



3 questions you should ask your benefit technology partners

WITH THE HOLIDAYS on hand, maybe you'd like to give your clients a great gift. As tempting as a fruit-of-the-month club membership might be, here's a suggestion that'll last much longer: a benefits technology partner with capabilities and services that match their needs and those of the benefits carriers you use.

Shopping for that perfect partner doesn't need to be as frustrating as finding this year's must-have but out-of-stock toy. Just ask your potential partners these key questions to find the right fit.

#1: What data exchange formats do you support other than APIs?

Application programming interfaces are growing as the preferred data exchange format for carriers. About two-thirds support APIs and more plan to use them in the future, according to our "Enrollment and Benefit Technology Partnerships" report. APIs streamline integrations and improve data accuracy for tasks like eligibility management, demographic changes and evidence of insurability. About half of carriers have an active API with a technology partner, a number likely to grow next year.

But not all carriers can support APIs, and most don't expect APIs to replace all other formats. Technology partners must be able to support other data formats—without charging additional fees.

#2: What product features can you support—and which are problematic to build?

Most technology partners can support all types of products, but some features create stumbling blocks. Carriers cite technology vendor problems with issue-age rates, evidence of insurability

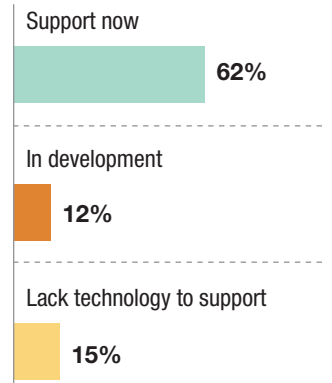
in real time, individual products, fully underwritten coverage and stacked coverages. Make sure partners can support features clients want and carriers offer.

#3: What benefit education and decision-support tools do you support?

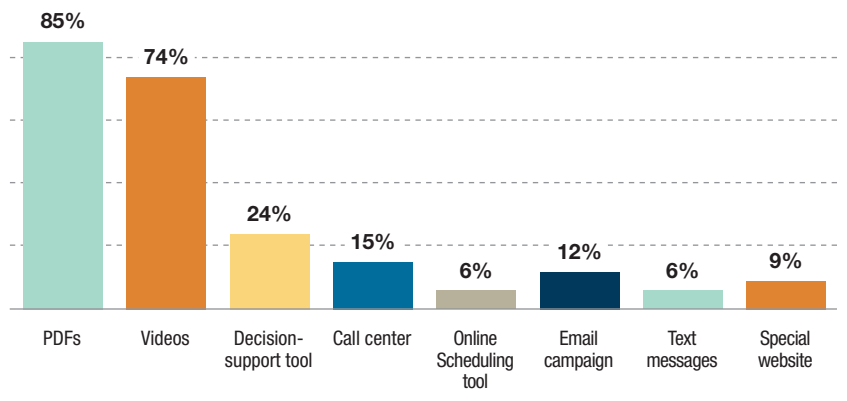
Education and communication are vital to driving employee participation. Some technology partners offer personalized plans, plan comparisons and recommendations. Decision-support tools are native to most partners' platforms, but some provide them through third parties. It's important to understand your clients' needs and ask potential partners what they can bring to the table.

Make sure you understand what the carriers you use and the technology partners you're considering can support. The wrong pairing could create implementation delays and negatively impact participation. A gift like that would be about as welcome as the ugly Christmas sweater hiding in the back of your closet.

Carrier support for APIs



Carrier use of benefit education and online enrollment tools



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