

Milliken & Company adopted Benefitfocus to modernize and streamline benefits administration for 6,000+ employees

Executive summary

In October 2022, Milliken & Company conducted its first fully digital open enrollment period with Benefitfocus. The switch allowed the organization to deliver a convenient, modern benefits experience to its some 6,000 benefits eligible employees across more than 30 locations. Eliminating paper enrollment forms and standardizing processes across different groups of employees has been a key component of the organization's larger digital transformation.



Partnering with Benefitfocus has enabled Milliken & Company to:

- ✔ Modernize open enrollment and the entire benefits administration process.
- ✔ Alleviate many administrative and communication burdens on its small in-house benefits team.
- ✔ Leverage industry best practices to enhance benefits coverage and service.
- ✔ Move toward a consolidated benefits administration solution.
- ✔ Improve the benefits experience for more than 6,000 employees.

Brad Johnson, Senior Director of Benefits and Retirement at Milliken & Company, oversaw the implementation process and has engaged with Benefitfocus since. He described his experience working with Benefitfocus as a valuable technology solution as well as a strategic partner.



Having a long-term relationship was a number one priority. I had my own personal familiarity with Benefitfocus ever since the company started. Our initial sales person started calling us several years ago and we slowly built a relationship over the past six or seven years.”

Brad Johnson
Senior Director of Benefits and Retirement
Milliken & Company



Milliken & Company is a global manufacturing leader founded in 1865. The company specializes in a range of products, including flooring, textiles, chemicals and health care solutions. With headquarters in South Carolina, Milliken & Company operates more than 30 locations in the U.S. and employs more than 6,000 benefits eligible employees in hourly and salary positions.

The Challenge

Prior to implementing Benefitfocus, Milliken & Company conducted open enrollment with different processes for different groups of employees. Hourly employees completed paper enrollment forms, which HR team members would process manually. Salaried employees completed enrollment digitally via an on-premises HCM solution – better than paper but still not ideal, given its clumsy user interface. Both processes were rife with opportunities for missteps.

Paper enrollment required HR staff to perform mountains of data entry, which could have resulted in incorrect personal information or coverage levels that wouldn't be caught until months later. The HCM interface lacked intuitive navigation and clear instructions, leaving many employees confused and frustrated.

As a forward-thinking leader, Johnson championed a solution that would streamline and standardize the open enrollment process as well as all other aspects of benefits administration. His prior knowledge of Benefitfocus and trust in the individuals he engaged with prior to implementation made it a simple choice. The technological advantages sealed the deal. "The SAP partnership with Benefitfocus was another driving factor that made my life easier," said Johnson. "I had built the relationship and then for that to plug in seamlessly with SAP, that was the catalyst for our IT department to go ahead and approve it."

Garnering support from other leaders in the organization did take some time. Fortunately, a new CEO joined the organization and shared Johnson's vision of a unified benefits administration solution. Soon after, Milliken & Company embarked on the implementation process.

The Solution

Milliken & Company currently utilizes a number of services available through Benefitfocus and, in ongoing strategic planning meetings with its account executive, is evaluating services to expand and enrich the partnership.

- ✔ **Benefitplace™**
- ✔ **Dependent Verifications**
- ✔ **Direct Bill, Closed Loop Payroll**
- ✔ **Health Insights**
- ✔ **Benefit Service Center (task list)**
- ✔ **Advanced Engagement, Smart Moments**

Rolling out a brand-new open enrollment process with Benefitfocus allowed Milliken & Company to deliver a more modern and convenient experience for all benefits eligible employees. Implementing Benefitfocus has offered employees more self-service tools, which translates into faster and easier access to information about enrollment options, benefits coverage and provider choice. At the same time, it reduces the administrative lift for Milliken & Company's in-house team and empowers HR site managers to field many basic benefits questions on their own. "We think it's going to get much better as people get more familiar with the system," said Johnson. "Over time it will continue to improve the ROI from productivity."

Johnson described their implementation process as a smooth and easy one. "Our implementation manager was so good," he said. "She was so good that some of the things that we probably thought were bigger issues ended up not being as big of an issue. Through implementation, we had virtually all of the resources that Benefitfocus has, which was great."

Looking ahead, Milliken & Company is exploring other Benefitfocus services. Working closely with Benefitfocus allows Johnson to tap into industry best practices and get fast answers for a range of questions, in addition to guidance in prioritizing items on his benefits administration wish-list.

Johnson is exploring ways to extract even more value from the relationship with Benefitfocus. He added: "We're asking a lot of questions: Can we do salary bands? Can we bring more on with our voluntary benefits? I'd like to get our pre-65 retirement medical plan and COBRA moved over. I'd like to consolidate everything under a single roof, which makes life easier for us."



The Results

Upgrading from disparate and partially analog enrollment processes means Milliken & Company struggles to quantify the impact of implementing Benefitfocus. But that doesn't mean Johnson can't speak to the many advantages of modernizing and unifying benefits administration. One key takeaway also serves as advice for companies looking for a benefits admin partner. "Remember there's a reason that you're looking for a solution and don't get so locked into your way of doing things that you miss out on best practices," said Johnson. "We learned early on that we needed to be a little more flexible and maybe change some things. Maybe we were too customized and now we're trying to get away from so much customization and move more towards standard processes."

Perhaps the most powerful impact of implementing Benefitfocus has been the vast improvement in the quality of the benefits experience from the employee perspective. "Going digital with Benefitfocus opened up a different world for us," Johnson said. "Now we have new hires come in and they don't have to fill out paper forms. Not too long ago, we were hiring at the Vice President level and handing them paper forms. They hadn't had to fill out a paper form in 20 years."

Benefitfocus has also helped Milliken & Company make employee benefits easier to understand and use. With quick links for single sign-on, employees can more easily access a variety of vendors connected to their medical coverage, such as HSA, SSO and wellness programs. "With that single sign on, employees love that they can check their points quickly and easily," said Johnson, "and all of our documentation is in one single place. It's just easier for people to find what they need. And because it's mobile, people can look at this at home, on their phones."

Partnering with Benefitfocus has also allowed Milliken & Company to maintain a relatively small and agile in-house team. With just 2.5 dedicated benefits administration positions and support from HR managers at each location, Milliken & Company has maintained its pre-implementation benefits participation rate, despite experiencing a 10% reduction in force through attrition. Johnson attributes the population changes to economic fluctuations and, with Benefitfocus in place, it's unlikely he will need to grow his in-house team even if the company returns to its previous headcount. Working with Benefitfocus allows Milliken & Company to deliver a higher quality benefits experience while simultaneously streamlining and reducing the in-house administrative load.

Working with Benefitfocus has also enabled Milliken & Company to chart the future, with strategic support and planning based on proven best practices. While Johnson is well-versed in the art of crowdsourcing information about how other companies approach benefits administration, the partnership with Benefitfocus gives him the confidence and guidance to create strategies that align with Milliken & Company's goals. Tapping into industry best practices and Benefitfocus' expert advice gives Milliken & Company direct insight into the future of benefits administration. "We asked questions constantly throughout implementation," Johnson said. "What's everybody else doing? What's the most normal thing to do here? What's best practice?"



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The ongoing relationship and communication that Benefitfocus offers, in the form of monthly strategy meetings, helps Johnson advance Milliken & Company's benefits offerings, experience and administration. "Most importantly, what I appreciate about our relationship with Benefitfocus is having the expertise to answer our questions," said Johnson. "We have great relationships with good people that we can call up and have conversations with. And we're trying to figure things out together. We've been so impressed with everyone we've interacted with. Everybody knows the platform and services and that's just that's huge."