

Education after  
annual enrollment:  
**5 ways to stay  
connected  
throughout the  
plan year**





## Benefits education doesn't end after open enrollment. To realize the value of your benefits program, you have to help your employees use it.

In today's talent market, a valuable employee benefits package is critical. That may be why more than half (56 percent) of organizations say they have increased physical and mental health support for employees<sup>1</sup>.

But no matter how much work you put into crafting the perfect lineup of plan offerings and programs, your package isn't helping if your people aren't using it. While you probably prepared for a great open enrollment season, have you considered what you can do afterward to ensure your employees' success?

The beginning of a new plan year is the perfect time to reengage employees in benefits education. By continuing your efforts, you can make sure your people use and value the plans and programs you developed and they signed up for.

Here are five ideas you can use to stay connected with your people now and throughout the plan year.

<sup>1</sup><https://2022.risk-outlook.com/>



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# 01

## Choose the right communication channels

To truly engage with your employees on benefits, you need to make sure your communications strategy is effective. Your people need to know you'll be their partner during the entire plan year and will be available with the right message at the right time and in the right place.

With nearly half (45 percent) of full-time employees doing at least some remote work in September 2021<sup>2</sup>, organizations will need to get creative in how they accomplish this. In addition to communicating via traditional channels like email or on-site signage, consider using:

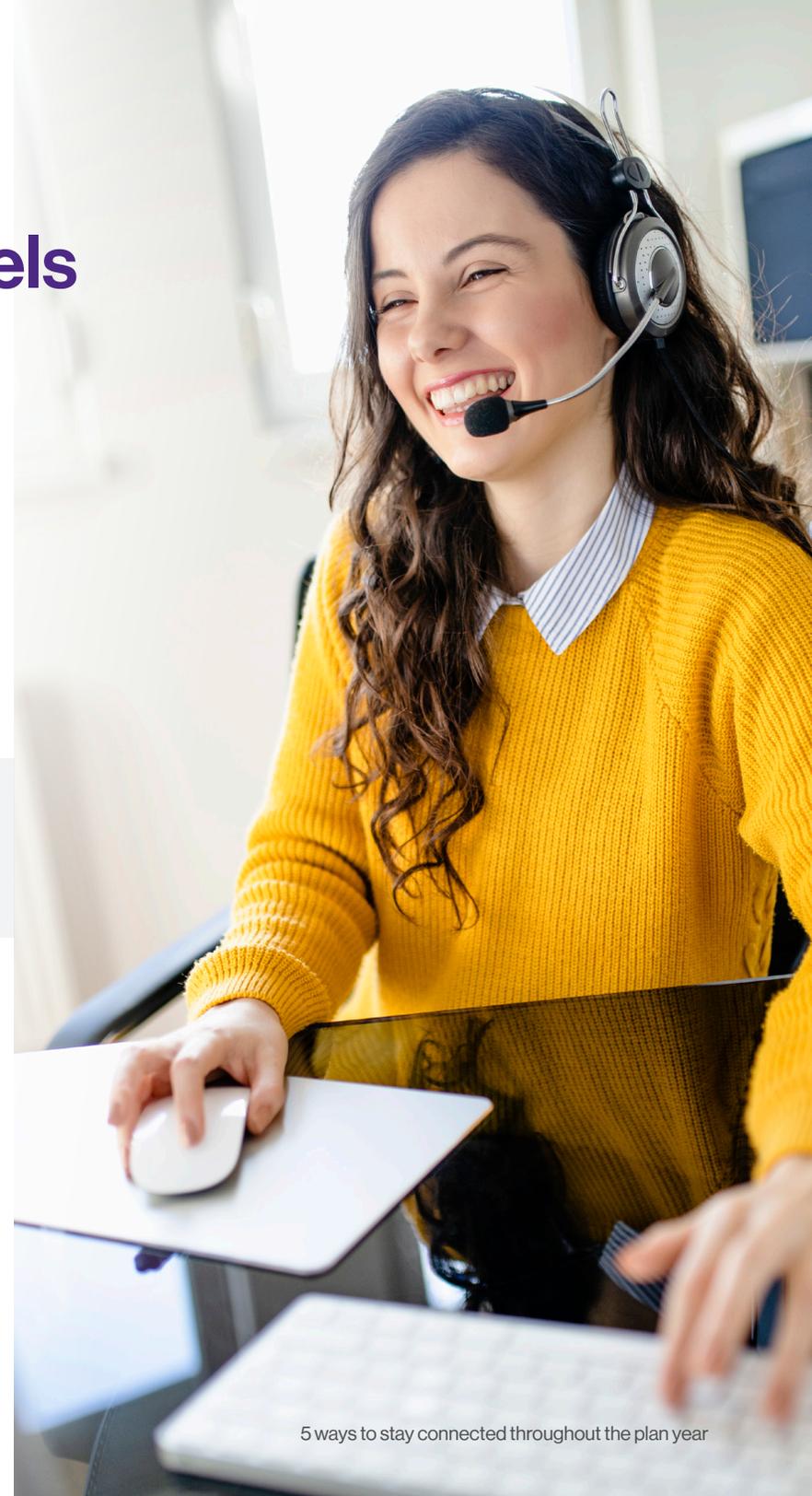
-  Intranet
-  Employee blog
-  Group messaging
-  Text messaging
-  Online or streamed events

If you use an employee benefits platform like HealthEquity, you can also encourage your people to sign into their accounts or download the appropriate app when the plan year begins.<sup>3</sup> They can orient themselves with the technology and explore where they'll receive messages from your organization's benefits team or your benefits partners.

Even for long-tenured employees, this kind of early communication can help set up the right expectations and foster benefits engagement that lasts throughout the plan year.

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/355907/remote-work-persisting-trending-permanent.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Accounts must be activated via the HealthEquity website in order to use the mobile app.



# 02

## Clarify the logistics of HSA use



Health Savings Accounts (HSA) are an increasingly popular benefit. With HSA-qualified health plan premiums roughly 11 percent lower than the premiums of traditional PPO options<sup>4</sup>, signing up for an HSA can help employees cut costs while they build personal health savings.

Unfortunately, not everyone who signs up for an HSA ends up using it. According to a 2020 JAMA Network analysis, 55 percent of people with an HSA didn't contribute to their account in the past year<sup>5</sup>. Your organization can work to prevent this outcome by making sure those who have an HSA understand exactly how it works.

Start by reminding employees how HSA funding works at your organization. Typically, HSAs can be:

-  Entirely employee-funded
-  Offered with an employer seed
-  Offered with an employer match
-  Offered with a mix of seed and matching funding from the employer

If your organization offers any seed or match-based funding, make sure to remind employees when that money is available. HealthEquity research shows that people whose employers offer an HSA match are more likely to contribute their own funds<sup>6</sup>, helping them engage with the benefit throughout the year.

You should also work with your benefits team (or benefits platform, like HealthEquity) to help employees understand how their HSA works logistically. If your employees receive an HSA debit card, make sure they know how to activate and use it. Ensure they download any necessary apps and know to save receipts when appropriate.

Once your employees understand the basics, you can prepare for more advanced education further in the plan year.

For example, you should be ready to introduce and discuss HSA investing once employees have a sufficient balance in their accounts. Even employees who have had their HSA for several years may not know they can invest their funds.<sup>7</sup> Yet this is one of the fastest ways people can grow their account balances – those who invest their HSA funds have balances that are roughly six times higher than the balances of non-investors.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kff.org/report-section/ehbs-2021-section-1-cost-of-health-insurance/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2020/07/17/Study-55-in-US-with-health-savings-accounts-dont-contribute-to-them/9401594992460/](https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2020/07/17/Study-55-in-US-with-health-savings-accounts-dont-contribute-to-them/9401594992460/)

<sup>6</sup> HealthEquity, 2020: Build a Winning HSA.

<sup>7</sup> Investments made available to HSA holders are subject to risk, including the possible loss of the principal invested, and are not FDIC or NCUA insured, or guaranteed by HealthEquity, Inc.

# 03

## Remind FSA accontholders of their funds

Another benefit worth addressing is the flexible spending account (FSA). In 2021, 43 percent of workers in the private sector had access to a healthcare FSA<sup>8</sup>, making it an important – and progressively more common – part of your overall package.

FSAs can be used to pay for important healthcare expenses throughout the plan year. However, many people with an FSA wait until the final weeks, or even into the FSA grace period, to spend their funds. With a deadline looming, they may make hasty decisions that don't reflect the full potential of the benefit. Spending down FSA balances at the end of the year also means many don't receive significant value from their account until that time.

Your benefits team can help your people access that value earlier – and potentially make more thoughtful spending decisions.

Many organizations that contribute to employee FSAs choose to disburse that funding at the beginning of the plan year. Employees, however, may not realize this. Simply reminding your people that they have funding available can prompt them to use it.

You can also encourage employees to think about and plan for how they want to use their FSA funds during the plan year. Budgeting for certain expenses likely makes purchases with FSA funds more thoughtful – and therefore more valuable to the employee.



Consider providing lists of eligible FSA expenses to generate spending ideas. Remember, however, that some of your employees may have signed up for a Limited Purpose (or HSA-Compatible) FSA. In this case, they may use FSA funds for eligible dental and vision care expenses only.

Because your people likely chose their benefits a few months ahead of the plan start date, you may want to remind them of the type of plan they signed up for.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/factsheet/flexible-benefits-in-the-workplace.htm>

# 04

## Capitalize on New Year goals with your wellness program

Organizational wellness programs have been a standard offering for a while, but they're receiving increased prioritization as the ongoing pandemic strains physical and mental health. According to a 2021 report from Mercer, nearly 40 percent of employees say they feel some level of stress, with one in five reporting high or extreme stress<sup>9</sup>. Many are looking to their employers for support.

Culturally, your people are likely to be most engaged with health and wellness goals at the beginning of a new year. You can capitalize on this increased attention to wellbeing by promoting your wellness offerings.

Work within the parameters of your wellness program to help your people set attainable goals. Make sure they know of any resources or incentives you're offering in conjunction with participation and help them sign up.



When planning events, be sure to address the needs of a hybrid workforce. Many wellness activities can be hosted virtually and your benefits team can leverage apps and software to track and reward progress.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/health/mmb-2021-health-on-demand.html>



# 05

## Stay focused on new developments in the benefits landscape



Your benefits team should be an expert not only on your own benefits program, but also on the employee benefits industry as a whole. In a space as dynamic as healthcare, for example, it's crucial to have people on staff who understand new developments and how they affect the organization.

Your benefits team should also prepare to educate employees on any changes. But consider keeping that information tailored to how they affect the company's programs; new federal regulations or congressional bills may be interesting to some, but they can often feel overwhelmingly detailed.



In 2021, a HealthEquity survey found that employees whose employer expanded benefits during the pandemic reported significantly higher satisfaction with their company<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://blog.healthequity.com/how-to-retain-and-attract-talent-during-the-great-resignation>

# Make things easier with HealthEquity

Partnering with HealthEquity makes it easy to stay connected with your people throughout the plan year. With programs like Engage360, you can feel confident about benefits education and engagement all year long. Utilize our open enrollment toolkit, deploy our thematic Engagement Packages, and learn best practices in our ongoing training events. You can even use analytics-fueled Health Savings Score to benchmark your performance against industry peers and identify opportunities for improvement.

With HealthEquity, you'll be sure to get the plan year off to a great start. And you'll be free to focus on your areas of expertise, providing a full lifecycle of benefits support to your people.

Questions? We're here for you 24/7  
[866.408.5482](tel:866.408.5482) | [my.HealthEquity.com](https://my.HealthEquity.com)



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