



At the Intersection of HR and Benefits Technology

How a flexible solution can improve efficiencies, control costs, and simplify compliance in a complex and changing benefits landscape.

Executive Summary

While businesses are always looking to streamline processes and reduce overhead, no business unit feels this pressure more acutely than HR. For years, HR has been asked to "do more with less." This has become an even greater challenge as HR is called on to shoulder everything from containing healthcare costs to assuring compliance with the new, complex regulatory provisions of the PPACA—and avoiding costly penalties.

This White Paper will show how HR can use Benefit Portal Technology to automate a range of labor-intensive day-to-day tasks to improve efficiencies and control costs, while simplifying compliance with regulations as they come online, such as the distribution and receipt of Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC) documents. It will also highlight what to look for: technology that can be tailored to your needs and can scale to accommodate rapid business growth; an easy-to-manage solution that improves employee engagement while providing intuitive decision-support to guide you through an increasingly complex benefits landscape.

The More Things Change...the More the Value of Company-sponsored Benefits Stays the Same

While the healthcare—and benefits—landscape is changing, businesses continue to view company-sponsored benefits as key recruitment, retention, and productivity tools. The 2012 Deloitte Survey of U.S. Employers gathered responses from 560 randomly selected employers on a range of issues related to employee health benefit plans. Key findings include: 81% of companies representing 84% of the workforce plan to continue providing health benefits coverage, employer-sponsored health benefits are not likely to disappear (though financial risk will be shifted to employees), employers do not understand the full scope of the PPACA (particularly on areas intended to improve the efficiency and quality of the delivery system), and while employers are concerned about health costs, they are unaware of solutions that could improve the quality of care, and simultaneously reduce cost. Other studies, such as the MetLife 10th Annual Study of Employee Benefits, underscore the widespread—indeed, deeply entrenched—acceptance of benefits as recruitment, productivity, and retention tools.

As costs escalate and compliance becomes more complex, businesses need to look more closely at their benefits technology with an eye toward maximizing its value.

Three Core Components

The truth is, administering benefit programs is a complex undertaking involving strategy, design, mitigating risk, financing, delivery, ongoing management, and communication—requiring both expertise and technology. Simply put, the complexity, costs, and risks associated with employee benefits underscore the value—indeed, the need—for an efficient, cost-effective benefits programs that aligns with your broader business objectives.

Today, most businesses use web-based tools to support their benefits administration. While some are more advanced, robust, or user-friendly, businesses need to look beyond simple “features” to ensure that their technology delivers ROI on multiple levels. Following are some key points to consider:

- **Flexible Solution.** A web-based benefits solution built on discrete, yet interconnected modules affords more choice and customization. Carefully review your legacy solution, where it falls short of expectations, your over-arching HR/business goals, and pinpoint the functionalities that would be of most immediate value to your organization. Additionally, a scalable solution—one that affords more functionality as your needs grow—extends the value of your investment.
- **Improving Engagement Through Benefit Portals.** All organizations are looking to improve employee engagement around their benefits. The more engaged the employee, the more he/she appreciates the value of their benefits (via a total rewards statement), and the more proactive he/she is in taking preventative measures regarding their health and wellbeing—which correlates to lower overall health costs. For several years there’s been a move toward consumer-driven healthcare, where employees are given the tools and resources to take more ownership of their benefits and health. A properly designed company health portal that clearly and effectively routes users to the information and support they need—when they need it—can dramatically increase engagement. A benefits solution that is built on a company branded benefits portal will pay significant and lasting dividends, from controlling costs to increasing employee engagement.

Moreover, a well-designed portal can automate a range of labor intensive processes for employees (enrollment, access to documents, price comparisons, self-service re: questions, etc.). A portal that automates these processes AND improves user engagement, frees up HR “bandwidth” to attend to other tasks, maximizing their productivity and value to your organization.

- **Simplifying and Assuring Compliance.** A portal that simplifies—and assures—compliance with the new and unfolding regulatory landscape, offers a huge value-add. A portal that provides a simplified and secure means of distributing and tracking receipt of Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC) documents, for

instance, can represent significant cost savings (non-compliance with the ERISA disclosure requirements of the PPACA costs \$1,000 per employee).

Stacks and Associates

Stacks & Associates, a healthcare finance management company serves small- and mid-sized businesses, many with a one person HR staff. Their focus is on providing a solution that will help their clients remain compliant with new provisions in the PPACA, as well as provide day-to-day support on benefits enrollment, communications, and other labor-intensive HR tasks.

Founded two years ago by industry veteran Doug Stacks, the firm began by providing small- and mid-sized companies with HR backup. Then, on a recommendation from a colleague, Stacks implemented an HR/Benefits platform (BASIC Guru) that enabled them to create self-service HR/Benefits portals tailored to each of their employer groups. Stacks was able to streamline HR and benefits processes for its clients, providing everything from online enrollment to an HR resource library—for administrators and employees—that Doug Stacks calls “Google for Business.”

As important, the platform, developed by BASIC Guru, enables employers to simplify compliance with the new SBC provisions in the PPACA—providing a completely automated framework in which employees receive, digitally sign, and return their SBC...compliance couldn't be simpler.

“BASIC Guru enables employers to simplify the task of employer compliance, particularly with SBC documents,” says Stacks. “Compliance and helping small- and medium-sized businesses to navigate the PPACA is a big part of our business. It would be a big thing to take on, but BASIC hands that to employers on a platter.”

Maximizing ROI

According to a survey from Guardian Life, a majority of workers (56%), regardless of age or educational level, believe a single, consolidated web-based platform that integrates all of their benefits allows them to better understand and consider their insurance options, make selections, and appreciate the value of benefits available to them.

A new business landscape requires that organizations look toward their investment in HR management in a new light. The way an organization implements and utilizes its online benefits enrollment system can result in improved efficiencies and appreciable benefits—both immediate and long-term—across the organization; from increasing productivity across all areas through employee and manager self-service, providing a centralized means for effective and ongoing two-way communication, and simplifying and assuring compliance. Today's benefits enrollment solutions provide a robust, flexible, and scalable vehicle that can improve operational efficiencies across your business and deliver real cost-savings that impact the bottom line.

About BASIC Guru

BASIC has been serving employers nationwide since 1989. BASIC Guru is our flagship web-based benefits enrollment and management platform, providing agents, brokers, and their employer clients with complete, customizable HR solutions. BASIC Guru provides collaboration, flexibility, stability, security, quality service, and an experienced staff to meet an organization's integrated HR and Payroll needs. HR solutions should be simple. Keep it BASIC. <http://www.basiconline.com>.