

# Marketing Your Benefits: How to Create Competitive Messaging

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In a hyper-competitive hiring environment, we know candidates are evaluating all aspects of a potential new employer, especially benefits. But having the best benefits package does little good if job candidates—or your current employees—don't understand its value and how to utilize it. Make sure you are marketing your benefits with a clear, competitive message that ties in your culture and defines your brand.

## **Make Marketing Part of Your Strategy**

Just as you are evaluating potential employees, job candidates are deciding if your organization and its culture would be a good fit for them. Benefits are one more way to reflect and reinforce your values and culture.

This effort should start with the strategic planning meeting and a deep dive into the demographics of your organization. Understanding the decisions your employees make allows you to design your benefits package with all the typical factors in mind like coverage, network and budget. It also allows you to consider how your benefits align with your organization's cultures and how you can make those benefits easier to communicate. Issues that confuse employees at open enrollment, like too many or too similar plan choices, will also dull the impact for potential hires.

Sometimes this means making small, nuanced changes to plan design that can make communication easier. For example, bumping the employer contribution of your most popular health plan to a round number creates a more compelling talking point. The extra half of a percent shouldn't amount to a significant cost increase but should pay dividends for recruiters and make it easier for candidates to understand and appreciate.

Don't forget about voluntary benefits. Strategically selected perks can offer employees exclusive benefits and added value. This becomes more effective if they align with their priorities and are presented as part of company culture.

Incorporating these details into your benefits messaging makes your organization enticing and shows your current employees you are dedicated to supporting their health and well-being.

## **Understand Your Employees' Communication Styles**

Educating your current employees on your benefits is crucial. If your employees don't understand how to use their benefits—or the value they offer—the strategy behind your benefits decisions is lost. In order to effectively educate your employees and create a communication plan, you must understand their communication preferences.

Conducting employee surveys is helpful in getting these answers. Addressing areas like:

- Preferred method of communication -- Do employees rely on desktop or mobile?
- Do they prefer company meetings, individual appointments, webinars, a combination or something else to discuss benefits and open enrollment?
- Workforce needs -- Does your workforce have multiple language requirements or other accessibility needs?

### **Create a Competitive Message for Your Candidates**

Your benefits are only as competitive as your messaging. And a competitive benefits package loses some of its value if you can't market it in front of your candidates. This has always been true, but it has become a much more important piece of the hiring process in the current marketplace. In-demand candidates may be comparing multiple offers. This is an opportunity to emphasize the value of your benefits plan.

Communicate your company's offerings earlier in the hiring process in a digestible way. Consider creating a one-page highlight sheet to give your candidates a holistic view of your company, its benefits and its culture. This allows you to emphasize the strongest aspects of your benefits plan and helps to sell the candidate on your organization and culture. This is where that round employer contribution number you decided on during renewal will stand out.

Often, younger employees want to see a company's wellness and charitable initiatives stand out as strongly as their benefits and compensation package. So build your benefits messaging into your company culture deck, communicating that it is a core piece of your brand.

Similarly, an organization that maintains a family friendly culture should have benefits to match. This could include robust family medical care, generous paid family medical leave, child care benefits or fertility benefits. Highlight and connect these benefits with culture in hiring communications.

### **Market Your Message**

Your benefits, your brand and related messaging to employees and prospects is all connected. Designing each in consideration of the others creates a more compelling, synergistic package. Benefits consultants can assist and advise employers on more than just renewal rates. Consultants play an active role in their client's strategic plan to attract and retain talent. Partner with your consultant to help you make informed decisions on how to best communicate your benefits to potential—and current—employees.

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