

Being Creative in Health Insurance Options

When you are looking forward to the future of your company, health insurance is probably weighing heavily on your mind. By giving health insurance benefits, you are more likely to keep your employees happy (and with your company), but health insurance can be a big burden on what you are doing.

Creative Health Care Options

So what can you do in order to make sure that you are creative in your vision for health insurance? How can you make sure that your employees are taken care of in the best way possible, without making the cost of health insurance a burden on you and/or your employees? Using your vision and getting creative with your health insurance options can really help you save money. In this article, we're going to explore some of the options that you can try in order to make sure that your employees are taken care of, and that the health care costs are not a pain.

1. **Health plans with high deductibles, but offer health savings accounts as an option.** This particular option is common, but it can make your employees nervous, so use it with caution. The advantage is that your employees can put money into their health savings accounts (out of their paycheck or from you), and there are no taxes taken out of the money that is put in there. That's a huge advantage, because that money is never taxed, even at the end of the year. Then, you can pay for the health insurance (no cost to them), and the HSA can help them cover the co-pays and other deductible costs. The other advantages of this plan (other than the HSA being tax-free) are that your employees can keep saving up in their HSA (the money never goes away), and you can make sure that they are keeping their health care costs in check (thus, costing you less money).
2. **Consider a Cooperative.** If you run a small business, this is probably one of the best options that you can consider. Why? Because cooperatives are groups of insurance agencies that allow your patients to not only choose which provider they use, but also allow you (the employer) to get the plans for a lower cost than you would have dealt with in the open market that most small businesses have to deal with. Also, members of cooperatives can help their employees to get more options for their insurance, like adding in dental, vision, or even specialist work without having to pay outrageous co-pays or getting another plan entirely to cover those areas of health. Easy access and lower cost makes this great for small businesses and their employees. You'll have to do a little research to find your local health insurance cooperative, but your local Chamber of Commerce or Small Business Association will be able to help you out.
3. **Focus on preventative care.** Instead of purchasing expensive health care options, you can take the time to do some research and add some health care costs as benefits that aren't related to the insurance that they have. Many times, outside companies will work with companies to make sure that their employees can get what they need in order to take care of preventative care. For example, you can offer free or reduced price gym memberships or athletic center memberships to your employees; you can either offset the cost by paying it yourself, or you can work with the organization in question in order to get the reduced cost, or both! You may be able to work with

a community health care organization in order to make sure that your employees have access to screenings and preventative care without having to pay extra for it in their insurance payments. You can even give them access to online wellness and nutrition programs for just a few dollars a month, thus decreasing the costs of insurance even further.

These aren't your only options, of course, and your options will differ depending on a number of factors, including the area where you live, the type of business that you run, any organizations that your company is affiliated with, the laws of your state or town, and more. You will have to do a lot of research in order to make the best decisions for your current health care situation, but if you get creative with how you want to do it, you can actually save yourself a lot of money and hassle in the long run.

Getting Employees Involved in Health Care Choices

As an employer, you likely know that you don't have all of the answers. Because of this, you need to make sure that you are talking with your employees and getting them involved with their health care choices. If you just force everything on them, you may end up with frustrated employees, especially if they live a distance away and they can't use the health care benefits in the area that they reside.

First off, in order to get employee input, you have to make sure that you're actually talking to them about important information. With the Affordable Care Act, a lot of things have changed, and your employees may not completely understand the impact it may have on them (if it has had any impact at all). By taking the time to teach them about their options and how their health care may have changed as a result of the changes in the system, they may be able to talk to you about possibilities that they read about or heard about that you may not have seen during your research. Be personal; sit down and talk to them or invite employees to schedule meetings with you so that there is a mutual understanding of what has been changing and what may need to be done so that your employees can get exactly what they need from their health care.

As mentioned above, cooperatives are a great option for businesses because they give their employees a choice in the matter when it comes to health insurance. So, if you have a cooperative or you have a number of different options that your employees are able to choose from, then you will be more likely to see exactly what your employees are looking for in their insurance. Sit down and review all of the options that your employees have. Do your employees notice that there is something missing? Is there something that all of your employees want? Is there a way for you to provide those things through a third party provider that will not only help your employees, but will also help you to drive down your health care costs even further? Once again, this will take time, but it will also help you to get your creative juices flowing when it comes to figuring out the best health care options for your company.

Lastly, see what your employees are doing in order to develop their own health and well-being. By encouraging wellness in your company, you will see a lot of difference in the way that your employees act and live. Not only will your health care costs go down because people in your workplace are not suffering from injury and illness, your employees may start working together and getting creative with ways to help reduce their health insurance costs through preventative wellness. Encourage your employees to come to you with ideas about how they want to approach their wellness, or how they can

get the entire workplace involved with something. Pick their brains and see what they would like to do. If you trust them as an employee, let them lead something like a weight loss competition or a challenge with incentives, and offer to provide the incentives. Many brains thinking about the same ideas can help foster a sense of community and encourage creativity in such a way that you will start to see results that you never expected.

Do your employees like to play a role in the vision of your company, or do they feel as if their voice is not heard? If you are looking for ways to encourage creativity and vision, start with the process we've discussed in this section. It may not seem incredibly important, because it's related to health insurance and not to how the company is run, but if employees realize that you care about what they say when it comes to something that's important to them, they may be more willing to approach you about other things as well. It takes time to build that trust, but in general, you will be able to see exactly what is going on and further the vision that you have for your company.

So what is your vision for your company's health care and culture? What do you want to see when it comes to making sure that your employees are taken care of? By getting creative and really thinking about what your employees want and need out of their health insurance plan, you will be more likely to have healthy, happy employees that will stay with your company for years to come.