



DISTRIBUTION

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Worksite Marketing: The Original Omnichannel Strategy

One of the emerging trends in our industry is omnichannel retailing, defined by Wikipedia as:

The evolution of multichannel retailing, but concentrated more on a seamless approach to the consumer experience through all available shopping channels, i.e., mobile Internet devices, computers, bricks-and-mortar, television, radio, direct mail, catalog, and so on

As such, organizations must engage with today's consumers on their terms — that is, *when, where, and how they want*. Well established in the consumer products space, the concept of omni-retailing (also known as omnidistribution) is seen by many financial services organizations as the next evolution of distribution strategy. How can companies tap into today's self-directed consumers to meet their savings, investment, and protection needs?

Looking across the broad landscape of financial services, much of the focus has been on retail channels. But right within our industry there is one distribution method that is ahead of the curve: worksite marketing. Earlier in my career I spent a significant amount of time conducting research on this distribution method. Looking back, I realize that much of the underlying strategy of marketing, enrolling, and servicing voluntary benefits had at its core the consumer-facing mantra (i.e., omnichannel) we hear so much about today.

For years worksite marketers have had sophisticated systems in place to smoothly coordinate payroll deduction, census, and other information at both the employer and employee levels. They communicate their offerings through all available channels (benefits fairs, group and one-on-one meetings, direct mail, and Internet). Laptop, contact center, and other enrollment technologies have been in place for some time.

Worksite marketers also must coordinate enrollments at large, multisite employers and ensure that they provide a consistent message. They leverage their own

sales and enrollment professionals, benefits brokers, and enrollment companies to bring product to market. They employ a seamless approach to marketing, enrolling, and servicing their “customers” — namely, employers and employees.

Consider how the following story — told by a presenter at a past conference on voluntary benefits — demonstrates an omnichannel approach:

This broker shared his experience with enrolling loggers in the Pacific Northwest. Understandably, he had difficulty finding an effective way to bring together such a dispersed group to communicate about and enroll the benefit he was offering. Working with the employer, he proceeded to go to the worksite — the forest — and conduct small-group presentations on large tree stumps, with enrollment via laptop computer. He was successful because he found a way to promote his offering to customers *when, where, and how they wanted*.

Today we see worksite marketers use many carrier, broker, and third-party enrollment systems to enroll employees. LIMRA research shows that while many considerations influence the option(s) presented to clients, the employer's preference is most crucial. As such, these solutions can be (and are) customized. Further, many worksite marketers now offer employee self-service options, which route employees to a website or secure portal to elect coverage. Increasingly, these options are available from any web-enabled laptop, tablet, or mobile device, thus meeting the needs of today's self-directed customers.

Omnichannel is the new environment in which today's businesses operate. It acknowledges that customers leverage multiple outlets as they research and buy products and services. As such, organizations must be able to deliver a consistent consumer experience across face-to-face, contact center, web, and mobile channels. Looking for ideas on implementing an omnichannel strategy? Go no further than your company's worksite marketing division. 🌐