

Benefits Insights

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Virtual Open Enrollment Fairs

Open enrollment fairs are a great way for employers and benefits providers to help employees understand and enroll in the benefits programs that meet their needs. These fairs are typically done in person, and they allow employees to learn about available benefits and discuss offerings with providers. Just as the COVID-19 pandemic may be changing what employees need for benefits, the format of open enrollment events should change, too.

With open enrollment season around the corner and many organizations extending work-from-home policies, a virtual open enrollment fair may be necessary. This article explores benefits and best practices for organizations moving their open enrollment events online.

The Importance of Reimagining Fairs

Although employees are used to attending in-person open enrollment meetings, this is the time for organizations to reimagine their benefits events and find a solution that works best for their workforce during an ever-evolving pandemic.

Before you spend time and resources, reflect on what was successful about past in-person open enrollment fairs and what you're hoping to achieve this time around. Concentrate on what's most important for your employees to know, do and feel coming out of the open enrollment fair. Think ahead to how you will determine the success of the virtual event. Focus on what matters most to the bottom line and your people.

Virtual open enrollment fairs are:

- **Convenient**—Now more than ever, employees are busy with work and personal life, as many employees continue to work from home. Between work, caregiving and other responsibilities, employees should find virtual fairs more accessible and accommodating to their schedules. Also,

consider the time-savings for your employees who will be involved in planning and running the event.

- **Cost-effective**—A virtual event can also reduce costs for participating organizations. By going online, there is no cost for traveling or printing collateral. Going paperless is an eco-friendly bonus, too.
- **Evergreen**—Pushing benefits partners to share digital resources about their offerings means that you will have information available year-round to share with employees.

Plus, you can reuse any content created for the virtual fair. You can easily repurpose open enrollment content for new hires or other employees as needed.

Tips for Going Virtual

If your organization is ready to take open enrollment fairs online, here are some general best practices to consider.

- Connect early with benefits partners to collaborate and customize resources for your employees. Since everyone has limited time, it's important to zero in on what employees need to know about their options or what has changed from the year before.
- Develop an extensive agenda covering both general and specific benefits. If employees know what they want to learn more about, they can attend that specific session, make their enrollment decisions quicker and resume their workday.
- Include anonymous testimonials from employees about featured benefits or those benefits for which you would like to boost enrollment.

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- Provide clear instructions and details about how and when to attend the virtual fair. If you're introducing a new platform or web conferencing service to employees, make sure they have plenty of time to download and set up any accounts necessary to join when it's time for the event.
- Conduct a survey or raffle to drive virtual engagement and participation among employees. Swag is one of the top motivators for employees to attend in-person events. Collaborate with benefits partners on what could be virtually offered or directly distributed among employees.

If you do not have an existing benefits website available, consider building an internal digital destination so employees have a year-round resource. You can post evergreen partner resources on there and continue to share any other relevant benefits updates. Organizations' benefits experts can also set up virtual office hours to answer any lingering questions or concerns before completing enrollment.

Other Considerations

It can be overwhelming to redesign all open enrollment processes and events to fit the needs of a remote workforce. The solution is what works best for your employees—and your budget.

To learn more about open enrollment, contact LassiterWare today.