

# HR Strategies to Successfully Navigate Open Enrollment



 TIP SHEET

You spend a significant amount of time and money researching and investing in employee programs, but did you know that the average employee spends an average of 18 minutes selecting their annual benefits?

Even more concerning is the fact that half of your workforce doesn't even understand the benefit options available to them. Considering how little time is spent on reviewing and comprehending the differences in healthcare plans and additional benefits, it's likely that many employees simply re-enroll in the same plan year-after-year without fully utilizing the great options your organization puts forth. It's depressing, we know, and it needs to change.

Open enrollment is your opportunity to engage employees in dialogue about their health and increase utilization of your organization's wellbeing initiatives.

It's time to turn the annual open enrollment headache into an ongoing employee engagement opportunity.

**These 5 tips will help you get started.**



01

## Map It Out

**Communicating a compelling and inclusive wellbeing vision to employees is challenging. After all, no two employees are alike, meaning a one-size-fits-all approach simply won't cut it.**

Organize a communication calendar to enhance communications during the critical open enrollment period and beyond. Start by segmenting your audiences based on demographics and messaging needs to create targeted communications that resonate with your employees. Utilize data to identify targeting opportunities to further strengthen your communication plan.

Begin by mapping out a four-week communication sequence around the open enrollment period. Remember that the best communication strategies view open enrollment as the launching point for a dialogue

with employees year-round. Reuse this framework to organize your monthly communications for the remainder of the plan year.

**A communication calendar should include:**

- Audience segmentation
- Stakeholders
- Multi-channel delivery model
- Culture-reinforcing themes



02

## Numbers Talk

**You know healthcare costs are expensive. Do your employees? Disclose your organization's share of healthcare costs and trends. Help employees understand the investments you make in them. The transparency will expedite the conversation toward taking advantage of your benefit initiatives and improving their health.**

Of course, the numbers are just part of the overall story you want to tell. Make it personal for people so they understand what's in it for them and how your efforts positively impact their lives. Even better, weave the numbers into a narrative and find ways to convey the story visually, as both methods are proven to improve people's retention of information.

**Consider communicating your message via a mix of channels, including:**

- Newsletters
- Posters
- Social
- Webinars
- Infographics
- Large installations
- Podcasts
- Peer champions



03

## Add Some Fun

**For many employees, open enrollment is stressful, time consuming, and definitely not exciting. Consider adding a little fun to make the event more interactive and less boring by incorporating an engaging company-wide challenge into the mix.**

Encourage employees to get active, eat and sleep right, and participate in your open enrollment programming. A company challenge is a great way to create momentum and get employees thinking about their health and wellbeing and can increase employee participation and engagement in open enrollment.

When implemented successfully, incorporating friendly challenges into your strategy will strengthen company culture and foster social connections. To begin, recruit your company-wide champions to serve as challenge ambassadors and drive participation.

Track, measure, and share key statistics (such as the ones listed below) to ensure employees recognize the overall impact. Develop an action plan for the following year to continue to improve upon these metrics.

**Challenge results to highlight:**

- Enrollment
- Participation
- Behavior changes
- Outcomes
- Overall satisfaction
- Additional feedback



04

## Realign Your Strategy

### Do any of these scenarios sound familiar?

- Low or stagnant benefits enrollment and utilization
- Increased costs associated to specific lifestyles or conditions
- Incentives that fail to move the needle on population risks

If so, adjust your marketing approach to ensure you focus on benefits that address high costs and connect employee offerings with needs and goals that resonate with your populations.

If your approach has stalled, reevaluate how you define your goals. Determine the outcomes you seek to drive from your workforce and establish new, meaningful, and measurable goals. Create opportunities to reassess progress along the way and adjust course as needed to keep your overall goals within reach.

### Questions to ask yourself before diving in:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What actions do you want employees to take?
- How will you define success?
- What measures will be in place to inform program adjustments?
- How will your efforts align with overall business goals?



05

## Cultivate Your Culture

**Don't let open enrollment be the one time each year when benefits are top of mind for your employees. Your ultimate goal is to create a culture of inclusive wellbeing, improve employee engagement and communication, and realize better business outcomes.**

Creating a culture of wellbeing starts with a commitment and ongoing support from your leaders. Once they're on board, integrate health into your corporate mission, values, policies, and everyday activities. When employees see this culture infused in every aspect of your organization, getting behind it will feel like second nature.

### **Keys to establish a culture of wellbeing include:**

- Assessing your organization's readiness for change
- Ensuring your approach is inclusive of all populations
- Creating a team of champions across the organization
- Developing targeted activities and events year-round
- Offering forums for employees to celebrate success
- Executing and measuring your efforts

Having an understanding that who an individual is and where they live as drivers of a healthy workforce and culture is crucial. For leadership, this means building an inclusive culture and investing in solutions that scale across your global workforce but enables local content, languages, imagery, and assessments to deliver sustainable impact.

Planning for open enrollment with a hybrid workforce presents new challenges, but digital health tools can simplify this busy time of year for everyone. Virgin Pulse is the industry's only true Homebase for Health®, providing a highly personalized, access-from-anywhere employee wellbeing platform that can integrate and help employees navigate all your benefits offerings that keeps employees informed about and connected to the resources they need to bring their best selves to work each day.

**Ready to kickstart a culture of inclusive wellbeing and communicate all your HR benefits and initiatives to your employees, wherever they are? [Talk to an expert at Virgin Pulse to get started.](#)**

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