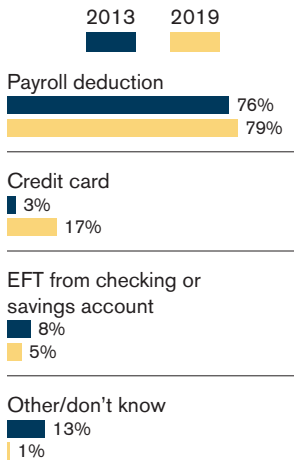


PLOT POINTS

By Bonnie Brazzell
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Consider the employee

Preferred payment method for future benefit purchases



WITH THE ABUNDANCE of technology service providers vying for your employer clients' attention, making decisions using bad data or alluring sales propositions can leave employers vulnerable. Payroll vendors, enrollment and benefits-administration platform providers and billing services promise cost-effective, efficient and effective solutions to ease an employer's pain points. It's not to say that these technologies will or will not deliver what they promise, but an important element in the decision-making process must be the preferences of employees.

Take payment methods, for example. Payroll deduction is no longer the only option, with direct employee billing using credit cards, debit cards or ACH emerging as possible alternatives. However, our latest employee research found that almost 80 percent of em-



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ployees surveyed cite payroll deduction as their preferred payment method for future benefit purchases.

While preference for credit card use has increased since our last study in 2013, it doesn't come anywhere close to the popularity of payroll deduction. Payroll deduction has been consistently cited as one of the top reasons for purchasing voluntary products by around 90 percent of employees for many years.

Benefits communication is another example of an area where considering employee preferences can enhance decision making. Online tools, videos, webinars and mobile apps all offer efficient, low-touch methods to educate employees about voluntary benefits. Our same employee research found that while employees' top preference to learn about voluntary benefits is on their own through information sent by their employer via email, newsletters, etc., the next most preferred communication method is to speak with someone in person.

In addition, a single learning method or tool is likely not sufficient to cover increasingly diverse employee populations. If we look at learning preferences by age, employees over age 50 were less likely to prefer learning about voluntary benefits on their own via the internet or intranet, and employees age 65 and older have a stronger preference for speaking with someone in person than other age groups.

To solidify your place as the employer's trusted advisor, arm yourself with good data on the employee perspective and bring this information to your employer clients as they navigate and vet the growing number of technology service providers.

Preference for learning about voluntary benefits

	2015	2019
On my own through information sent by my employer (emails, newsletters, etc.)	43%	39%
Speaking with someone in person	30%	30%
On my own via internet or intranet	19%	23%
Speaking with someone over the telephone	3%	6%
Online chat	2%	2%
One-to-one video session (i.e., Skype)	1%	1%
Other	1%	1%

Preference for learning about voluntary by age

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
On my own through information sent by my employer (emails, newsletters, etc.)	34%	33%	38%	46%	34%
Speaking with someone in person	34%	30%	30%	31%	46%
On my own via Internet or intranet	24%	6%	23%	17%	14%