

Voluntary Benefits Insights

2020 vision: Things to know to get ready for a new year

Joe Sitarz

The year 2020 has always had a nice ring to it. Which is why just about everyone is heading into the new year with high hopes and a big vision. The year should be no different in the world of voluntary benefits. When you look at the trends and attitudes of employers and employees alike, it appears that 2020 could present more opportunities to win hearts and minds when it comes to voluntary benefits. Here are some of the things we're looking at as the old year ends and a new one begins.

Employers plan to add more voluntary benefits

When it comes to voluntary benefits, there's one indicator that more employers recognize the value of offering these benefits to employees. A recent survey from [Willis Towers Watson](#) reveals the following:

- ▶ 42% of employers offer voluntary income protection benefits (such as accident, critical illness).
- ▶ 69% of employers plan to offer more voluntary benefits over the next three to five years.

What does that mean for brokers? It is evident that 2020 presents a great opportunity to win more sales and nurture more prospects. As you educate your potential clients, it can be helpful to frame these benefits as an essential to any employee recruitment and retention plan, especially as record-low unemployment numbers persist.

Health care costs will continue to escalate

It's probably not a stretch to say that a year from now, as employees enroll in their employer-issued benefits plan, health insurance premiums will see another price hike. The truth is already out there: Traditional health insurance is losing its power when it comes to offering a financial shield against a health crisis. But 2020 offers yet another opportunity to spotlight the fact that voluntary benefits are an important part of the solution.

Expect more interest from younger workers

As millennials and the up-and-coming generation Z employees give more serious weight to protecting their assets, we're seeing increased interest from these age groups in signing up for voluntary benefits. While paying down debt is a top priority for this generation, they're also maintaining financial security so they can protect what they have. When explaining the value of voluntary benefits to these savvy consumers, relevance is key. Be ready to show how they can offer a financial shield and use examples that are relevant to their lifestyles.

Employees are seeking better choices

During enrollment time, health care costs can come as bad news. Rather than feeling powerless to the rising expenses, expect to see an increased interest in searching for a solution that offers the financial protection they desire. Framing benefits as something that returns power and control to the everyday person is a smart strategy. Choice can come as a welcome solution to a growing problem. At the same time, the education process is critical, because the last thing you want is to overload and overwhelm with choice. However, recognizing that hidden motivating factor behind a decision to enroll in voluntary benefits — choice — gives you a path forward.



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Increased demand for better tech tools

Having access to the best tech tools in the industry can help you make serious inroads when it comes to winning new business and helping employees choose the benefits that make the most sense for them. And we're quickly arriving to the point where having the right tech tools is mandatory, not optional. Decision-making tools use employee data to match them with plans that align with their current lifestyles and family needs — and eliminate wasted time learning details that don't apply, freeing up brain space for plans that are most relevant. After enrollment, employees are accustomed to using apps and websites to conduct just about every area of their personal business, and their voluntary benefits should be no exception.

Solutions for inter-generational complexities

Modern workplaces could potentially house up to five generations, starting with the youngest members of the silent generation (born in 1945 or earlier) all the way to Generation Z, born in 1995 and after. Balancing and addressing the wants and needs of this multi-generational workforce was identified as a top challenge of employers across the globe, according to the earlier cited Willis Towers Watson survey. Voluntary benefits can be the solution that addresses needs across the generations, protecting wealth at any stage of life.

Now that you're ready to take on 2020, learn more about how Reliance Standard can help you create more customized plans for any sized-workplace, so you can meet your goals in the upcoming year.



About the author

Joe Sitarz, AVP Voluntary Sales and Marketing, has been a sales leader with Reliance Standard for more than 18 years. In his current role he is responsible for driving profitable growth in the voluntary benefits and limited medical benefits space, especially in emerging areas including supplemental health, platform partnerships and national account relationships. Joe oversees a national team of regional practice leaders.

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