

THREE ESSENTIAL TYPES OF CONTENT FOR EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION



INTRODUCTION

If you want to create an engaging experience with your employee communications, it's important to move beyond a one-sized-fits-all approach. A single benefits guide or webinar is no longer sufficient to capture your employees' attention. Engaging communication mimics the experience they have as consumers. This means using multiple channels to get the word out, creating on-demand experiences that employees can access 24/7, and—critically—providing content in multiple formats. Using multiple types of content will engage different types of learners and ensure that your communications are easy to consume.

Marketers think a lot about the content they produce to communicate with their customers, and they use different formats strategically, depending on the type of information they are trying to convey, who they are targeting, and what they want the content to achieve.

Leading HR organizations are now adopting the same approach when communicating with employees. A well-thought-out mix of content types will amplify engagement with your communications and teach your employees that it's worth their time to engage with what you send them. Let's walk through the three essential content types that you should be leveraging, and explain when to use each one.



VIDEO

It's probably no surprise that online videos are a staple of modern communications. Over the last decade, their popularity has soared. Globally, people watch over 1 billion hours of video on the internet each day – that translates into an average of 45 minutes per day per person.¹

Your colleagues in marketing have likely capitalized on the popularity of videos, with over 93% of marketers reporting that they use video in their campaigns. And they do so because videos are an effective tool. Research by Forrester has revealed that when marketers include a video thumbnail in an e-mail, up to three times as many people click through the e-mail and go to the company's website. And once they get there, people spend more time on websites with video on them.²

Marketing-minded HR leaders are also utilizing videos in their employee communications. But it's important to know when to use video, as it isn't suitable for every piece of information you want to get across. Here are some scenarios where video is the preferred option.

Inspire your employees to pay attention to something. Think about those tear jerker commercials that you see during the Superbowl, or the humane society ads that solicit donations through photos and videos of sad cats and dogs. They get you to pay attention, don't they? Of course you don't want to go to quite that extreme with your employees—no tissues needed!—but video is great for telling people why they should care about something. Use it when you want to get your employees leaning forward and listening to what you have to say.

Explain a complex concept or process. You've probably seen an "explainer video" on social media recently, about how a product works or how to cook a meal. Videos are great for this type of message too because they are efficient. Using text or static images would require more time and effort from your employee-consumer to ingest than a quick video.

Build awareness of a program. Video can also be a great tool for building awareness by providing a summary or overview of one or more programs. The combination of visuals and memorable audio (think catchy music) can help employees retain the information and remember that the program exists.



Inspire your employees with a short video

1. Zenith, 2017
2. Forrester, 2009 and Wistia, 2016

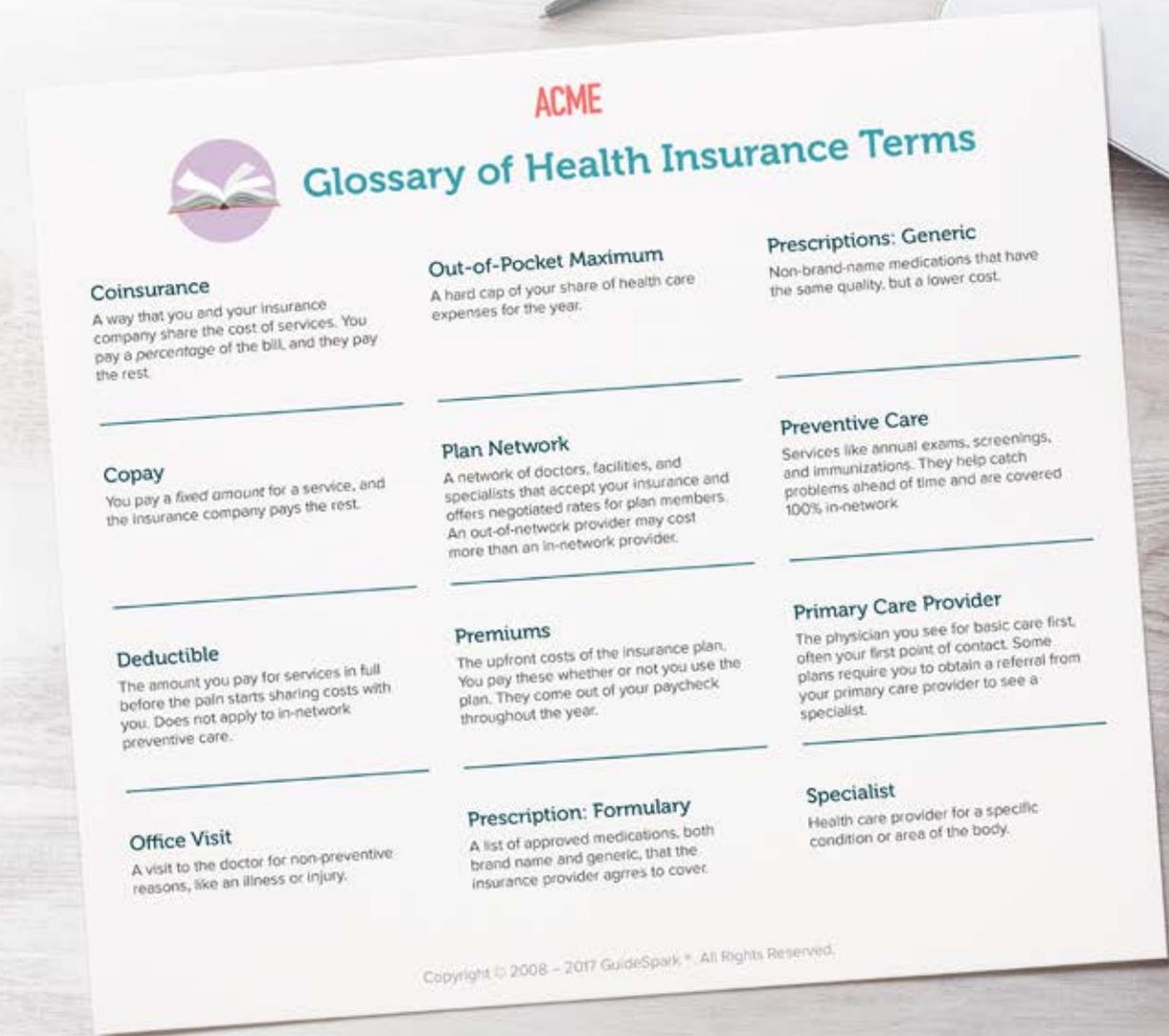
PRINTABLE DOCUMENTS

Although communication is evolving rapidly, printable documents, which have been the mainstay of corporate communication for the last few decades, are not completely obsolete. The difference between yesterday and today, however, is that they can no longer be the only type of content you're providing to employees. Printed documents should be used strategically, when they're truly the best fit for the information at hand. And, they should be available on demand. Today's employees expect to be able to access information 24/7 on a variety of devices. So, skip the printed guidebooks and make documents available digitally with the rest of your content. Employees who want printed copies can print them on their own.

Here are the key scenarios where you'll want to lean on documents.

Provide details that employees will need to come back and reference. Documents are great for conveying key terms, contact information, or large amounts of data. Some examples of when you'll want to use a document include: glossaries of health insurance terms, a table of medical plan premiums, or examples of bonus plan calculations.

Present a checklist that employees can use to track their progress. Everyone loves a good checklist, right? For this type of information, a simple document is still your best bet. Lists are great for guiding employees through the steps they need to take before enrolling in benefits, or for outlining the points they need to address in their self-assessment during performance review season. Make sure you keep the document simple and concise so it's easy for employees to use.



INFOGRAPHICS

Finally, leading HR organizations are adopting infographics in their employee communications. Infographics are similar to documents, but generally include less text and rely more heavily on imagery to carry the core message. They allow you to isolate a few key pieces of information and ensure your employees remember it.

Marketers have seen tremendous success with infographics in recent years, and chances are you've seen at least a few floating around social media. Like video, infographics are popular because they are effective communication tools. Just like the other content types, though, they are not perfect for every type of information, so it's important to be selective about when to use them in your employee communications. Here are some situations where infographics are a great choice.

Provide simple tips for navigating a scenario. Consider using an infographic when you have a few simple tips that you want people to internalize about a particular process or event. This could include best practices for delivering feedback to employees or ways to incorporate feedback outside of formal reviews. By combining concise text with related graphics, you'll help employees remember the information when they need it most.

Communicate a framework. Infographics are also great for conveying simple frameworks that your organization uses, whether it's for setting goals (e.g. "SMART" goals), awarding wellness incentives, or allocating merit increases. There is one caveat here: if the framework is complex or requires a lot of data to explain (e.g. bonus calculations at some organizations), you should consider video or a printable document respectively.

Communicate a timeline of events. Infographics are especially great tools for delivering timelines, because they allow employees to quickly absorb (and remember) a sequence of events and understand how elements within a series relate to one another.



BONUS POINTS

If you want to take your communications a step further, consider expanding your approach to include formats like podcasts and interactive quizzing or games (think BuzzFeed). A word of advice, though: if you're considering expanding, check in with your employees and ask what types of content they find engaging as consumers. If none of your employees are avid podcast listeners, it might be an uphill battle to get them to start engaging with them now. On the other hand, if you've got a bunch of video game aficionados, it could be a worthwhile endeavor to incorporate some gamification or interactivity into your communications.

KNOW HOW TO USE YOUR CONTENT

In addition to knowing when to use each format, it's also important to remember some general principles about creating engaging content, across all formats:

- **Keep it short.** This applies to all content types, but is especially important with video. Here at GuideSpark, we've learned that the most effective videos are three minutes or shorter. It may be tempting to consolidate all of your printable documents into one guidebook, but today's employees do not want to search through a large document to find the information they need. Although it is more work on your end to maintain, you'll find that your employees engage more with your content when it's offered in concise and focused pieces.
- **Keep it simple.** It's tempting to cram a lot of animations into a video, or colors into an infographic, to try and get people's attention, but those tactics can distract viewers and make it difficult for them to absorb and retain the information.
- **Keep it authentic.** Avoid overthinking your messaging or overdoing it with your corporate branding. Employees respond best to content that looks and sounds like it was created by humans.

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SUMMARY

In the quickly evolving landscape of employee communication, it's critical to leverage a variety of formats for your content. But you have to know when to use each type if you want your communication to be effective.

GuideSpark Communicate Cloud® (GSCC) empowers HR teams to engage employees with consumer-grade content experiences and communication campaigns modeled after marketing initiatives. GSCC provides a library of communication journeys focused on Total Rewards, Onboarding, Performance Management, and Compensation/Equity programs. With GuideSpark, HR can effectively cut through the noise to drive adoption and alignment of critical HR programs.



ABOUT GUIDESPARK

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