



Ideas to help you communicate your retirement plan

Retirement Plan Communications

You understand that your retirement program is an integral part of your employee benefits package. Not only is it a key competitive advantage for your company or organization, but it's also a critical tool to help your employees prepare for a rewarding retirement.

However, helping your employees understand that may be another story.

The key to your employees understanding, appreciating – and taking advantage of – your retirement program is communication.

Start with a plan

Successful communication needs a plan. Follow these simple guidelines to help you construct a blueprint for retirement plan communications:

What's your objective?

Your goals should be: increased awareness and appreciation of your retirement program and increased participation. Possibly, you'll want employees to increase current contributions to your plan.

Ultimately, your objective is to help your employees prepare for retirement.

Who is your audience?

Your employees.

What are the demographics of your audience?

That depends on the makeup of your employee population. Is it predominantly blue or white collar? What's the overall investment sophistication level of your employee base? What other factors, such as gender, economic, geographic or otherwise, will you need to consider?

What's in it for your employees?

What benefits of participation are likely to matter most to your employees?

- Tax deferral
- Compounding
- Investment diversity
- Employer contribution

How are you going to communicate your plan?

You probably have a great deal of experience in the various communication methods that work best with your own employees. You can use that experience in constructing a well organized, targeted retirement plan communication campaign.

What are your constraints?

Timing. Budget. Personnel resources. Consider the logistics of your own organization.

Who are you communicating to?
 What are you communicating
 Where will you do it?
 When will you do it?
 Why do you do it?
 How?

The retirement awareness process

According to the International Society of Certified Employee Benefit Specialists (ISCEBS), there are four types of employees, each with distinct saving and investing characteristics, and an increasing awareness of retirement and investment issues. They are, in order of investment sophistication:

Spenders

Employees who are not participating in the retirement investment plan at all, or only at very low levels.

Savers

Employees who participate in the plan, but who are not investing aggressively enough for their age and life situation.

Investors

Employees who are fairly knowledgeable about their investment choices and are making good investment decisions for their life situation.

Planners

A small number of employees who take retirement planning very seriously and seek out information to help them make the best decisions.

The goal of your communication program is simple: to move employees along the retirement awareness spectrum by encouraging spenders to become savers, then investors, then planners. Certain key messages will help with each transition (see below).

Turning spenders into savers

- How much money will be required to live in retirement?
- How much a small weekly investment can grow over time
- The value of starting early
- Company match, if available
- Advantages of pretax investment
- Portability of an investment in your plan
- Convenience of payroll deductions

Transforming savers into investors

- Long-term growth potential
- Asset class information and education
- The importance of diversification
- The risks of conservative investing
- Investment risk and potential reward in long-term investing
- Personal investment portfolios
- Managing a portfolio over time

Investors into planners

- Determining expenses and income at retirement
- Identify savings gaps
- How to use the “Efficient Frontier”
- Develop a long-term saving and investment strategy



Your benefits programs

Peer groups are one of the most important decision-making resources adults have. Consider forming an advisory panel of your organization's opinion leaders to help you communicate your retirement plan.

A tag-line or theme

Consider developing a name or theme for your benefits program, and use the theme (as well as any signature design elements) continuously on all pieces to help build awareness of your plan and its many benefits.

Off-the-shelf materials

ING provides a wide variety of communication materials to help you publicize your plan, including:

- Posters
- Educational materials
- Software
- Videos
- Payroll stuffers
- Internet education
- Newsletters

You should be able to choose from a variety of graphic styles and customize these materials for your own plan.

Off-the-shelf materials from your plan's investment provider can provide a strong base for your own communication campaign. Think about having your employee advisory panel select the materials your organization will use, and determine timing and placement of those materials to best suit your employees' needs.

Benefits Expo

A Benefits Expo, no matter how simple or elaborate you make it, will increase your employees' appreciation for the benefits you provide them.

Whether it's during an hour after work, a half-day or a weekend event, "exposing" your benefits program to employees serves a valuable advertising function: It increases awareness.

Consider inviting spouses to your event – benefits decisions are often family decisions.

The various providers of your organization's benefits programs can supply you with literature and educational materials. In many cases, providers will even offer displays and giveaways to increase benefit awareness.

Key employees – employees who are perceived as opinion leaders by other employees – can be invaluable in crafting your communication campaign. Involving these employees right from the beginning – soliciting their support and active participation in the success of your plan – can help you increase appreciation of the plan even before you implement a communication strategy.

Seminars

Consider staging some investment education seminars throughout the year. Seminars can be targeted to specific employee demographic groups (for example women or people within five years of retirement), or investment knowledge levels, such as advanced investment topics or, tie seminars to changes in tax laws – 2001's heavily publicized Tax Reform provides just such an opportunity.

Special events

Contact employees (via e-mail, or with a letter, flyer or postcard) at life-changing events – a birthday, a new baby or adopted child, employment

anniversary, promotion. Positive, life-changing events are good times to check retirement investments and strategy to make sure they're on track.

Publications

Does your organization have a newsletter? Articles, at key enrollment periods, can help your employees understand the benefits of participating in your retirement program. On an ongoing basis, recurring "ads" in your newsletter can help sustain awareness for the program.

Your own in-house publication is one of your most visible communication vehicles, and testimonials from fellow employees are powerful arguments.



Seminars can be targeted to specific employee demographic groups.

Think about profiling employees using their testimonials about the benefits of plan participation in your newsletter.

The Web

Do you have a Web page? If you do, your employees probably visit it from time to time – as do your prospective employees. Consider incorporating key information about your benefits – including your retirement program – into your site for several advantages:

- To your employees: It increases awareness of your program
- To prospective employees: It helps them research the advisability of working for your organization

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- To your customers and other audiences: It demonstrates your commitment to employee satisfaction – one of the key components of first-rate customer service

If you have an Intranet page, consider providing links to your providers' own Web pages.

Existing events

It may be a holiday party, a summer picnic, or an annual awards celebration – any event your employees count on – and it provides another opportunity for you to promote your benefits program.

An advertisement in a program, a giveaway or a booth with benefits literature will provide on-going communication opportunities.

Contests

The awards can be small – but the benefits enormous. Contests involve your employees in your plan.

What are your employees' own dreams for retirement? Ask employees to submit their retirement goals – and fantasies – and then hold a random drawing. Or publish responses in your newsletter. You can even issue a "retirement quiz" to help your employees self-test their readiness.

Whatever the promised reward, a contest can start your employees thinking about their own retirement goals and plans.

The workplace

Your own office environment can help you promote your benefits.

Every day, your employees come to work, therefore, think of the work environment as valuable promotional space. Posters can be hung by water fountains, soda machines or in break-rooms. Educational literature can be placed in easily accessible places. Send regular e-mails to remind employees about various benefits of the plan.

Your retirement plan communications

Pre-enrollment

- Posters
- Payroll stuffers
- Educational newspaper
- Videos
- Internet retirement education module

Enrollment

- Personalized kits
- Investment descriptions
- Interactive software
- Slide presentations
- Educational library
- Calculator
- Comprehensive enrollment kit

Post-enrollment

- Toll-free account access
- Participant Internet account access
- Quarterly reports
- Newsletter
- Posters and payroll stuffers
- Educational library
- Interactive Flash campaigns/email
- Ongoing seminars

Your Strategy

Use the convenient worksheet below to map out a basic communication strategy for your retirement investment plan.

Company Name
Plan Contact (i.e., To whom will employees refer questions?)
Benefits Program
Name
Tagline
Signature graphic/logo

PLAN INFORMATION

Record the basics about your plan
Kind of plan – i.e., Deferred Compensation, Profit Sharing, 401(k), 403(b):
<input type="checkbox"/> New plan <input type="checkbox"/> New provider for existing plan <input type="checkbox"/> Existing plan
For existing plans:
Number of employees participating _____
Percent of employees participating _____%
Percent of non-highly compensated participating _____%
Average Deferral Rate _____%
Employer Match: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (_____ % up to _____ % of salary)
<input type="checkbox"/> No

Employee demographics
Answering these questions will help you consider the unique needs of your own employee audience.
Average salary:
Average age:
Percent female:
Percent male:
Other Demographic Considerations:
Retirement Awareness Spectrum: Percentage of employees who are:
_____ % Spenders
_____ % Savers
_____ % Investors
_____ % Planners

Key benefits of participation/messages to stress

Use this table to explore which messages and benefits will be most meaningful to your employees. See pages three and four for samples of messages to employees at various points along the Retirement Awareness Spectrum:

Spenders
Savers
Investors
Planners

Goals/objectives

Make sure you know what you intend your strategy to accomplish.

Target Participation	_____ % of eligible employees
Asset Allocation	_____ % to fixed-return options
	_____ % to variable-return options
Average contribution rate	_____ % of pay
Other:	



RETIREMENT PLAN COMMUNICATIONS...

Communication vehicles & events

List the vehicles you'll use in your campaign:

<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail
<input type="checkbox"/> Posters
<input type="checkbox"/> Payroll stuffers
<input type="checkbox"/> Slide presentations
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Software
<input type="checkbox"/> Videos
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefits Expo
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Employee demographics

Company events may include picnics, meetings, raises or a bonus payment.

What events will you use to remind your employees about retirement planning and the importance of planning a financial strategy?

Company Events	Dates	Action
Enrollment meetings		
Employment anniversaries		
Bonus payment		
Financial education seminars		
Promotion		
Summer picnic		
Raises		
Holiday party		
Other:		
Other:		
Other: _____		

Personal Events		
Birthday	n/a	
Birth of a child	n/a	
Adoption	n/a	
Home purchase	n/a	
Approaching retirement	n/a	
Other:	n/a	
Other:	n/a	
Other: _____	n/a	

Employee advisory panel

List the names of the individuals who will help communicate the program:

Name	Phone Number	Department	E-mail
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Event planning

Use the following guidelines to plan your own enrollment periods or educational seminars:

6-8 weeks before the event:

- Start to discuss event with your representative
- Determine topics to be covered
- Choose which off-the-shelf materials to use

3-4 weeks before the event:

- Hang posters and announcements in highly visible workplace locations
- Mail payroll stuffers and flyers
- E-mail plan announcement to employees
- Print ad in company newsletter

2-3 weeks before the event:

- Distribute invitations
- Set up tent cards in common locations
- Publish article in company newsletter
- Affix announcement stickers to posters
- Send reminder e-mail

1-2 weeks before the event:

- Distribute flyers
- Distribute educational material

Week of event:

- Send final reminder e-mail

Seminar Checklist

Use this handy “to-do” checklist to plan the logistics of your retirement plan meetings and educational seminars:

Location

- Room size
- Seating style
- Location of presenter
- Position of electrical outlets
- Location of doors and windows
- Heating and cooling options
- Lighting

Audio-Visual Equipment

- Check equipment in advance
- Make sure lights are clean
- Provide remote control
- Speaker needs: podium, microphone, etc.
- Extra bulbs for projectors
- Transparencies and washable markers for overheads
- Computer and projector connections

Presenter Needs

- Lavalier microphone for large rooms
- Small table for materials
- Projector and screen
- Water pitcher and glass
- Napkins or paper towels

Other

- Small, draped table for sign-in
- Two or three clipboards with sign-in sheets
- Paper and pens
- Table for workbooks and literature
- Tablecloths
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

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