

Staying connected: how can professional service firms amplify employee benefits programs while working remotely?

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, global immobility and social distancing measures have triggered a radical shift in working practices for professional service firms. Remote working has enabled firms to remain operational, but prolonged social isolation is impacting employee wellbeing.

Employee benefit programs are a critical tool to enable firms to support their colleagues and build employee engagement, but with much of the workforce working remotely, how can leaders ensure colleagues are able to access the relevant information?

Firms are invested in supporting their people and recognize the importance of communicating about existing coverages and new programs that help their employees cope with the added stress and anxiety of the past year. Benefits personnel previously accustomed to embarking on “road shows” to multiple offices are now tasked with using new mediums to keep the value proposition brought by their firm’s investment in employee benefits front-and-center.

Aon’s Enrollment Solutions experts recommend an “all of the above” strategy when it comes to communicating about benefits:

On-demand webinars

Recordings that deliver benefits education in a concise format and focus on key topics like open enrollment dates, information about significant changes, and instructions on how to enroll or change elections. They can also be used to remind colleagues on how to get the most out of the programs – using in-network medical providers or participating in the wellness or wellbeing programs, for example.

Live group meetings (via Webex, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, etc.)

Virtual benefits education sessions centered around questions and answers. These sessions can be used to answer questions and concerns during annual enrollment periods or to conduct a deep dive into a new offering that have been recently rolled out, such as back-up care plans or additional behavioral health resources.

Virtual face-to-face sessions

Offer employees, partners, and executives the opportunity to participate in virtual one-on-one meetings with a benefits counselor to review their specific needs and options in the work-from-home environment.

Traditional strategies

Firms should not forget the value of sending postcards and other informational mailings to employees at home. Other historically successful non-virtual strategies should also be continued, if feasible.

To discuss any of the topics raised in this article, please contact **Mark Scarafone** and **Jake Delman**.