

Communicating Benefits Through Social Networking

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Your company's benefits package provides you with a great way to attract and retain staff, but this only works if your employees know how and when to take advantage of what is offered. Because of the explosive growth of social networking sites such as Facebook® and Twitter™, combined with the increasing popularity of PDAs, the number of avenues employers have to communicate with their employees also continues to grow.

As benefits managers are becoming less apprehensive regarding talking publicly about health benefit plans, the use of social networking sites to reach out to employees regarding general benefit information is starting to become more common. Utilizing social networking sites as a platform to break down potentially confusing and overwhelming amounts of benefit information can be a great way to really reach out to your employees.

Perks of Using Twitter to Communicate Benefits

As one of the most popular sites to communicate benefits information, Twitter is a quick and flexible way to get information out to your employees, and can be a powerful addition to your benefits communication initiative as well. Sending fast and frequent updates to your employees helps to keep them thinking about their benefits year-round.

- Twitter makes you keep your message short – 140 characters, about 20 words – so it's perfect for communicating about events, notices, tips and reminders.
- Short messages entice your employees to link to more detailed information.
- Quite often benefits communication is delivered in a one-size-fits-all package with so much technical information that the employee cannot find what they're looking for. Twitter allows you to break down the message into short and concise "tweets" or posts.
- You can pull a Twitter™ feed into your intranet or benefits Web site, employees can receive your tweets on their mobile phones, or they can sign up for RSS feeds. This lets your employees choose how they want to receive information from a variety of outlets.
- Twitter is interactive, so it's easy for your employees to send a quick question that not only the benefits manager, but other employees can answer. And many benefits questions are general, can be answered in less than 10 words and do not require personal information to be exchanged. Questions such as "Where to I submit claims for the FSA?" can be answered using Twitter, saving the employee and benefits manager valuable time.

Although Twitter™ is a great way to get benefits information out to your employees and their families, comprehensive resources are still necessary. A mix of online, interactive, print and in-person communication provide a well-rounded benefits communication strategy.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.