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Creating Effective Benefits Communications: Start with a Strategy

Communication matters more today than ever. Your benefit programs are constantly changing. Coupled with the advent of more complex benefit programs such as consumer-driven health plans, HSAs, HRAs, and ever-evolving voluntary benefits packages, a strategy to communicate these changes effectively is imperative.

For example, *ineffective communication resulted in 55% of employees not understanding vital plan details*, according to MetLife's 2008 Employee Benefits study. Worse yet, the study also revealed that *just 1 in 4 employees think that their benefit communication is effective*.

Benefits that are communicated clearly and effectively are understood, used properly and appreciated for their value.

So how can you increase the effectiveness of your benefits communication efforts?

Effective communication starts with a strategy!

A strategy that:

- **Understands the audience**
 - Think about all the different types of audiences that you will be communicating with – don't lump all employees into one group and use the same strategy for all.
 - Develop a different level of communication for managers and leaders who communicate with internal audiences since they will help communicate with those audiences.
- **Sets goals and objectives upfront**
 - Don't just communicate for the sake of communicating.
 - Set goals and objectives to select the messaging and tone of your communication. Goals are high level – the reason for the communication; objectives are specific actions that you want to occur as a result of the communication.
- **Considers the budget**
 - Start with an action plan or a budget limit – develop an action plan of all the things you could do to accomplish your goals and objectives, determine what you can afford and assign priorities; or work with a budget number and fit your efforts into that number.
 - Check with vendors about existing communication they might have available off-the-shelf. Customized communication is always better; however, vendors may offer communication solutions that will work – but make sure they align with your goals and culture.



Effective Communication Strategy, *continued*:

- **Develops consistent and repetitive key messages**
 - Determine the key messages – what do you want to convey? Develop messages that compel employees to think, feel and act. Make those messages clear, concise and consistent throughout all communications, regardless of the medium.

- **Selects appropriate media**
 - Consider audience communication needs – where or from whom do they get their information? What can be used to get their attention?
 - How much time do you have?
 - What is your media budget?
 - What technology do you have that can deliver the message effectively? Or what can you invest in now that will yield communication savings in the future?
 - Where are your employees located – how do you connect to various field offices and branches? How do you reach those all important spouses and dependents?

BeneCom has over 17 years of experience communicating benefits. Let us help you develop a strategy that will help you successfully communicate your valuable benefit offerings in a way that educates, increases satisfaction and motivates employees to use them in a cost-effective fashion. **BeneCom Associates offers effective benefit communications strategies for every budget.**

To learn more, call us at **860.674.2626** or visit us [online](#).