

Search:

[Advanced Search](#)

Channels

[Health Plans](#)
[Dental/Vision](#)
[Disability](#)
[Retirement](#)
[Supplemental](#)
[Quality of Life](#)
[Finance/Strategies](#)
[Compliance](#)
[Jobs/Careers](#)
[Employee-Consumer](#)

Archives

[EBN Magazine](#)
[BenefitNews Connect](#)
[BenefitNews Adviser](#)
[Success Stories](#)
[By The Numbers](#)

Subscribe

[Employee Benefit News](#)
[Connect Newsletter](#)
[Employee Benefit Adviser](#)
[Adviser Newsletter](#)
[Employee Benefit News Canada and Companion](#)

Resources

[Research Vault](#)
[Source Book](#)
[Links](#)

Events

[Calendar](#)
[Web Seminars](#)

New advice product helps move CDH forward

Kelley M. Butler

Employee Benefit News • February 2007

Employers introducing consumer-driven health plans to their workers know the motto: If you want employees to succeed in the health care driver's seat, they need driver's ed.

[PRINT](#)
[E-MAIL](#)

During last fall's open enrollment season, employers began offering driver's ed in the form of personalized HSA advice provided by Myfinancialadvice, a financial planning advisory firm based in Boulder, Colo. In an exclusive to EBN, one employer recounted their experiences in using the HSA advice product - MyHSAadvice - to aid employees in health care decision making. MFA also provided EBN with exclusive survey results from a poll of certified financial planners regarding the correlation between advice and HSA adoption.

ORC Macro

Calverton, Md.-based market research firm ORC Macro launched two high-deductible health plans with HSAs for the first time this year, and benefits manager Rhonda Goldstein "really wanted to make them feel comfortable and get all the information they needed to make a good decision" about enrolling in the plan, she says.

After being introduced to MyHSAadvice by her benefits consultant Cory Easton, Goldstein believed it was the right tool at the right time to effectively reach ORC Macro employees. "We wanted them to know an expert was breaking down all the pieces and would help them decide, Yes, [an HSA] is good for you,' or No, it's not."

MyHSAadvice has certified financial planners conduct phone and e-mail consultations with employees to advise them on whether to enroll in an HSA. ORC Macro sent information packages to employees' homes and distributed several e-mail blasts to introduce the HDHP and accompanying advice service. The company also sent newsletters to explain consumerism and HSAs to workers, and conducted Web seminars and onsite meetings to hammer the point home, says Easton, a senior consultant with Kelly & Associates.

"They got a lot of information in advance," says Goldstein. "We started in August, and open enrollment was in October."

During open enrollment, MFA's financial planners trained in HSAs and ORC's specific benefit options consulted with employees to "compare the traditional plan to the HDHP in terms of cost and how each decision might affect individual families," explains Kevin Condon, MFA's executive vice president of advisor services. "We look at family health and financial status. If an employee has a chronic illness or a special-needs child [requiring a high level of care], those are things we take into account."

MyHSAadvice advisers created an action plan for each employee using the advice service, which included a recommendation for or against enrolling in the HSA. Advisers reviewed the plan with employees by phone, and were available by phone or e-mail if employees had follow-up questions.

To avoid the conflict of interest that concerns employers regarding 401(k) advice, "we provide employers with a filter," Condon says.

"We are independent advisers, with no financial incentives for our recommendations.

We don't have a dog in the hunt."

Such objectivity was a key point for ORC Macro employees, says Goldstein. "They liked that they could feel like no one was trying to sell them anything. The feedback we received was that the service was helpful."

Although it is unknown how many employees used MyHSAadvice, out of 500 total plan members, 20 ORC Macro members enrolled in a CDHP for 2007, a 4% adoption rate. Goldstein calls this "a good result for year one."

Easton concurs: "It's a tough group to reach, and this year was very positive," he says. "The thing I'm most happy about is that we offered them a lot of choice and gave them the tools necessary to make prudent decisions."

Going forward, Goldstein says "We're definitely going to [use MyHSAadvice] next year, and make it available to new employees as they come onboard."

HSA advice-adoption link

Last summer, MFA conducted a nationwide survey of certified financial planners about the role of expert financial advice in HSA decision making.

Among the findings:

* CFPs assert that, on average, 62% of employees need help with HSA decisionmaking.

* 43% of their clients opened an HSA as a direct result of their advisers recommendation.

* Only 11.5% of clients would have invested in an HSA without expert guidance.

Comparing HSA advice to 401(k) investment advice, "as in the early years of 401(k) plans, employees are confused and misinformed [about] the value of HSAs to their financial circumstances," the report reads.

"The stakes are far higher today as HSAs become mainstream. HSAs require employees to address a daunting array of issues, including cost effectiveness, contribution guidelines, tax treatment and long-term financial planning strategies. At the same time, employers depend on widespread [HSA] adoption to reap the financial benefits CDH promises."

Says Condon, "The savings to an employer for each employee that signs up is significant - \$700 to \$1,000 per employee per year, which makes decision support so critical." - K.M.B.

Benefits Marketplace *Provided by Industry Brains*

[Applicant tracking is easy with PCRecruiter ATS](#)

Find out why PCRecruiter is the software that over 2200 offices rely on for their staffing needs. Available in ASP, self-hosted Web & Windows desktop formats. Scalable, customizable & feature-rich.

[Applicant Tracking](#)

SonicRecruit brings the power of Web-based recruiting to your fingertips, anytime, anywhere. Quick, portable, and affordable, SonicRecruit puts you in control of the hiring process, from start to finish. 30 to 45 days for ROI.

[Building an in-house executive recruiting team?](#)

Are you stuck using an HRIS/ATS staffing system? Not leveraging relationships? For over 15 years, Cluen has developed the preferred software of high-level search consultants who want a Recruiting Intelligence tool to get the most out of their data.

[Customizable Learning Management Systems at Ziiva](#)

Prosperity is the only LMS your company needs for employee training management. Our unbeatable price and customizable LMS supports every aspect of learning within your organization. Let Ziiva make your training a seamless part of your operations.

[Click here to advertise in this space](#)

[About Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)



(c) 2007 *Employee Benefit News* and SourceMedia, Inc. All rights reserved.
SourceMedia is an Investcorp company.
Use, duplication, or sale of this service, or data contained herein, is strictly prohibited.