



## MAXIMIZING THE VALUE OF A GREAT BENEFITS PACKAGE TO STAFF & FACULTY

Items covered in this article are as follows:

- **Benefits Renewal Preparation**
- **Communication Strategy**
- **Empathic Engagement with Staff and Faculty**
- **Individual Private Meeting Availability**
- **Ongoing Educational Support after Open Enrollment**

In this brief article, we want to stress a few main points to help maximize the district's employee benefits program with the renewal season for most districts coming this summer. A strong benefit package offered to staff and faculty is critical to the stability and overall success of any school district. Benefits, namely group health insurance, are very expensive and identifying opportunities to increase the value and understanding of those benefits for staff and faculty will go a long way in helping a district meet its overall goals.

As a district, you should be in clear communication with your benefits consultant/agent at least 6 months in advance of your next plan year renewal, which for most schools is in July, August or September.

### Benefits Package Renewal Preparation

There are so many items that need of review and discussion in the renewal preparation process. From a detailed discussion and assignment of responsibilities early in the process, to setting up progress report sessions along the way, it takes a great deal of organization and follow through led by the benefits consultant and the specific school district client.

The technical process is a major area that requires a great deal of focus, but another area that is often overlooked is the execution of clear communication and education of the program once it has been finalized. We like to label that as "empathic engagement" of everyone that is offered and enrolled in the benefits program.

### Empathic Engagement

Once the school's benefits renewal goals and desires are completed, a strong and clear communication plan is critical to its success for the next school year. Often times the communication to those enrolled and eligible for the benefits program is done electronically and/or in hard copy form with benefits packets for each employee. There is always a great deal of technical and often times confusing information to review. For long-

term employees, this is not overwhelming unless the benefits package has dramatic changes for the upcoming plan year. For younger and newer staff and faculty members of the district, this indeed may be a challenge. This is where small group or one-on-one “empathic engagement” can make a huge difference during a district’s open enrollment period. We view empathic engagement as having that personal touch to help review and educate in person, which is preferred or availability by phone or email to the benefits consultant themselves or their supporting team members. These sessions are able to take a great deal of the lift and stress off the district’s leadership and administrative staff. If that engagement is completed at a high level, it makes the whole process a great deal more efficient and effective and drive a great deal more value to everyone in the program.

### **Empathic Support is Key to the Open Enrollment Process**

Empathy is an important part of emotional intelligence. Humans are social beings who rely on one another for socialization and survival. An empathic approach in connecting with anyone and in this case, adults learning employee benefit updates, changes and overall information, elevates the value a great deal. Health and wellness overall are emotional areas for most and having a benefits partner/consultant with that mindset can make all of the difference. The key is to have several open enrollment sessions available in a comfortable area and making sure that those presenting and answering questions have an empathic approach. That means listening and providing examples as well as being open to meet with individuals one-on-one as their questions may have sensitive and private health and financial material. We have also encouraged that spouses and partners that may be enrolled also have an opportunity to attend the meetings or meet one on one. The more education and access the better.

### **Private Availability and Follow-Up to Individuals is Critical**

Many people often have questions about their employee benefits that involve sensitive personal and private details. The benefits consultant and their team members should promote and make people aware that one-on-one empathic connections will be made available for those who have sensitive/private items to discuss. Individuals who take part in those private meetings will feel a great deal more comfortable bringing their specific private concerns to the forefront. Specifically for a health plan, having a clear understanding of one’s coverages and options is significant. It is considered a success if enrolled members use their benefits for regular preventive care and understand the coverages and access points for acute and chronic conditions.

We wish you all well as spring is approaching and for a very successful employee benefits renewal season this summer!

***Important Disclaimer: We strongly recommend connecting with a licensed professional for an assessment and a complete understanding of your current and future employee benefits coverages and compliance requirements.***



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