

PLOT POINTS

By Erin Marino and
Nick Rockwell



Stuck in the middle?

IT'S COMMON FOR benefits professionals to reference all the nuances between the large and small ends of the voluntary market. The number of carriers used per enrollment and the top products offered are just a couple of the easily discernible aspects of these market segments. However, the mid-market (employers with between 100-999 employees) is a distinct segment with particular preferences and characteristics.

As an example, let's look at carrier selection. Across all market segments, ease of administration is the only factor that appears as a top-five factor in carrier selection across small, medium and large employer segments. The recent Eastbridge report, *Voluntary & the Mid-Size Case Market*, found that even the sub-segments within the mid-market vary in their top carrier selection criteria.

Beyond ease of administration, employers with 100-499 employees consider factors such as "carrier website for access to claims forms, status and information about coverage," "carrier help with enrollment," "availability of tools, calculators and benefits advice" and the "availability of self-administered billing." On the other hand, employers with 500-999 employees consider factors like "carrier reputation for quality and service," "price/value," "carrier support to develop communications and enrollment strategy" and "quality of enrollment and communications materials."

If we look at the small end of the middle (100-499), we might notice some considerations are more intuitively associated with the large case market, such as a carrier website for access to claims forms, status, and information about coverage. While looking at the large end of the mid-

dle (500-999 lives), it's interesting to see components more commonly associated with small groups, such as quality of enrollment materials and communications.

For brokers to effectively meet the most-pressing needs of their employer clients, they must have an appreciation for how nuanced preferences and perspectives can be within specific market segments; not just small and large, but medium (and even within the "medium" segment). Don't split the difference and try to sell to the middle. The most successful brokers will bring a tailored view of employer segments to their client conversations to best match their unique needs.

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Important factors in choosing a carrier (percent rating as "extremely" or "very" important)

Factor	100-499 EEs	500-999 EEs
Reputation for quality service and products	69%	85%
Ease of administration (billing and service)	77%	83%
Price/value	77%	81%
Quality of enrollment and communication materials	71%	75%
Carrier support to develop communications and enrollment strategy	71%	75%
Carrier will help with enrolling	77%	70%
Availability of self-administered billing	80%	66%
Carrier website for access to claims forms, status and information about coverage	79%	60%
Availability of tools, calculators and benefits advice	77%	70%

Nick Rockwell is president, Eastbridge Consulting Group. Erin Marino is senior director of research and marketing at Eastbridge Consulting Group.