



# Group Benefits Insider

*Information and insights about employee benefits*

## Industry trends drive voluntary growth

2016 promises to be a year of change and growth in the employee benefits arena.

That's why delivering on my commitment to you includes helping you keep pace with an ever-dynamic market. Each quarter, I'll be passing along valuable insights from my regional sales manager, [RSM name], about what's going on in the industry and how it affects you and your clients.

Check out [517,000 Sales Opportunities](#) below to learn more about the growth of voluntary benefits and the industry trends that will drive that growth in 2016.

## 517,000 Sales Opportunities

Opportunity is knocking. Across the country, more than 517,000 businesses offer no voluntary benefits to employees.<sup>1</sup> That's a gap you can help fill.

As employers plan for increasing healthcare expenses, they're looking for ways to manage other benefit costs. You can be a resource by providing them with solutions to enhance their benefit packages without additional costs. And, in the process, you can build your client base and help employees who are facing higher out-of-pocket medical costs and greater financial exposure.

## Key trends in voluntary

2016 looks to be a year of growth for voluntary benefits.

These industry trends power that growth:

**Simplicity:** Employers expect the full employee benefit experience – from enrollment to administration and every step in between – to be simple. Processes should be convenient and easy to follow, and language should be free from jargon, clear and concise.

**A focus on wellness:** More employers are recognizing the value of focusing on wellness to boost employee productivity and attendance. Benefits offered through voluntary products such as dental and vision coverage help employers address this need.

**Tech solutions:** Convenience, accuracy and personalization all play a role in benefits enrollment and administration, and all are better accomplished with electronic, online solutions. This is an especially important factor in meeting generational employee differences. For example, millennials in particular expect their transactions to be electronic/online.

**Flexibility as a differentiator:** Employee populations are dynamic and require adaptable solutions. Offer benefit options to meet a wide range of employer and employee needs, budgets and learning styles, for employers with a few to many employees.

**Emphasis on employee education:** Avoid scare tactics and industry jargon. As with the entire client/employee experience, the education layer should be simple and clear, and focused only on what employees need to know to make an enrollment decision. More than that, participation may be negatively affected.

## How do you help your clients select the right voluntary benefits carrier?

- **Look at breadth of the carrier's product offering.** Work with carriers that offer a wide range of flexible voluntary product solutions.
- **Review the company's financial strength.** Select carriers that have strong, superior ratings from reputable rating agencies, such as A.M. Best, Fitch, and Standard & Poor's, indicating the financial stability and the ability to meet financial obligations.
- **Gauge how many years they've offered voluntary benefits.** Experience and longevity speak volumes about a carrier's ability to meet your clients' needs.

**Know how the carrier will support you and your clients.** Make sure the carrier offers comprehensive support for voluntary programs in terms of education, enrollment and administration, including tried-and-true technology solutions.

- **Know their track record for success.** The success of a voluntary program can be measured by the number of employees who use the benefits, as well as the average premium generated.

With the growth of voluntary projected for 2016, now's the time to focus on benefit trends and assess opportunities to help your clients manage benefit costs and fill coverage gaps. Evaluate your book of business to determine if you have clients among the 517,000 not offering voluntary. And work with carriers that can help you offer solutions your clients need.

<sup>1</sup> [\*Keeping Up With the Times: Voluntary Benefits Remain a Fixture in an Every-Changing Landscape\*](#); Ronald R. Neyer, Jr.; LIMRA; May 6, 2015; viewed Jan. 6, 2016.