



BENEFITS INSIGHTS



How to Build a Benefits Communications Calendar

Offering competitive benefits is only half the battle. If employees don't understand, remember or know how to use their benefits, even the most robust package can feel underwhelming. That's why savvy organizations treat benefits communication as a year-round strategy rather than just an open enrollment push. It's never too early to start preparing for the next calendar year, and never too late to create a plan for the remainder of the year.

A well-planned employee benefits communication calendar helps employers deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time.

This article explains how to build and maintain an effective employee benefits communication calendar.

Why Employers Need a Communication Calendar

A benefits communication calendar is a structured, annual plan that outlines key details about sharing benefits information with employees. For example, the calendar can outline what will be communicated, when it will be delivered, who it is for and how it will be shared. This calendar may be used by company leadership, HR and benefits teams, or communications departments. Rather than reacting to questions or deadlines, organizations can proactively guide employees through key benefits moments, such as open enrollment, life events, wellness initiatives and reminder campaigns throughout the year.

Employers often underestimate how complex benefits feel to employees. Medical, dental, retirement, financial wellness and voluntary benefits can create cognitive overload, especially when communication is rushed. As a result, some organizations may first assess organizational and employee healthcare literacy to understand their current levels and opportunities for improvement. Then, the company could develop a more specific communication plan to educate employees year-round about the topics they are most interested in or confused about.

As such, a communications calendar can help organizations:

- Reduce confusion and last-minute enrollment issues.
- Improve employee understanding and appreciation of benefits.
- Improve organizational and/or employee healthcare literacy.
- Support compliance with required notices and disclosures.
- Spread education across the year instead of cramming it into open enrollment.

- Align benefits messaging with broader organizational goals.

Ultimately, consistent and valuable communication builds trust and improves the employee experience.

Developing a Communications Calendar

Building a communications calendar establishes a strong foundation for the year. This phase defines what will be communicated, when and why. Consider the following steps for building a communications calendar focused on benefits.

Inventory All Benefits and Requirements

Begin by identifying every benefit and related obligation, including:

- Health plans
- Retirement and savings programs
- Wellness program offerings
- Employee assistance program offerings
- Voluntary benefits
- Paid leave policies
- Required notices and compliance communications

This inventory ensures no benefit or required disclosure is overlooked in the calendar year.

Align Communications to the Employee Lifecycle

Next, map benefits to key moments when employees are most receptive to communications, such as:

- New hire onboarding
- Life events (e.g., marriage, birth and relocation)
- Open enrollment
- Wellness initiatives
- Retirement or financial planning milestones

This shifts communication from a deadline-driven to an employee-driven approach.

Identify Annual Anchor Moments

Establish the fixed points around which your calendar will revolve, including:

- Open enrollment and renewal periods
- Midyear benefit reviews or wellness campaigns
- Year-end planning and reminders

These “anchors” create predictability and enable proactive communication planning.

Define Target Audiences

The reality is that not all employees need the same information. As such, it's important to try to segment communications where possible, such as:

- New hires vs. tenured employees
- Full-time vs. part-time employees
- Remote vs. on-site teams
- Managers vs. individual contributors

- Employees with dependents

Targeted messaging reduces confusion and increases engagement. It helps ensure that the messaging is appropriate and meaningful to certain employee groups.

Select Communication Channels

Channels also have their own purpose and may vary depending on the employee group or the specific message being shared. Determine how each message will be delivered to the target audience, using a mix of:

- Email
- Intranet or benefits portals
- Webinars or live meetings
- Short videos or visual guides
- Manager toolkits

Choosing the right channel is just as important as the message itself, so spend some time selecting the channel that will resonate best with the target audience.

Build the Calendar Framework

Once the details have been decided, it's time to start mapping out the calendar. Employers may use a monthly or quarterly view and outline the following components:

- Communication topics and objectives
- Timing and frequency
- Audiences
- Channels
- Internal owners

This framework becomes the centralized reference point for benefits communication across teams and departments.

Maintaining a Communications Calendar

Once built, the communications calendar must be actively managed. Maintenance turns a static plan into a living strategy. Consider the following steps for maintaining such a calendar.

Balance Education, Reminders and Promotion

Ongoing success depends on variety. This balance prevents burnout while reinforcing value. As such, effective calendars include:

- Education to explain how benefits work
- Reminders tied to deadlines or actions
- Promotion of underused or lesser-known benefits

Assign Clear Ownership

Next, clear ownership keeps the calendar from becoming outdated or ignored. Maintenance requires accountability, so it's important to clarify:

- Who updates the calendar
- Who creates and approves content
- Who delivers communications
- Who tracks results

Monitor Engagement and Feedback

Employee engagement and feedback can help highlight what's working and what needs adjustment. Use available data to assess effectiveness, such as:

- Benefits utilization trends
- Open enrollment participation
- Email engagement metrics
- Employee survey feedback
- Common HR questions

Refine and Adapt Throughout the Year

Flexibility ensures the calendar remains relevant and effective. Therefore, benefits and employee needs evolve. A strong maintenance process allows employers to:

- Adjust messaging based on feedback.
- Add or remove communications as priorities shift.
- Respond to organizational or regulatory changes.

Conclusion

Building a benefits communication calendar creates clarity and structure, and maintaining it creates impact. When employers commit to both goals, benefits communication becomes a strategic advantage rather than an administrative burden. For employers, it can create clarity, consistency, and confidence. For employees, it may help replace confusion with understanding and appreciation.

Contact us for more employee communication resources.