

Increase Enrollment In Your Health Savings Account (HSA) Program

Effectively educating employees on the benefits and responsibilities of HSAs is an important element to increasing participation rates. Successful programs rely on several key components, which have evolved over the past three years as thousands of companies installed HSAs. JoAnn Laing, a nationally known authority on HSAs, has authored two books on HSAs and helped hundreds of firms implement these new offerings. From their experiences, she has developed a series of check-points for companies that are implementing HSAs this year. A few of her key points are:

1. **Gain management's commitment to the effort.** Sit down with a couple of the company decision-makers one-on-one and go through their personal health plan scenario: how the current health program (if there is one) compares to the proposed HSA program, what are the savings involved, and how the program works. When you have those managers on board and talking about how the HSA program will work to their favor, employees will sit up and take notice.
2. **Develop a pre-enrollment "buzz" and pre-sell early adopters.** Besides getting managers to talk up HSAs to employees, send out communications (on bulletin boards, via e-mails, etc.) before and during the launch of the HSA program about the advantages of HSAs (e.g., health insurance premiums cost less, contributions to HSAs are tax-free). This gets employees talking about the favorable aspects of HSAs and helps counter any negative information employees may have heard.
3. **Ask for help from vendors, agents, insurance providers, and benefits providers.** It is to their benefit to help employers, and to employers' benefit to seek out their support and participation. Ask agents and vendors to pre-train company management on the HSA program for which they already have many clients. Have them give insights into what has worked and not worked for other clients. Also, have agents and vendors available for employee meetings to explain the HSA program and to provide examples.
4. **Provide employees with pre-enrollment kits that include a work sheet and calculator so each employee can compare the current health program with the new HSA program.** If an employee speaks another language, have materials in his/her native language for greater understanding. Offer a list of FAQs and a primer about the basics of HSAs (or at least a list of qualified medical expenses).

Laing also advises employers to establish a contribution program to help employees fund the first year's deductible and include ways of saving monies utilizing health care providers. She also emphasizes the importance of monitoring, measuring, and modifying the program as it develops. Above all, talk and listen to employees as they educate themselves on the benefits of HSAs.