but you could share videos and infographics via the company intranet.

Benefits reviews

Your enrollment strategy should always make room for improvement. Benefits reviews are a significant part of that, allowing you to reconsider [key factors in plan design](#) as your company's needs change. You can also work with your broker at the end of the year to prepare for plan renewal and the next benefits enrollment cycle.

Employee data and feedback

Benefits brokers and insurance carriers can help you gather and track key data about plan design trends, benefits claims experiences, network utilization and more. But don't forget that your employees themselves are also an important data source; you can always ask for their opinions on new benefits or how various plans have created value.

Get More From Benefits Enrollment

Health benefits are a crucial tool for hiring, retention, productivity, morale and more — not to mention an important way to care for your employees. However, if you want to get the most ROI, you need a benefits enrollment plan that addresses top pain points and helps keep your workers on track.

Fortunately, Ameritas is here to help.

Our teams specialize in employee benefits education and creating custom enrollment materials for large groups. Thanks to years of experience in the industry, we're also experts at helping you and your employees make the most of the connection between dental, vision and overall health for better outcomes. That means we're your partner in everything from plan design to ongoing benefits utilization.

Find out more about employee benefits strategies on [our blog](#).

Sources

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