

# Bringing Your Benefits Fair Strategy to Life

A benefits fair, virtual or in-person, can be your greatest opportunity to engage and educate your employees on their benefits.

It's a fun way for you to get employees curious and thinking about their total wellbeing—especially those who may not be as engaged at other times of the year. Even more importantly, it helps you demonstrate your organizations' commitment to your employees and showcase benefits that can help them protect their health, wealth, property and lifestyle. Plus, you can bring your benefits fair to life with a creative theme, brand and identity.

Make the most of your next benefits fair with these best practices, theme ideas and suggested timeline for successful execution.

**Benefitfocus**<sup>®</sup>



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# Benefits Fair Best Practices

## Top 7 Ways to Drive Better Engagement

**1 Solicit feedback.** Get direct feedback from your employees both before and after your benefits fair. By launching a quick survey, you can understand what they'd like to get out of the event, the types of vendors they'd like to see and additional ways you could make it more helpful to them. Post-event you can ask participants for feedback directly through email, focus groups or using another survey. Pro Tip: Offer an incentive for completing the surveys such as being entered into a drawing for a prize.

**2 Build your team.** Benefit professionals don't have to operate in a silo. Ask for help, especially for an event like a benefits fair. It's the perfect opportunity to pull together a planning committee to assign specific tasks and help make sure the event is seamless and a positive experience for everyone.

**3 Logistics and timing are everything.** Proper planning is key when it comes to benefit fairs and events, so getting the timing right is a critical first step. Choose a date that won't compete with other important meetings or events. It's also good practice to avoid Mondays and Fridays (and holidays, of course). Finally, schedule your benefits fair either right before or towards the beginning of your open enrollment period. Employees can get their questions answered and have time to consider all their options. And when it comes to logistics, it's important to ask questions like, "What's my budget? Are we holding it in person, virtual or a hybrid of both? If in person, everything from floor plan to traffic flow and vendor information will help you determine setup needs. If virtual or a hybrid, there are technical aspects to consider (learn more on [page 4](#)).

**4 Diversify your vendors.** Make sure you have representatives from all the vendors across your benefits program. This helps draw in a wide range of employees who may be interested in different benefit options. With a virtual or hybrid benefits fair, vendors that want to participate in online sessions can share valuable information on their products. If the vendor will allow it, be sure to record these sessions so employees can access on-demand if they miss the live session or want a quick refresh.

**5 Incorporate activities like health screenings.** In-person benefit fairs are the perfect opportunity to offer health screenings as an option for employees. Consider incorporating onsite skin cancer checks and/or glucose/cholesterol blood tests as well as flu shots – depending on the time of year. Pro Tip: Screenings can take extra time, so allow participants to preregister for a specific time slot and send them a personalized reminder message the day before your event.

**6 Brand your benefits fair and communicate.** Bring your benefits fair to life with creative branding. It can go a long way to help make messages more engaging and easier to understand. Then, broadcast your event through a variety of channels! Communication, early and often, is key to helping employees feel informed and valued. Plus, the purpose of a benefits fair is to get your employees engaged and provide multiple opportunities for benefits education whether in-person or virtually. Using the right channels and frequency of communication can help you drive the greatest attendance and participation.

**7 Offer giveaways to draw a crowd.** Some employees need a nudge to motivate them to learn about their benefits. One way to do that is to offer giveaways. Vendors often incorporate fun items and freebies, but you can add to the incentive with items like cookbooks, yoga mats, and gift cards for local wellness stores. Another option is to add a grand prize such as round-trip airline tickets, which can often be purchased using corporate credit card points. Another option is to add a grand prize such as round-trip airline tickets, which can often be purchased using corporate credit card points.

# Benefits Fair Strategy: Taking it Virtual

Many companies are forever changed by the shift to remote work during the pandemic. Whether maintaining remote status, operating in a flexible hybrid model, or moving towards in-office work, there's a lot of value in incorporating virtual elements into your next benefits fair and beyond.

**Virtual Sessions:** These offer employees the chance to better understand their benefits by hearing directly from the vendors themselves. However, there are many options for how to present virtual sessions. They can be anything from quick and easy to more in-depth and involved.

**Missing traditional benefits fair goodies? No problem.** Ask vendors to send their informational flyers, brochures and little goodies directly to you. Then, have a team of colleagues ready to help create benefits fair care packages to be mailed to employee's homes. Even better, you can outsource to a packing vendor that will create the boxes and mail them out for you!

	Type	Description	Pros	Cons
<p><b>Quick &amp; Easy</b></p> <p><b>In-depth &amp; Involved</b></p>	<b>Pre-packaged, vendor provided videos</b>	Ask vendors to provide promotion videos around their products that you can share with your employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendor provided</li> <li>• Easily shareable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General overviews may not be targeted enough for your employee population</li> </ul>
	<b>Recorded video interview</b>	Record a quick video interview where each vendor answers a few questions about their benefit offering.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions pertain to your employee population</li> <li>• On-demand and easily shareable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement and coordination of vendors for participation</li> <li>• Short-form video may not provide enough detail</li> </ul>
	<b>Recorded webinars</b>	Conduct a 15–20-minute webinar with each vendor going more in-depth on their offering and how it pertains to your employee population. Bonus: Ask an employee to share their story of how it's benefited them as part of the webinar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time to go in-depth on benefit offerings</li> <li>• On-demand and easily shareable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement and coordination of vendors for participation</li> <li>• More demand on your time</li> </ul>
	<b>Live webinars with Q&amp;A</b>	Conduct a 15–20-minute live webinar with each vendor going more in-depth on their offering with a Q&A time following where participants can ask questions live.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time to go in-depth on benefit offerings</li> <li>• Option for those to attend live and ask questions</li> <li>• Use recording for on-demand viewing and sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement and coordination of vendors for participation</li> <li>• More demand on your time</li> <li>• Greater promotion efforts needed to drive attendance</li> </ul>
	<b>1:1 chats with vendors</b>	Offer employees 15-minute time blocks to connect one-on-one with vendors to help understand how an offering applies to their unique situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees get their questions answered directly in a private setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater demand on your time as well as your vendor's time</li> <li>• Scheduling may fall to you</li> </ul>
	<b>Benefits podcast</b>	Interview vendors and share with employees to listen on demand or alongside family members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No visuals required.</li> <li>• On-demand and shareable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires specific audio recording tools</li> </ul>

# Benefits Fair Theme Ideas

A benefits fair can be a powerful tool to engage employees. How do you make sure it's as engaging as possible? Good branding (aka, theme).

Branding can help you convey the value of your benefits by creating and nurturing a distinct reputation in a way that helps employees better connect with their benefits. Plus, it makes communication fun and easier to understand. Ultimately, the result is happier employees that are better able to take advantage of the full value of their benefits.

**Here are a few theme ideas to consider for your next benefits fair.**



# Benefits Fair Theme 1: Sports & Football

A sports-themed open enrollment is versatile and provides an easy way to incorporate fun lingo into messaging and graphic designs.

## Theme Activities

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Fun run  
Corn hole boards set up for prizes

## Branding Ideas

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Benefits Fair Event Title: “Pep Rally”  
Benefits Summary Guide: “Benefits Playbook”  
Save the Date Card: Sports Ticket Format  
ESPN-like Open Enrollment Video

## Fun Messaging Ideas

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### Email Subject Lines:

- Block and Tackle the Unexpected with Accident Plans
- A Winning Drive Strategy with Consumer-Driven Health Accounts
- Protect Your Blind Side with ID Theft Protection

Daily Reminders: Today’s OE Benefits Drill

Open Enrollment Video Call to Action: Watch Our Benefits Highlights Reel

Benefits Fair Communication: Almost Game Time: Your Benefits Pep Rally is just around the corner!

Flyer/Poster: Countdown to Kick Off! Don’t Punt on Your Benefits!



**Giveaway Idea:**  
Tickets to local sports team event

# Benefits Fair Theme 2: Animals

Studies have shown that animals help lower stress. Consider combining health information with a benefits fair that's also actively doing something good for employees' health. An animal-theme can be a fun way to add excitement.

## Theme Activities

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Partner with:

- A local zoo and have them come onsite with some animals
- A local animal shelter who is willing to bring adoptable dogs and cats

## Branding Ideas

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Benefits Fair Event Title: "Benefits Safari"

Benefits Summary Guide: "Benefits Junglebook"

Save the Date Card: Zoo Ticket Format

## Fun Messaging Ideas

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Email Subject Lines:

- New, aMEOWzing Benefits for Open Enrollment
- Forget the bear necessities, your benefits encompass so much more

Taglines:

- It's a jungle out there. Don't monkey around with your health.
- Stop kitten around with your health. It's doggone important.

Benefits Fair Communication:

- Bee Fit! Check out your health and wellness options at your annual benefits fair!
- Cat-Cow, Downward Dog: Join us at the benefits fair for a free yoga session!



## Giveaway Idea:

Membership to local zoo or aquarium

# Benefits Fair Theme 3: Rock-n-Roll

No matter the person, everyone can get in touch with their inner rock star, and there are plenty of ways to incorporate this fun theme into your branding for your benefits fair and open enrollment communication.

## Theme Activities

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Have employees that play in a band? Invite them to perform!  
Find electric violinists in your area to amp up your benefits fair

## Branding Ideas

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Benefits Fair Event Title: “Benefits Hall of Fame”  
Benefits Summary Guide: “Benefits Best Hits”  
Open Enrollment Video: Benefits Video Music Award Winner

## Fun Messaging Ideas

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Email Subject Lines:

- Rock Out at Our Employee Benefits Hall of Fame Event
- Rock and Roll All Day at Your Upcoming Benefits Fair

Tagline: Health & Wellness Rocks at <COMPANY NAME’S> Benefits Fair

Benefits Fair Communication: See the Benefits Chart Toppers at the Upcoming Benefits Fair

Daily Reminders: Today’s Benefits Top Hit



## Giveaway Idea:

Tickets to attend an upcoming show in your area

# Benefits Fair Planning Checklist

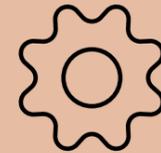
*Your guide to benefits fair communication, logistics and evaluation.*

Benefit fairs offer the opportunity to engage employees around their benefits, health and wellness. To make the most of your benefits fair, use the following checklist to guide you in planning around key areas, including:



## **Alignment & Support**

Make sure to gain alignment with senior leadership as well as ask for help. Pull together a broader team to help make sure the process and event are seamless.



## **Logistics**

Logistics are key to making sure your benefits fair runs smoothly. Never underestimate the importance of designating a proper amount of time for planning logistics and prep work to prevent any obstacles along the way.



## **Communication**

Different employees respond to different messages in different ways, so a strong communications plan is necessary to promote your benefits fair. Plus, participation is the ultimate goal so remember to use as many communication methods as possible.



## **Evaluation**

Evaluation is critical for measuring the effectiveness of your benefits fair and helping plan future events. Create a strong evaluation plan to create alignment and engagement around measurable goals as well as help you clearly define what you'd like the result of your efforts to be.

# 6 Months Prior



## Alignment and Support

Get support from your organization's leaders.

Establish a champion within the senior management team who can help you keep open enrollment top of mind with leadership, gain consensus or approval, and avoid any potential obstacles.

Organize a planning committee ranging from three to five members who represent a variety of voices across your organization. Then, clearly define tasks with accountabilities and agreed-upon timelines.



## Communication

Determine your target audience (i.e., current employees, family members, retirees, etc.).

Assess employees' needs and interests with a survey or quick poll.



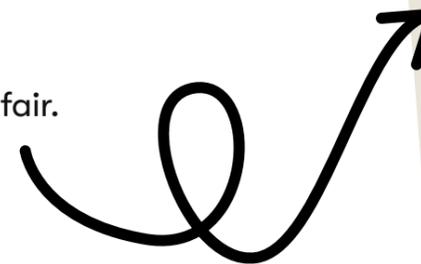
## Evaluation

Establish **clear objectives and key results** to drive the planning and execution of your benefits fair. Use these as benchmarks for evaluating success.

Build a timeline to track each metric.

### Example:

- **Objective:** Drive greater employee benefits education that results in changes based on what they learned.
- **Key Result:** X% of on-site employees participated in benefits fair.
- **Key Result:** X% of employees that participated in virtual benefits fair sessions.
- **Key Result:** X% of employees made a change to their health plan during open enrollment.



# 4 Months Prior

## Logistics

Establish a budget. Consider whether you have a budget that is:

- **Predetermined:** Prioritize the most important aspects of the event.
- **Limited:** Look for options to increase the awareness of your benefits program without benefits fair add-ons like incentives or screenings and focus on zero-cost forms of communication like email and text messaging.
- **Healthy:** Consider new ways to promote your benefits fair, add in screenings and/or drive participation with incentives.

## Communication

Estimate the number of employees you expect to attend (ex. 25-50% of total on-site population).

Establish your theme. A theme helps you focus your communication in a fun way, resulting in a better connection between your employees and their benefits.

## Account for Budget Items

Typical budget items include:

### **General:**

- o Incentives
- o Giveaways and/or prizes
- o Promotion

### **Virtual events:**

- o Technology fees

### **In-person events:**

- o Site fees
- o Equipment rentals
- o Refreshments
- o Health screening service fees

**Insider Tip:** Reach out to your medical plan carrier to see if they offer any free screenings as part of your partnership. Pharmacy providers can also offer free vaccinations when available.

# 3 Months Prior



## Logistics

Set a date, time and location.

Identify any special activities to include such as health screenings, demonstrations, and/or fitness activities like yoga or an online healthy cooking class for virtual events.

Create a list of potential vendors and assign committee members to contact them.



## Communication

Build out your communication timeline with important target dates to promote the benefits fair and keep all the moving pieces aligned.

Use all the communication channels available to maximize visibility, awareness and interest.

## Consider the following communication channels:

- Email
- Text messaging
- Video
- Company newsletters
- Corporate social media
- In-office: Posters, flyers and table tents in high-traffic areas as well as bulletin boards

# 2 Months Prior

## Logistics

Finalize commitments from vendors.

- In person events: Ask for any equipment/special needs.
- Virtual: Determine the type of virtual sessions you will hold and set the planning/execution in motion.

Determine the logistics of your health screenings (i.e., pre-registration, slots available per hour, etc.), if applicable.

- Design your floor plan to accommodate participants and vendors, if applicable.

## **In-person events? Consider the following:**

- Traffic flow
- Space for vendors and screening stations
- Demonstration, fitness program and/or virtual session areas
- Electrical and audiovisual requirements
- Tables and chairs for vendors and administrative needs
- Welcome and registration area (i.e., banners, signs, decorations, etc.)

# 1 Month to 1 Week Prior

## 1 Month Prior

-  Arrange incentives/ giveaways.
-  Send a save the date announcement.

## 3 Weeks Prior

-  Confirm logistics with vendors (i.e., location, on-site contact, parking information, arrival/departure time, etc.).

## 2 Weeks Prior

-  Promote your event highlighting agenda, screenings and incentive items.
-  Begin taking preregistrations for health screenings, if applicable.
-  Begin promoting virtual benefits fair sessions, if applicable.

## 1 Week Prior

-  Remind employees of your upcoming benefits fair through digital forms of communication.
-  Send calendar invites to employees registered for virtual sessions and/or 1:1 sessions, if applicable.
-  Re-confirm vendor participation and logistics.
-  Assign committee member to direct vendors as they arrive if hosting in-person.
-  Remind employees to preregister for screenings, if applicable.
-  Review floor plan and arrange for refreshments, if applicable.



## Benefits Fair!

 **Logistics**    **Communication**

PLANNING CHECKLIST:

# Day of Benefits Fair



## Logistics

In-person: Help vendors get settled.

Virtual: Smooth out technical aspects with vendors before the start of their session.  
Don't forget to record!

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## Communication

Send a final reminder about your benefits fair to drive participation.



## PLANNING CHECKLIST:

# Day After Benefits Fair



### Logistics

Send recordings of the virtual vendor sessions to employees.

Thank vendors for participating and provide any pertinent feedback.



### Communication

Ask participants for feedback either directly through email or using a survey.

Ask vendors for candid feedback on the benefits fair.



### Evaluation

Gather results from health screenings (i.e., # of participants screened, # of high-risk individuals, etc.), if applicable.

Review vendor and participant feedback and identify changes or improvements for your next benefits fair.

Grade your objectives and key results to determine how well you achieved your success metrics.

Share results with senior leadership and planning committee.



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## About Benefitfocus

Benefitfocus (NASDAQ: BNFT) unifies the entire benefits industry through innovative technology solutions that bring efficiency, cost savings and simplicity to employee benefits administration. Our powerful cloud-based software, data-driven insights and thoughtfully designed services help employers, insurance brokers, health plans and suppliers address the complexity of benefits enrollment and engagement, while bringing easier access to health, wealth and lifestyle products through a world-class benefits experience. Our mission is simple: to improve lives with benefits. Learn more at [www.benefitfocus.com](http://www.benefitfocus.com).

