

## Covering all bases:

### Preparing for open enrollment, part 3

This article is the third and final in EBN's annual Preparing for Open Enrollment series, and presents benefits professionals' advice on when and how to rollout a wellness program. The first two articles are available at [ebn.benefitnews.com/openenrollment](http://ebn.benefitnews.com/openenrollment).



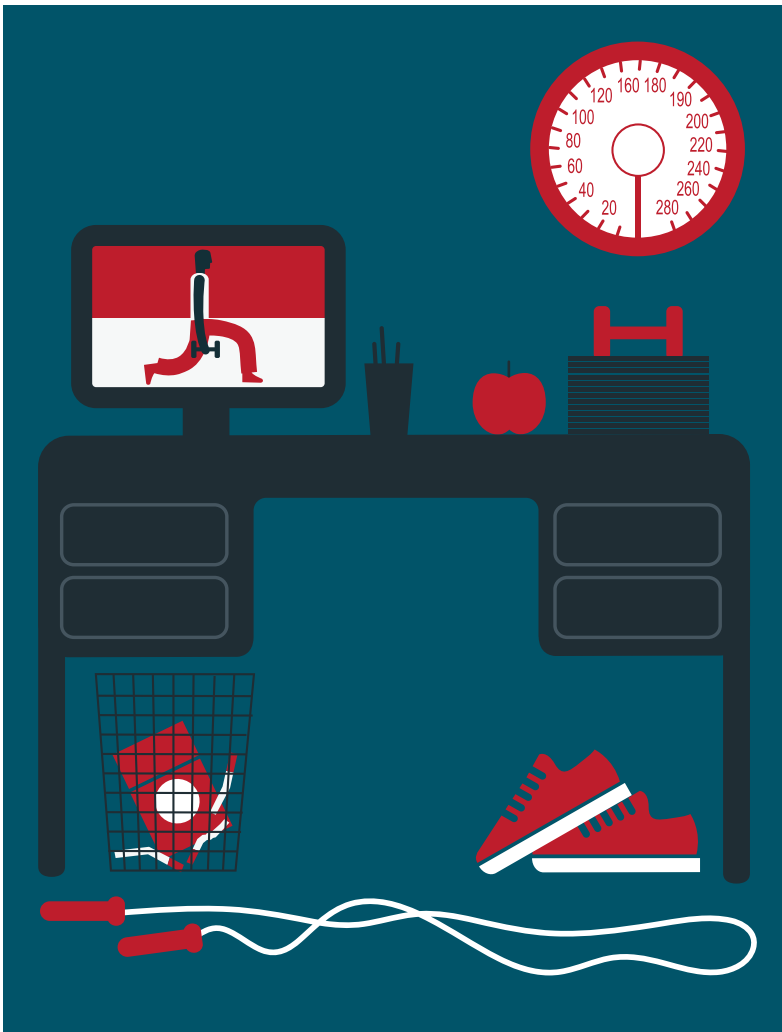
By Lynn Gresham

Illustration by Carlos Aponte

*Open enrollment can be a great time to showcase your wellness program and link it to your overall health management strategy. However, some experts caution against introducing a new wellness initiative at this busy time of year.*

*"Many employers tend not to communicate often enough throughout the year, then wind up bombarding employees with too much information during large campaigns, specifically around annual enrollment," says Foy Curley, Jr., senior associate in communications with Employee Benefits Solutions in Houston. "Employees already spend too little time reviewing enrollment materials; mixing the communications messages across two important initiatives will likely alarm some employees into ignoring everything and cause others to focus on one campaign or the other, not both."*

*If you do roll out a wellness initiative in conjunction with open enrollment, careful planning is essential. Here, we share a few EBN readers' success strategies for maximizing wellness program participation, both during OE and throughout the year. You'll find more advice in the Wellness Programs supplement on our website.*



## IT'S NOT WHEN, BUT HOW YOU ENGAGE EMPLOYEES

» **ANDREW FOOTE**, director of product development,  
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Corporate benefit managers differ widely on when to roll out a wellness program: during open enrollment or at another time, when there are fewer distractions? But the more pressing question is: Why do some wellness programs fail to engage employees and deliver expected cost savings?

The traditional approach — outbound cold-calling — yields low engagement rates because it assumes that employees are ready to change upon being contacted and want to engage with a health professional by phone.

A better approach is to drive inbound engagement by continuously promoting wellness programs through-

out the year, thereby enabling employees to initiate dialogue about the programs on their terms. Healthy cooking demonstrations, “ask an expert” sessions and onsite fitness classes are examples of innovative approaches that help maximize employee engagement.

Some employers also use an onsite health specialist — a health professional — who serves as a day-to-day resource for employees’ health-related questions, drive increased screening and health risk assessment completion, and help connect them to the company’s clinical, wellness and online health management resources. When employees are ready, they engage the specialist. Employee engagement increased four-fold at one large firm when using an onsite health specialist, compared with using traditional outbound calling by a nurse.

Onsite health promotion can revolutionize traditional wellness and disease management programs by delivering offerings in the environment in which employees spend most of their waking hours.



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