

WHAT IS IT?

A benefits portal is an intranet or extranet web site that provides information, forms, and resources associated with an employer-provided benefits package. Depending on the underlying technology, the benefits site can be customized to the benefit plans of the employer, or even the individual benefit selections of each employee. A benefits portal may or may not include online enrollment functionality. The difference between an intranet and an extranet is purely technical. An "intranet" is hosted by the employer on an internal server or website. An "extranet" is usually hosted by a third party on an external web site.

WHY OFFER IT?

- Provides up-to-date benefits information and related resources from work or from home - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Reduces employee inquiries to the HR department
- Increases employee understanding and awareness of the company's benefits package.

WHAT TYPES OF EMPLOYERS OFFER IT?

Organizations where a large percentage of employees have internet access from work and/or home.

WHAT SIZE EMPLOYERS OFFER IT?

Any size employer.

WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER?

- Amount of content
- Level of technical complexity
- Design and layout
- Maintenance and administration requirements
- Company culture and employee and dependents' involvement with the benefit package

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS AREA?

Developing a benefits portal in-house requires time, administrative resources, and knowledge of internet technologies and employee benefits. To fill this gap, numerous Internet-based benefit communications companies have sprung up. These systems combine generic content (articles, glossaries, calculators, etc.) with a company's customized benefits information (benefit plan comparisons, SPDs, eligibility requirements, etc.) on a web page branded with the employer's logo. Online benefit communication systems can also provide instructions and forms for hard copy enrollment, and most systems can interface with add-on employee self-service modules to provide true online enrollment.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Customizable benefit communications systems require an implementation fee and a monthly fee that ranges from \$2 - \$5 per employee per month depending on the service provider and the package included with the service.

PROS AND CONS

PROS

- Improves employee communication by providing a central location for benefits information, with the ability to research information in more detail.
- Answers common questions immediately and in a consistent manner.
- Reduces HR overhead and administrative burden.
- Reduces need for and expense of printed materials.
- Available 24x7 to both employees (intranet or extranet) and eligible dependents (extranet only).

CONS

- Employees need Internet access through either a PC or kiosk at work and/or at home.
- Requires staff resources or a partner to implement, administer and maintain.
- Requires training of HR staff and employees.
- May require a shift in corporate culture.



This Fact Sheet is designed to provide a general overview of the benefit program, service, or regulatory act it describes. The information included in this document is not a substitute for legal or professional opinion relative to a plan sponsor's particular fact pattern. Your ArlenGroup consultant can answer more specific questions relative to its application for your organization.