



Engagement Energizer

**12 Months of Better Benefits
Communication**



There are 12 months in the year. So why do so many companies try to squeeze a year's worth of benefits communication into two weeks during Annual Enrollment?

Here's what year-round benefits communication looks like in practice: "Engagement Energizer" is a sample communications calendar that maximizes benefits messages by linking them to key engagement and decision-making moments in employees' lives.

It can help you reimagine how you communicate with employees to engage and excite them about their benefits, no matter what time of year.



January

Like a fresh snowfall, January holds the promise of fresh starts like no other month – so now is the time to capitalize on employees' sense of renewal and **New Year's resolutions**. According to Nielsen data, the most common resolutions are to:

Stay fit and healthy 37%

Lose weight 32%

Enjoy life to the fullest 28%

Spend more time with family and friends 19%

Use your communication in January to let employees know your benefits are there to help support them in keeping their resolutions this year: It's a great opportunity to promote your employee assistance program (EAP) and/or wellness program, with all the ways those benefits can keep employees and families healthy, balanced, and focused on what's really important.



February



Combine Valentine's Day and National Heart Health Month and you have a tailor-made opportunity to focus on your company's medical and wellness benefits. Heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in the U.S., accounting for one in four deaths. Piggyback on prevention campaigns this month from the American Heart Association ("Go Red for Women") and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("Strong Men Put Heart Health First") with a communication campaign of your own!

Communicate to employees that preventive care screenings are covered 100% under your medical plan and promote healthy heart nutrition and exercise initiatives through your wellness program.

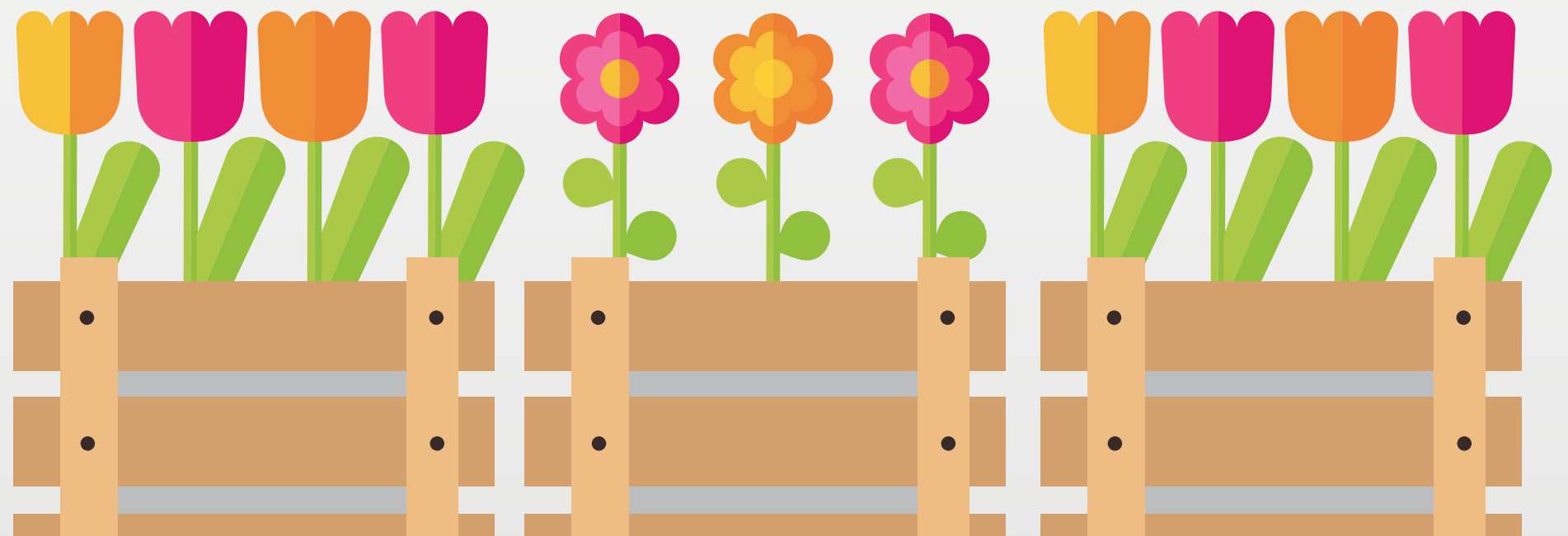
You can also keep it light and fun in the spirit of Valentine's Day by giving dark chocolate – known to lower heart disease risk – as an incentive to participate in screenings or to donate blood.



March

As everything begins to bloom again this month, help employees **“spring” into saving**. Communications can focus on saving more through a health savings account (HSA), reminding employees they can change their contributions anytime, not just during Annual Enrollment!

Speaking of savings accounts, IRS rules allow claims for prior year FSA receipts until March 31 – so it’s a good time to remind employees of the “use it or lose it” rule.



April



It's tax season! Use communication this month to show employees how to use their benefits to save more of their money from Uncle Sam – promote your 401(k) or other retirement plan and the importance of saving on taxes now, as well as protecting their financial future.

Financial concepts are difficult to explain in words alone, so this is a prime opportunity to let digital tools help drive home your messages. Use infographics to explain common finance terms in plain language, videos to make retirement planning more engaging, and online games or apps to help employees “choose their own adventure” in calculating their retirement needs and see how different savings scenarios affect their retirement lifestyle.

Research shows the average couple will need \$300,000 in retirement to pay for healthcare alone, so there's no harm in promoting your HSA this month to keep it on employees' radar for Annual Enrollment.



May

April showers bring May flowers – this month, remind employees to stop and smell the roses. According to the American Institute of Stress, 1 million people are absent from work each day due to stress. Re-emphasize your EAP this month, as well as any wellness initiatives – including exercise and mindfulness – to help employees reconnect mind and body.

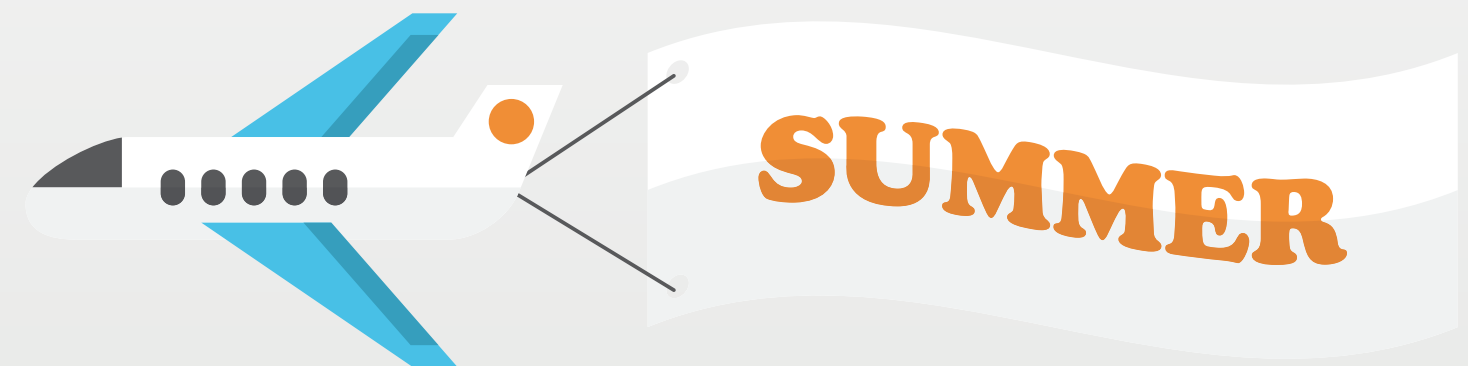


June



Americans leave more than 500 million vacation days unused each year. While you might think this is a big score for employee loyalty and productivity – it’s not! Time off to relax and recharge is essential to keeping employees productive and prevent burnout; plus, they’ll be even more loyal if they know that you value and respect vacation time.

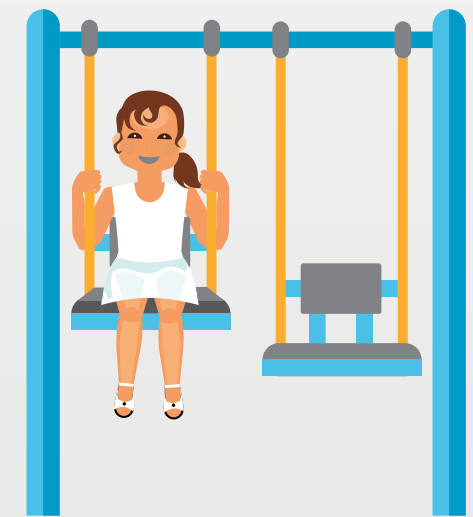
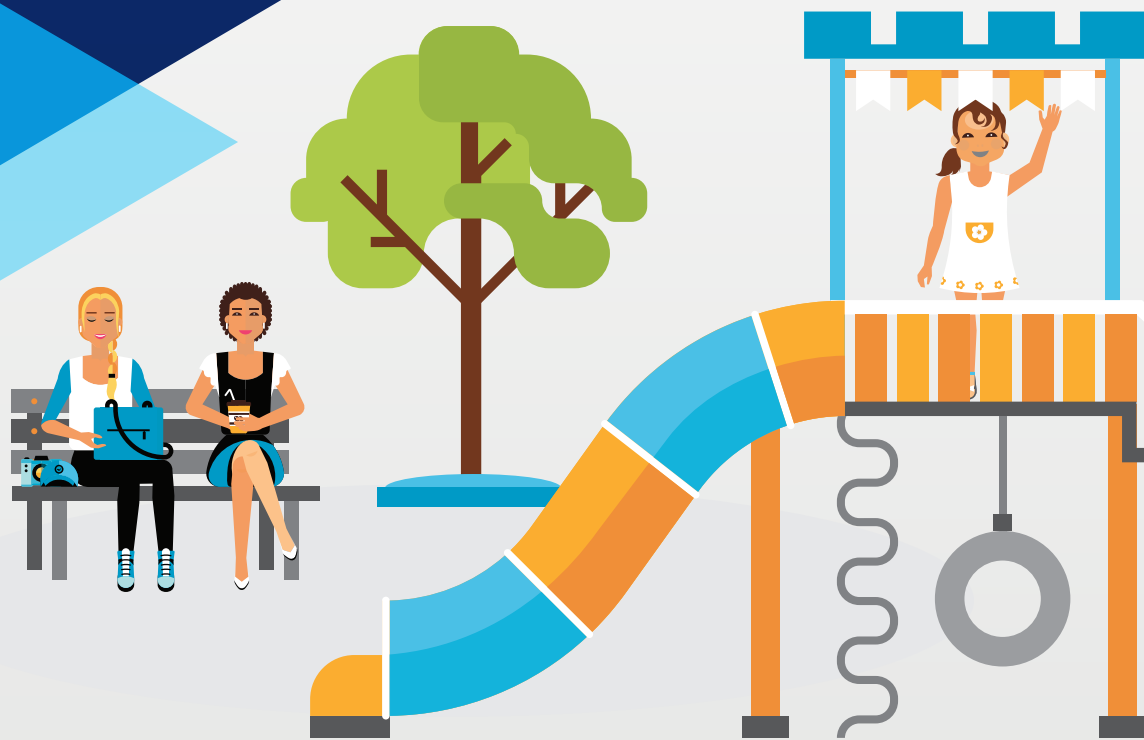
Remember: One of workers’ top New Year’s resolutions is to spend more time with family and friends. At the halfway point of the year, let employees know this month that you’re still committed to helping them see this one through to the end!



July

School's out for summer! For parents, the scramble for summer plans usually begins in late spring... but you know what they say about the best laid plans. Child care arrangements inevitably fall through, and when school is out of session, working parents can be left in the lurch – and their work responsibilities along with them.

Give parents in your workforce an extra boost this month; communicate backup care resources that you offer, with specific phone numbers and/or email addresses to use in emergencies. They will thank you, and their managers will too!



August



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tracks U.S. births, and without fail, the most babies are born in August each year. It's not hard to see why – it falls nine months after the holiday season when people are more likely to... be merry and bright.

So, prepare your team for a spike in life events this month! Start communicating early and often with new parents about their options for parental, disability, and FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) leave. New parenthood is an overwhelming time to say the least; you'll be the hero for your employees if you communicate clearly how to navigate adding their little one to benefit plans.

And don't let medical benefits take the spotlight! Be sure to highlight financial plans, too – additional life insurance, plus increased 401(k) and HSA savings all can have room to shine this month.



September



Back to school time! Education will be top of mind for employees this month – for their children and maybe even for themselves. Use this month to communicate all things related to school:

Before- and aftercare resources for working parents with small children

Homework assistance/tutors or SAT prep

Tuition reimbursement/assistance for employees with a thirst for continuing education

Voluntary 529 plans to offer access to tax-free savings options for college

Student loan repayment services to help Millennial workers make a dent in their debt burdens

Knowing how to take advantage of available programs to make back to school time easier and less expensive for employees and families will earn your company an A+ for employee engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.



October

This is the moment you've been waiting for: **Annual Enrollment!** Use this month to communicate new plan options, benefit changes, and any tools or resources you have at the ready to help employees make benefit decisions for the year ahead. This is also a great time to announce any enrollment-related in-person meetings with vendors, lunch & learns, benefits fairs, or online sessions so that employees can block time for them on their calendars. (Be sure to make these sessions open to spouses/partners, too – in case the family decider isn't your employee!)



November

You've spent the year highlighting all of the great benefits your company has to offer – now you just need to tell employees how and when to choose. Take time this month to clearly communicate the logistics of the enrollment process:

Specific dates

Ways to enroll: online, in-person, paper, phone, mobile

Whom to contact with questions or problems enrolling

FAQs – i.e., what happens if they miss the enrollment window or enroll in the wrong plan



December

End the year helping employees to give thanks, reflect on their blessings, and take time to give back. Communicate holiday giving and volunteerism efforts, including companywide projects, paid volunteer time, or other ways your company supports employees in giving to causes that are special to them.

Finally, congratulations! You've spent the year communicating successfully – as you sing Auld Lang Syne, raise a glass to celebrate all that you've accomplished and toast to effective communication in the year ahead!





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