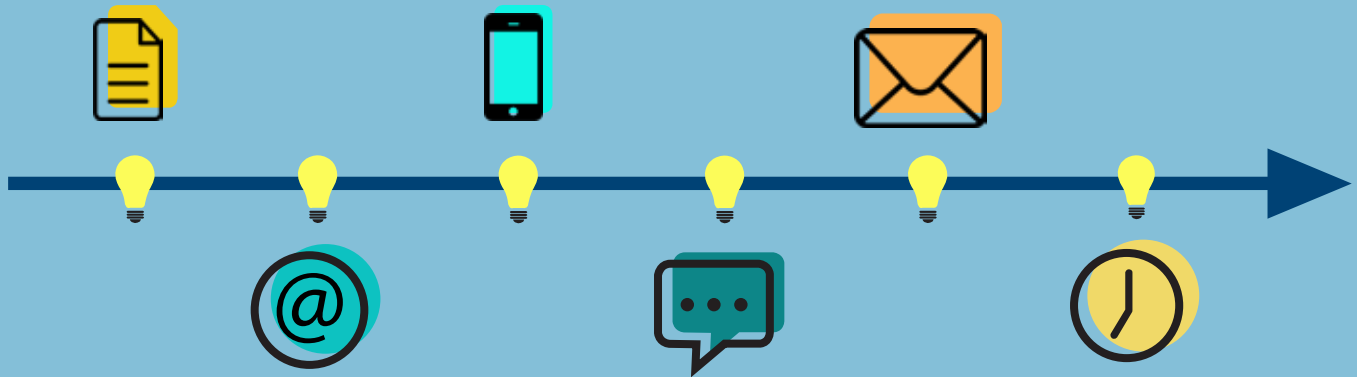


OPEN ENROLLMENT



Maximizing Open Enrollment for Employees

Open enrollment can be an overwhelming time for both employers and employees. Employees are given the opportunity to re-evaluate their current benefits and make changes for the coming year, while employers must choose a benefits package that balances cost and value and facilitate the enrollment process. Due to a variety of factors, benefit offerings are changing, placing new demands on employees and employers during open enrollment. To make the enrollment process as smooth as possible, it is important that employers educate and communicate with their employees effectively.

The Open Enrollment Process

As employer-sponsored benefits transition to more voluntary, employee-paid or employee-subsidized offerings, employees must assume more control in making smart decisions. Accordingly, employers should provide benefit information in an easy-to-understand format that provides employees with essential information, along with additional resources to help them make decisions.

Here is a typical open enrollment process:

- Notification—Employers send out an organization-wide announcement alerting employees that open enrollment will begin shortly.
- Receipt of Information—Employers distribute information about benefit plans, selection information and the appropriate forms to their workers. Employees may also receive personal information based on their elections from the previous year.



Employers may direct their employees to the company website, invite them to attend HR seminars, offer a benefit fair with the insurance company or offer access to interactive decision-making tools.

- Making Decisions—Employees research their various benefits options and discuss with family to determine which benefits they will elect for the coming year.
- Enrollment—Employees select their benefits.

Open Enrollment Strategies

The following suggestions, based partially on an employee survey conducted by MetLife®, can improve the open enrollment process for both employers and their employees:

- Establish solid communication between the HR department and employees. To do so effectively, conduct meetings and seminars and offer calculators, intranet education information and benefit fairs. If your organization is smaller, conduct one-on-one meetings with employees to determine exactly the type of information they need.
- Survey your employee population to determine their priorities—product importance, preferred method of communication, etc. By doing so, employers can identify exactly what their employees want, and workers feel their needs have been heard by decision-makers.
- Customize benefits and information resources to the life stages of your employees. For instance, if you have a large older population, feature more retiree benefits.

