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Why Open Enrollment Communications Are Hard

(And Why That's Not Your Fault)

Open Enrollment is one of the most demanding moments HR and Benefits teams face.

You're working against a fixed deadline, with compliance-heavy inputs, multiple reviewers, and employees who need clarity—not documents. At the same time, you're expected to deliver outcomes: completion, confident plan choices, and a smooth employee experience.

Most Open Enrollment challenges aren't benefits problems.

They're communication, decision-support, and delivery problems.

And solving them requires marketing-grade execution—copy, design, accessibility, cadence, and segmentation—at the exact moment most HR teams have the least bandwidth.

This playbook exists to help you see:

- What "good" Open Enrollment communication actually looks like
- Where execution commonly breaks down
- How teams stabilize Open Enrollment without adding headcount

Clarity gaps don't show up as "bad communication."

They show up as tickets, second-guessing, last-week panic, and incorrect elections.

Find out how clear your Open Enrollment communications really are with our **Open Enrollment Clarity Scorecard.**

In 10–15 minutes, you can identify where employees get stuck—and what to fix first, using what you already have.

You'll uncover:

- **Message clarity** (what changed, what matters, what to do)
- **Decision support** (comparisons, "choose if…" guidance)
- **Segmentation & relevance**
- **Delivery cadence & manager enablement**
- **Accessibility & employee experience**
- **Operational impact & feedback loops**

Fill out the Scorecard Now

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The Open Enrollment Communications Execution Timeline



Most Open Enrollment timelines look reasonable—until execution begins.

Creative development, accessibility checks, reviews, and channel coordination often collide late in the process, creating predictable compression and rework.

Start early, stay organized, and lean on partners when you need support.

TIP

If You're Behind Schedule:

< 6 weeks out:
Focus on clarity, not completeness.

< 3 weeks out:
Stabilization beats perfection.

The most common pain points we see teams running into:

UNDERESTIMATING CREATIVE ASSET DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Requires copy, design, accessibility, and review coordination

NOT SETTING A ROBUST COMMUNICATION CADENCE

Needs sequencing, not just reminders

INADEQUATE MANAGER ENABLEMENT

Often rushed or skipped entirely

Creatives On Call can help your team stay aligned ahead of deadlines while ensuring employees have everything they need to make confident benefit choices.

Are you ready with timelines + checklists?

You should have 6-month, 3-month and 1-month checklists, along with communications plans for pre- and post-enrollment.
Let us assist you in crafting lists and plans for success.

Schedule an Appointment

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Use Visual Design to Reduce Open Enrollment Confusion

Use icons to label key concepts.

PLAN A	PLAN B
$2,000	$1,500

Design side-by-side plan comparisons.

ENROLL NOW!

MAY 1st

Highlight key dates and actions.

Avoid data overload.

TIP

Most teams need execution support—especially for creative, messaging, and accessibility.

Crafting benefits communication campaigns can get complicated fast:

- Carrier and vendor data is dense and inconsistent.
- Information design is required to convey key points.
- Assets must work across email, intranet, PDFs, and mobile.
- Accessibility standards must be met under tight timelines.



Is your team in place and ready to go?

Achieving communication clarity across numerous deliverables typically requires:

- **Comms Strategist & Project Manager**
- **Copywriter & Proofer**
- **Designer & Video Editor**
- **Reviewer**

CREATIVES ON CALL CAN HELP WITH COMPLETE, READY-TO-START TEAMS.

Talk to Us

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Explaining Benefits So Employees Can Choose Confidently

Explaining benefits clearly isn't about definitions alone.

It's about helping employees apply information to real decisions.

That means translating terms into scenarios, tradeoffs, and "choose if…" guidance—while staying accurate and compliant.

Where teams stall:

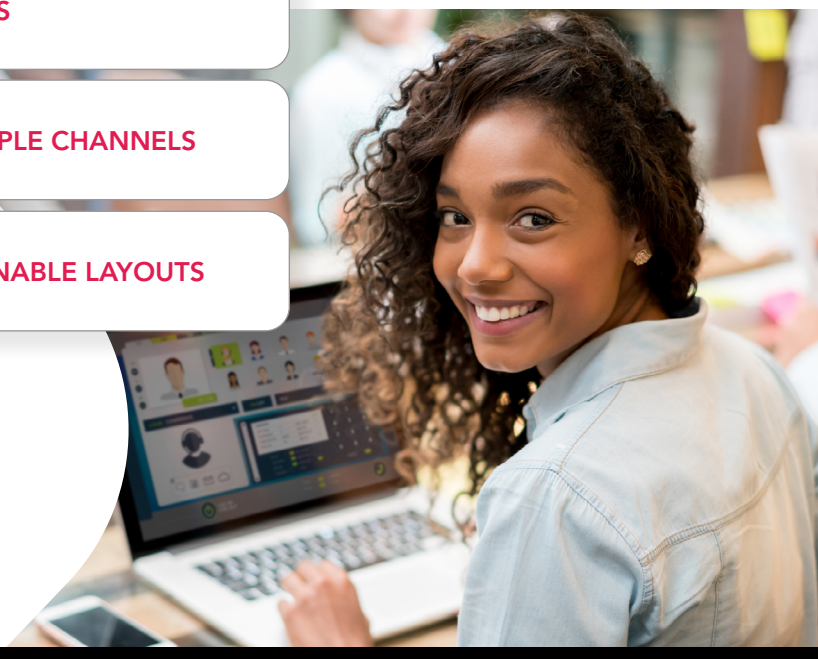
- Turning vendor documents into scannable layouts
- Maintaining consistency across emails and portals
- Designing accessible calls to action under pressure

The hidden work:

- CUSTOMIZING LANGUAGE TO YOUR ACTUAL PLAN NAMES
- BUILDING REAL-LIFE SCENARIOS EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZE
- MAINTAINING ACCURACY THROUGH REVIEWS
- FORMATTING FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND MULTIPLE CHANNELS
- TURNING VENDOR DOCUMENTS INTO SCANNABLE LAYOUTS

TIP

If this list feels useful—but time-consuming to customize—that's the signal most teams need execution support.



Did You Know?

Visuals are processed faster than dense text when hierarchy and focus are clear.

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Open Enrollment Clarity Scorecard

A practical diagnostic to identify where employees get stuck—and what to fix first

Plus: How Creatives On Call helps you stabilize Open Enrollment quickly, without adding headcount

Why this matters

Open Enrollment is a fixed-deadline moment when HR and Benefits teams are judged on outcomes: completion, confident plan selection, utilization, and the operational load on HR. When Open Enrollment communications aren't clear, the "cost" shows up fast—repeat questions, last-week panic, incorrect elections, and employee frustration.

This scorecard helps you quickly assess whether your Open Enrollment communications are designed for understanding and action—and where a focused clarity lift could reduce confusion and support burden.

Where Creatives On Call fits (and why teams bring us in)

Most Benefits teams aren't staffed like marketing teams—and Open Enrollment requires marketing-grade communication under deadline. Creatives On Call plugs in quickly with the exact specialists Open Enrollment demands (writers, designers, motion/video, web, content strategy, accessibility), so you can ship employee-ready communications without hiring.

We help you:

- Translate complex, approved benefits information into clear, employee-ready messaging
- Build decision support (comparisons, "choose if…" guidance) that reduces mistakes
- Create a structured cadence that prevents last-week chaos
- Deliver fast-turn production with review-friendly workflows and accessibility built in

How to use this scorecard

- Complete in 10–15 minutes
- Use it with what you have today: emails, Open Enrollment hub pages, PDFs, vendor content, manager toolkits
- Score each statement based on your current reality

Scoring

2	**2 points** = Fully true / consistently in place
1	**1 point** = Partially true / inconsistently in place
0	**0 points** = Not true / not in place

Important note: Creatives On Call supports communication and behavior-driving clarity. We do not design benefit plans or provide legal advice. You own plan specifics and final approvals.

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2 points = Fully true / consistently in place
1 point = Partially true / inconsistent
0 points = Not true / not in place

Section 1

Message Clarity

Do employees understand what matters and what to do next?

1.	Our Open Enrollment communications clearly explain what changed this year (separate from everything else).	2	1	0
2.	Each major Open Enrollment message answers three questions up front: What is this? Why does it matter to me? What do I need to do next?	2	1	0
3.	We do not rely on dense PDFs or long policy documents as the primary employee message for Open Enrollment.	2	1	0
4.	Employees can quickly tell where to enroll, by when, and what happens if they don't act.	2	1	0
5.	Open Enrollment messages are written in plain language—not vendor, carrier, or compliance-heavy terminology.	2	1	0

Section 1 Score (out of 10):

Section 2

Decision Support

Are you helping employees choose—or leaving them to guess?

6.	We provide simple plan comparisons that highlight meaningful differences (not just feature lists).	2	1	0
7.	Employees receive "choose if…" guidance (example: "This plan may be right if you…") rather than generic descriptions.	2	1	0
8.	We address common decision drivers (dependents, prescriptions, network access, expected usage) with clear prompts and examples.	2	1	0
9.	We clearly explain tradeoffs (example: higher premium vs. lower deductible), not just plan highlights.	2	1	0
10.	Employees have a clear way to sanity-check their choice before submitting Open Enrollment elections (checklist, decision guide, or quick comparison).	2	1	0

Section 2 Score (out of 10):

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2 points = Fully true / consistently in place
1 point = Partially true / inconsistent
0 points = Not true / not in place

Section 3

Segmentation & Relevance

Is everyone getting the same message—or the right message?

11.	We tailor Open Enrollment messaging for at least 2–3 key employee groups.	2	1	0
12.	First-time enrollers receive different guidance than experienced employees.	2	1	0
13.	Employees enrolling dependents receive clearer, more detailed decision support (not just the same overview content).	2	1	0
14.	Non-desk or frontline employees can easily access Open Enrollment information through channels that match how they work.	2	1	0
15.	Remote or distributed employees receive Open Enrollment communications that do not rely on a single channel or a single intranet page.	2	1	0

Section 3 Score (out of 10):

Section 4

Delivery & Cadence

Are you guiding employees through Open Enrollment—or overwhelming them?

16.	Open Enrollment communications follow a clear, paced sequence (not a single information dump).	2	1	0
17.	Each Open Enrollment message has one primary action (not multiple competing calls to action).	2	1	0
18.	Reminder messages reinforce clarity and next steps—not just urgency.	2	1	0
19.	Managers are equipped with simple Open Enrollment talking points and a short "what to do if asked" guide.	2	1	0
20.	Employees know where to go with questions—and what should be handled by HR vs. vendors vs. the enrollment platform.	2	1	0

Section 4 Score (out of 10):

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2 points = Fully true / consistently in place
1 point = Partially true / inconsistent
0 points = Not true / not in place

Section 5

Accessibility & Employee Experience

Can all employees actually use what you send?

21.	Open Enrollment materials are readable on mobile devices.	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
22.	Visual hierarchy makes key information easy to scan (dates, actions, changes, comparisons).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
23.	Videos (if used) include captions; visuals include descriptive context; links are labeled clearly.	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
24.	Color contrast, typography, and layout support accessibility needs (readable fonts, adequate spacing, clear buttons).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
25.	Employees with different language or accessibility needs are considered in Open Enrollment planning (translation, alternate formats, support pathways).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

Section 5 Score (out of 10): _____

Section 6

Operational Impact & Feedback Loops

Are you improving Open Enrollment—or just reacting to it?

26.	We track the most common Open Enrollment questions employees ask (before and during Open Enrollment).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
27.	We measure HR ticket volume spikes during Open Enrollment and can identify the top drivers.	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
28.	We know where employees drop off or delay enrollment (example: platform confusion, decision uncertainty, missing information).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
29.	We adjust Open Enrollment messaging during the enrollment window based on real-time confusion signals (tickets, questions, incomplete enrollments).	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0
30.	After Open Enrollment, we run a short retrospective to capture what worked and what caused friction—so next year improves.	☐ 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 0

Section 6 Score (out of 10): _____

Scoring

50–60: Strong Clarity Foundation

Your Open Enrollment communications are well-structured and employee-centered. Focus on refinement: stronger decision support, more targeted segmentation, and tighter measurement.

35–49: Functional but Fragile

Open Enrollment likely "works," but confusion and repeat questions are costing time and trust. A targeted clarity refresh can significantly reduce support burden and improve confidence.

20–34: High Risk

Open Enrollment confusion is likely creating ticket spikes, delays, and incorrect elections. Clearer messaging, decision support, and a structured cadence are urgent priorities.

Below 20: Predictable Chaos

Open Enrollment breakdowns are likely systemic. Stabilization is needed quickly to prevent operational strain and employee frustration.

Your Scores:

Section 1 Score (out of 10):	
Section 2 Score (out of 10):	
Section 3 Score (out of 10):	
Section 4 Score (out of 10):	
Section 5 Score (out of 10):	
Section 6 Score (out of 10):	
Total Score (out of 60):	**0**



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How Creatives On Call Can Help

(Fast, flexible, expert)

If your score indicates gaps, Creatives On Call can plug in quickly—without adding headcount—to deliver employee-ready Open Enrollment communications.

Common ways teams engage us:

ENROLLMENT CLARITY AUDIT
Identify confusion traps and quick wins, then prioritize fixes

CORE CLARITY KIT
Build the minimum viable Open Enrollment communications system (overview, changes summary, decision support, FAQs, manager toolkit, reminders)

FULL OPEN ENROLLMENT CAMPAIGN SYSTEM
Segmented, multi-channel communications with structured cadence and measurement support

What you can expect:

Clear deliverables, fast-turn execution, review-friendly workflows, and accessibility-forward communication—built for the realities of Open Enrollment timelines.



See How We Can Help

Turn Open Enrollment from chaos into clarity—quickly, and without adding headcount. Contact us today!