

Emap uses online communication tools to raise employee awareness about flexible benefits



The Challenge

Some years after the initial introduction of flexible benefits at Emap, the company was keen to find a way to improve awareness about the scheme, and to empower employees to make informed benefit choices.

The Solution

A coordinated, structured communication campaign based around a new benefits microsite and e-shots.

The Benefits

- Increase the overall awareness about the scheme
- Enhance the understanding and appreciation of the benefits on offer
- Improved take-up of a number of benefits
- To create an informative, engaging and attractive campaign to promote and publicise the benefits on offer
- A microsite that remains in place as a central source for information about benefits.

Making sure employees understand their benefit options

Emap is committed to attracting, retaining and developing the careers of the most talented people that work within the media industry, and one way it seeks to do this is by encouraging staff empowerment and accountability.

About Emap

Emap is a business-to-business multiplatform media group providing millions of people around the world in the built environment, retail, media, fashion, health, education, government and automotive sectors with essential news and analysis. The company employs approximately 1,100 people across four sites in the UK.

NorthgateArinso, to whom Emap outsource all of its HR, payroll and benefits management, support this strategy by providing a full end to end self-service HR solution that enables staff to manage their own affairs, from booking holidays and making choices around their benefits through to reporting sickness.

Giving employees the ability to make choices about their benefits packages is another way to promote accountability. Some years ago Emap was one of the first companies in the UK to launch a flexible benefits programme. Although the scheme has always offered an appealing range of benefits, the company was concerned that more could be done to improve appreciation of the scheme and promote the value to employees.

“When NorthgateArinso took over the scheme by providing its MyChoice flexible benefits solution, the opportunity arose to step up employee communication activity,” says Peter Tilley, Emap’s Head of Internal Communications. “We were very keen to raise awareness about the range of benefits available as a result of working for Emap. We offer a good scheme but we knew that awareness about it could be improved.

“We also wanted staff to be able to make informed choices about their benefits by having a thorough understanding of what is on offer. So a communications campaign was developed in the weeks prior to the window for staff making their annual benefits choices for 2010.”

A new benefits microsite

At the heart of the campaign was the creation of a new flexible benefits microsite, designed and built by NorthgateArinso in partnership with Emap. The site features a page dedicated to each of the benefits available, including clear information about how each benefit is structured. Specific information includes access to details like a hospital directory for the private medical plan and a claim guide for the dental plan.

The microsite provides a central place where employees have access to all the information they require to make an informed decision. It especially helps staff to understand the cost of each benefit and the value provided. There is also a link to the MyChoice portal, where employees log on to compare and model the costs for different benefit selections and ultimately register their final benefits choices.

Employee e-shots

Emap and NorthgateArinso also worked together to create a range of graphical, informative and exciting e-shots. The aim was to increase anticipation in readiness for the 2010 flexible benefits enrolment window.

A series of three e-shots were sent, with the first one announcing that enrolment for MyChoice would open soon. It reported on the introduction of the new Cycle to Work benefit, reminded employees about the value of the Emap MyPension scheme and included a link to the benefits microsite. Advice was also given on how to access the MyChoice site to review, check and select benefits.

The second email was sent on the first day of the enrolment window, with the third a few days before the enrolment window closed. These specifically urged employees to log on to MyChoice to start modelling their benefits package and submit their benefit choices.

“We were careful to adopt the right tone in the e-shots,” says Peter. “There was an appropriate level of communication, giving information to help people make the right choices for them but with no pressure. We believe that we offer a really competitive and attractive benefit scheme but ultimately employees have to decide what suits their individual situation and lifestyle needs.

“Our role was also to prompt them to think about the benefits they had last year and whether they wanted to make any changes. The communications that NorthgateArinso helped us create all fulfilled this aim as they were clear, concise and consistent.”

Using the latest digital marketing techniques in parallel with NorthgateArinso’s MyChoice technology allowed Emap to take advantage of a range of tracking tools to monitor how many people visited specific areas of the microsite and how many modelled and submitted their benefits. About half the employees visited the microsite and 30 per cent made changes to their benefits profiles.

“Although that’s not a majority response rate it is in line with what we were looking for given that our scheme has been in place for a number of years,” says Peter Tilley. “We knew that many staff would feel that the choices they had made in the previous year were still fine for them. Many of them are so familiar with our flexible benefits scheme, we knew that they would retain the same benefits. By taking no action they demonstrated that they were happy with their current arrangements. We would however still encourage employees to check for price changes, even if they wanted to stick with their choices, to avoid any surprises in their payslip”

Having an effect on awareness and benefit take-up rates

The communication programme ran during a period of recession, which will often influence people’s choices about benefits as they focus more carefully on how they wish to spend their salary. Despite this, take-up rates of some benefits at Emap were higher than a benchmark sample of other companies offering similar schemes.

This would suggest that the communication campaign achieved one of its main aims by generating increased awareness of the overall value of the benefits on offer. There was in particular an increased take-up rate for dental and travel insurance.

The new Cycle to Work benefit also enjoyed a good take-up rate that was well above the expected number in comparison with other similar schemes operated by NorthgateArinso.

Before the first email was sent, Emap staff were also asked through a mini on-line survey about how well they knew and understand the benefits that are available. They were asked the same questions after the enrolment period had closed. As a result of the communication campaign there was a significant increase in the number of employees who were aware of and understood the benefits on offer.

Peter Tilley sums up the impact of the campaign: “The feedback that has been received directly from employees about the new communications approach with NorthgateArinso has been extremely positive. It’s had a great impact on our employer brand and will help us to attract and retain the most talented people in the market.”

For an initial discussion about your requirements call us on 01244 572722.
Email: rewardinfo@northgatearinso.com
or visit www.northgatearinso-reward.co.uk