# Running Open Enrollment Like a 500-Person Company

At a 40-person company, open enrollment is usually an email with a PDF attached and a deadline. At a 500-person company it's a campaign: announcements, education sessions, decision support, reminders, and someone available to answer questions. Same decision for the employee, same money out of their paycheck, very different outcome.

## The Gap Is Not Where Most Owners Think

Bureau of Labor Statistics data from September 2026 shows the obvious part first. At companies with 1 to 99 employees, 59% of workers have access to medical benefits. At 500 and above, 90%. That gap is a budget question for most small employers.

There is a common assumption that putting everything on the benefits portal is a complete enrollment strategy. LIMRA's 2025 tracking of what employees actually use during enrollment says otherwise:

- Printed information mailed home: 68%
- Online portal or intranet: 54%
- Email: 53%
- In-person group meeting: 52%
- In-person one-on-one meeting: 51%

Printed material mailed home outranks the portal, and meetings sit level with it. Aflac adds that 55% of employees consider access to a benefits advisor important. The answer isn't choosing between paper, portal and people, it's running all three.

## The Open Enrollment Checklist – Built for a January 1 Plan Year

### 90 Days Out

- ☐ Request renewal terms and confirm your plan year start date
- ☐ Pull last year's enrollment data: who enrolled, who declined, who changed tiers
- ☐ Note any employees who dropped coverage, and whether cost was the stated reason
- ☐ Confirm whether plan design, network or carrier is changing
- ☐ Decide your employer contribution for the coming year

### 60 Days Out

- ☐ Finalize plan selection and the contribution split
- ☐ Build a cost sheet showing full premium, employer share and employee share per pay period
- ☐ Confirm who answers employee questions, and that they are actually available
- ☐ Check whether any commonly used local providers have left the network
- ☐ Translate materials if any part of your workforce needs it

### 45 Days Out

- ☐ Draft the announcement in plain language, with no carrier jargon

- ☐ Prepare both a printed version and a digital one
- ☐ Schedule a group meeting, or record a session employees can watch on their own time
- ☐ Offer one-on-one time, even in fifteen-minute slots
- ☐ Build the reminder schedule: announcement, midpoint, 72 hours, final day

### During the Window

- ☐ Give employees at least three weeks
- ☐ Send the announcement with the cost sheet attached
- ☐ Hold the group session in the first week
- ☐ Send a midpoint reminder that names who has not yet enrolled
- ☐ Keep someone reachable for questions the whole time
- ☐ Send a 72-hour reminder and a final-day reminder

### After It Closes

- ☐ Record participation: enrolled, declined, tier changes
- ☐ Compare against last year and write down what moved
- ☐ Ask three employees what was confusing
- ☐ Send a short note on how to actually use the plan: ID cards, finding in-network care, telehealth, prescriptions
- ☐ Put one benefits touchpoint on the calendar for each remaining quarter

## Show the Full Cost, Not Just the Deduction

One item on that list does more work than the rest. An employee who sees $85 come out of their paycheck has no way of knowing whether that reflects a company covering half the premium or 80% of it. They cannot value what they cannot see.

Aflac found roughly 75% of employers believe their workforce is satisfied with benefits, while only 65% of employees agree. Showing the full premium alongside both shares costs nothing, and makes a rate increase easier to explain when employees can see the business absorbed one too.

## Why It Is Worth the Effort

MetLife found employees who use their benefits and have good experiences with them are 2.1 times more likely to trust their employer during an economic downturn. That is an association, not proof that better enrollment reduces turnover. But the cost of turnover isn't in dispute. Gallup estimates replacing an employee runs 50-200% of annual salary.

For a 150-person company at $75,000 average salary, the conservative end puts a single departure near 37,500 dollars. Keeping three people who would otherwise have left is worth roughly $112,500, before anyone negotiates a renewal. Which reframes the question from how much can we cut off the premium to how much value we get from the money we already spend.

The employers who run open enrollment well aren't spending more. They started in October instead of December. If you'd like a second set of eyes on your process or your renewal before you sign it, Bona Vita Benefits is glad to walk through it with you.

---

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 2026; KFF Employer Health Benefits Survey; LIMRA 2025 Benefits and Employee Attitude Tracker; Aflac WorkForces Report; MetLife Employee Benefit Trends Study; Gallup.

This article is provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute insurance, tax, legal, or investment advice. Plan availability, eligibility, pricing, and terms vary by group and state and are subject to underwriting. Not all programs are available in all states. Employers should consult their own advisors regarding their specific circumstances and applicable notice requirements.

Securities and investment advisory services offered through LPL Enterprise (LPLE), a Registered Investment Advisor, Member FINRA/SIPC, and an affiliate of LPL Financial. LPLE and LPL Financial are not affiliated with Bona Vita Benefits Group LLC or Prudential.