

## Once is not enough! Promote perks year-round

For too many employers, benefits communication consists of handing an annual statement to workers and saying, “See you next year.”

However, a new Hewitt Associates survey says U.S. workers’ biggest complaint about their employee benefits isn’t cost or access—it’s that employees don’t really understand the benefits that they already have.

Lack of understanding leads to lack of appreciation for their benefits ... and eventually more turnover.

Ongoing education is crucial.

*Reason:* Employees’ benefits needs are constantly changing along with their life milestones, some of which are predictable (marriage, buying a home, having a child, paying for college) and some of which aren’t (facing an illness or elder care issue).

Here are inexpensive ways HR can educate employees year-round:

- **Surveys.** Ask employees about the benefits they use—or want to use—and what level of understanding they have about each benefit. Use the results to educate employees through several mediums.
- **Create a benefits newsletter.** Make it weekly, monthly or quarterly. Mail it to employees, distribute it with paychecks or send it via e-mail. Keep it simple and explain one benefit at a time. Your benefit providers may offer templates.
- **Tie education to seasonal events.** *Example:* Connect 401(k) information to tax season to illustrate how employees can save and defer taxes on money invested in the plan.
- **Host periodic brown-bag and drop-in meetings.** HR and representatives from your providers (health, life, retirement, etc.) can explain policies and answer questions. Distribute relevant materials before the meeting. Hold an annual education session for workers *and* their spouses.
- **Advertise.** Use media such as posters, postcards and paycheck stuffers to advertise newsletters, events, meetings and other education efforts.
- **Brand benefits education.** Create a logo and tag line for the benefits communication program to increase employee recognition of education efforts.