

How USI Handled Open Enrollment Remotely for a 24/7 Distributed Workforce



The Challenge: Reaching Employees During Open Enrollment

The client, Heritage Senior Communities, is a complex organization with 1,000 employees distributed across two states. While Heritage has different business groups, the majority of employees work in the healthcare field and work in nursing, caregiving, housekeeping, food service, and building maintenance.

Open enrollment is always tricky for this client because the employees are split into three groups with different sets of benefits options. Some employees have access to a benefits administration (ben admin) system to enroll online, while others use paper forms to enroll each year. Plus, facilities are open around the clock, which makes traditional benefits fairs difficult. If benefits fairs run for a few hours during the day, the people who work nights and weekends miss out.

The Solution: Airbo's Virtual Benefits Fair (VBF)

Carman reached out to Airbo, a fully mobile-optimized employee communications and education platform. For over a decade, Airbo has worked with organizations ranging from 50 to 100,000 employees to develop and enhance engagement techniques which have exponentially increased employee interaction.

Along with highly engaging techniques, Airbo ensures an intuitive employee experience and delivers benefits information in bite-sized pieces. These interactive pieces of content, called Tiles, are displayed on a grid called a Board.

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COVID-19 and quarantine has brought all of us on the benefit side of things into a new realm of not being able to actually go out and do face-to-face open enrollment meetings. Our communication strategies have changed.

Carman Baines
Vice President, USI Insurance Services

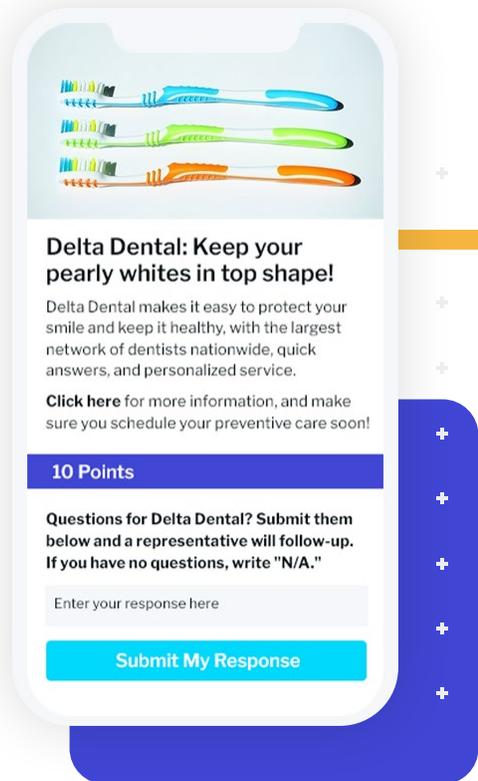
Reading the fun and interactive Tiles makes open enrollment engaging and more like a social media app than a stack of paperwork from HR.

In the first Tile, for example, a dancing cat GIF could welcome employees to the benefits fair and explain how it works. The next Tile could have a Youtube video by Cigna that provides an overview of medical plans. Tiles replace the booths from a traditional in-person benefits fair—complete with flyers to download, the ability to schedule 1-on-1 conversations with providers or HR teams, and even the all-important capability to give away prizes.

Tiles also have a built-in quiz or survey component with a quick and easy question to help keep participants engaged. The software offers a way to share benefits plans, which can be dull and tedious, in a format that grabs employees' attention long enough to convey the essential details.

Though Airbo is a powerful tool, it's quick and simple to set up. With just a week to put something together before her client's open enrollment, Carman set up and launched an Airbo Virtual Benefits Fair. Since some of Heritage's distributed workforce didn't have access to company email, Carman started by compiling the contact information that she had on file. She pulled together a mix of corporate email addresses, personal email addresses, and phone numbers into a master list. She segmented the list into three groups for different benefits packages. Then, Airbo's support team helped her send the benefits fair link to targeted groups.

In the past, with different benefits options for different employee groups, managers mainly handled open enrollment. With Airbo, a central, branded message could be sent from HR. Airbo links don't require any downloads or logins, so employees were able to access the information easily without creating a username or password or downloading an app.



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When we launched it, we could immediately see people going into the Tiles and clicking.

Carman Baines
Vice President, USI Insurance Services

Traditional benefits fairs offer a chance to interact with carriers, brokers, and HR. They are designed to make benefits as fun as possible, with balloons, cupcakes, and passports to incentivize people to come and participate so they can make informed decisions. The drawback is low attendance because fairs are usually one-time events, and not everyone can attend during the allotted time. This year, the fair's virtual format made it accessible 24/7 for 2 weeks, which allowed people to attend on their own time, including nights and weekends.

In addition to the more accessible format, raffle prizes such as gift cards and a Yeti mug enticed employees to participate. Just like a conventional event, vendors sponsored prizes and helped cover the cost of the fair by reallocating their travel budgets towards prizes for the virtual experience.

Airbo's Virtual Benefits Fair also helps companies address legal requirements: "In our business there are certain federal requirements that you have to distribute to employees every year," says Carman.

These notices are typically printed handouts, which proved to be a logistical nightmare during the COVID-19 lockdown. The Airbo team integrated the federal notices into the Tiles and included a question where employees could acknowledge that they had received and read the material. That way, Carman could print out a report to keep on file to ensure the employer fulfilled the federal requirement. It was more efficient, easier to track, and eliminated the need for face-to-face meetings.



The Results: Data and Feedback

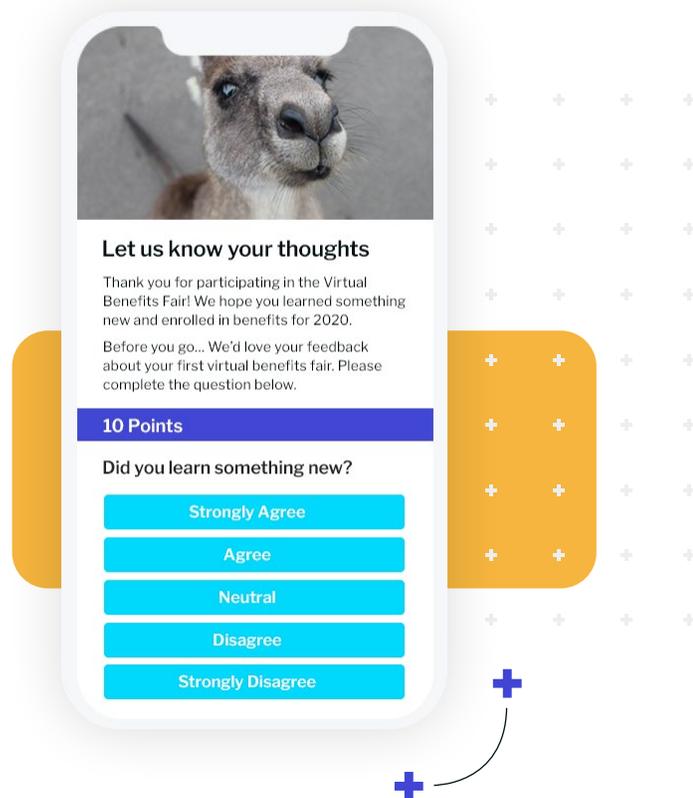
Approximately 900 employees participated in the Virtual Benefits Fair. The Airbo Virtual Benefits Fair software solved two challenges: distributing information in a pandemic without meeting face-to-face, and the common struggle of low attendance at benefits fairs that brokers frequently experience. The Virtual Benefits Fair raised awareness and appreciation of the company's benefits, and Carman noted higher rates of participation and engagement than previous open enrollments.

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This is the most activity that our ben admin has seen through open enrollment, and we've certainly provided other means of communication and outreach in the past.

Carman Baines

The last Tile asked employees if they had learned something new, and the answers were overwhelmingly positive: 80% of participants responded that they had indeed learned something new as a result of attending the fair.



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