

Benefitfocus Delivers Automation and Expert Guidance to Simplify Benefits Administration

National Express LLC maintains a lean in-house team while expanding offerings and elevating the benefits experience for eligible employees.

Executive summary

Four years after first implementing Benefitfocus to support their organization's complex structure and expanding benefits offerings, National Express LLC (NELLC) continues to unlock more advantages of working with a benefits administration partner that offers deep industry knowledge and advanced technology. With approximately 20,000 employees, NELLC relies on its partnership with Benefitfocus to provide benefits-eligible employees with the information and resources they need to select and utilize the most appropriate coverage for their personal health needs and goals.



Partnering with Benefitfocus has allowed NELLC to:

SIMPLIFY BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

- ✔ Modernize a previously paper-driven enrollment process.
- ✔ Maintain a lean in-house benefits administration team.
- ✔ Expand total benefits packages with new offerings.
- ✔ Control spending by eliminating the need for up to 10 separate vendors.

ELEVATE THE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPERIENCE

- ✔ Enjoy the confidence that employees receive accurate and timely benefits information.
- ✔ Leverage industry best practices to enhance benefits coverage and service.

Laura Dilallo, Director, Compensation and Benefits, NELLC, has partnered with Benefitfocus for the past two years. She shared details of her experience with Benefitfocus as a strategic partner, quality service provider and invaluable resource to support NELLC's benefit goals.

“Because our organization is so complex, the best thing about Benefitfocus is that they have the ability to customize,” said Dilallo. Despite the challenges that come with this complexity and with recent changes in the company, Benefitfocus has consistently provided quality service, demonstrated care and offered strategic guidance to help Dilallo and her team navigate their benefits landscape.



National Express LLC (NELLC) is the North American subsidiary of Mobico Group, one of the premier global mobility firms. They operate across 34 states and two provinces. Their organizations share a strong commitment to providing the highest level of safety, quality, outstanding customer service and positive employee relations. National Express School (NEXS) operates approximately 15,000 school buses, serves more than 400 school districts and contracts in 31 states and two provinces, and transports more than 1.3 million students on a daily basis. With U.S. headquarters in Lisle, Illinois (30 minutes from Chicago), the company employs more than 20,000 people in multiple states, with 24 different payroll groups, 79 contribution bands across 120 locations, union and non-union workers, as well as many part-time workers who are benefits-eligible.

The Challenge

NELLC has an exceptionally complex structure that includes 50 legacy health plans and many eligibility categories. The nature of these requirements simultaneously increased the need for a strategic benefits partner and elevated the challenge of finding the right provider. The intricacy of NELLC's structure and the size of its workforce translate into high demands for benefits administration. NELLC needed a partner that could not only integrate dozens upon dozens of unique rules but also do so with a high degree of accuracy.

Finding a benefits administration partner that could efficiently automate processes to manage NELLC employees' varying eligibility pools wasn't necessarily on the original wish list, but it turned out to be an invaluable capability. "Being able to customize all of our nuances was a nice surprise," said Dilallo, of her early interactions with Benefitfocus. "We continue to introduce new one-offs. We'll open a new location or enter into a collective bargaining agreement with a union that requires us to introduce a new offering. It's never a problem for Benefitfocus."

Additionally, it's long been a priority at NELLC to provide quality benefits with a convenient experience, so employees feel their benefits are truly an asset and not a source of stress. NELLC operates with a lean in-house team for benefits administration and, as such, needed a strategic partner that would allow the organization to streamline operations and control costs while delivering quality coverage and services to all eligible employees.

The Solution

NELLC is currently leveraging the majority of services available through Benefitfocus and evaluating services to expand and enrich the partnership.

For NELLC, Benefitfocus provides the following services:

- ✓ **Mobile app**
- ✓ **Centralized, online benefits hub**
- ✓ **Dependent eligibility verification**
- ✓ **Billing support**
- ✓ **COBRA Administration**
- ✓ **Live contact center**
- ✓ **Commuter and transit benefits administration**
- ✓ **Benefits engagement and communication**

Benefitfocus has helped NELLC navigate numerous acquisitions, as well, by providing a unified open enrollment experience for the benefits administration team and other employees alike.



I've worked for many different companies, and I've never come across such a complex organization as NELLC. I would definitely recommend Benefitfocus to any potential client. It's a great solution. I really like the way it can be customized, and it is very easy to work in."

Laura Dilallo
Director Compensation and Benefits, NELLC

The Results

In the years since NELLC first partnered with Benefitfocus, the return on investment has continually increased. Initially, the partnership allowed NELLC to modernize its benefits enrollment process, which previously relied on paper forms. Now, the NELLC team heavily relies on the easy enrollment, timeliness of support, and thorough employee communications. Benefitfocus' ability to employ automation to manage employee eligibility details also has an impact because employees can easily see what benefits are available to them and make the right choice for their personal goals and needs.

- 🕒 **EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE** | Altogether, these services have resulted in a digital enrollment process that's easier and more convenient for employees than using paper enrollment forms and cumbersome in-house processes. "Employees love Benefitfocus," said Dilallo.
- 🕒 **TEAM EXTENSION** | Expanding its benefits administration function by partnering with Benefitfocus – and taking advantage of services and automation – has also allowed NELLC to simplify in-house processes and keep its team lean. Without Benefitfocus, Dilallo estimates her team would need to work with 8-10 separate vendors to match the services. And, because managing those additional vendors would create extra work, she would need to hire additional benefits specialists. Instead, Benefitfocus bears the responsibility of adding team members to serve all clients, without passing on the expense.
- 🕒 **BENEFITS EXPANSION** | Working with Benefitfocus has also allowed NELLC to expand benefit offerings, adding pet insurance and identity theft protection most recently. Rolling out not one but two new benefits would have been virtually unthinkable without the support and strategic guidance of the Benefitfocus partnership. "Looking at our whole total package and the team's bandwidth, the thought of adding two more benefit offerings would be very challenging because of the customer service [demand], actual enrollments and payroll impact," said Dilallo. "That would have been daunting if we didn't have Benefitfocus."
- 🕒 **STRATEGIC GUIDANCE** | In addition to the tactical support for adding new benefits, Benefitfocus provides NELLC the strategic guidance to identify opportunities and elevate service for the company's employees. "Working with Benefitfocus has helped us improve the quality of our benefits package," said Dilallo.

Working with Benefitfocus also allows NELLC to tap into emerging best practices and proven strategies used by other companies. During regular check-in and strategic planning calls, Dilallo frequently asks her Client Relationship Manager about what is working at other companies. "We

can brainstorm and I can ask her for advice," said Dilallo. "The strategic thinking and planning support has been very helpful."

Partnering with a benefits administration provider that can easily support many different types of employees with different coverage options based on location, hours worked, union status and other factors is another key advantage NELLC relies on. "Having Benefitfocus keep track of all our different employees and eligibility groups – full-time, part-time, union, non-union, different states – demonstrates the power of the partnership," said Dilallo.



My in-house team is free from the administrative work, and I feel confident Benefitfocus has it covered."

Laura Dilallo

Director Compensation and Benefits, NELLC

The Future

Looking ahead, NELLC plans to continue simplifying and improving its benefit offerings and administration through its partnership with Benefitfocus. For example, NELLC next plans to outsource Affordable Care Act (ACA) reporting, as it requires bandwidth the lean team could reallocate elsewhere. Benefitfocus' ACA Compliance Solution will remove that burden from NELLC's small in-house team, further freeing them up to invest in strategic initiatives. "Plus," Dilallo adds, "employees can pull their Form 1095 off the benefits portal, which allows them to receive it in a timelier manner, not to mention the savings on postage!"

Additionally, NELLC will continue to work with Benefitfocus to develop strategic roadmaps specific to the organization and within their current technology landscape. These roadmaps will serve to guide their exploration of other services to help them deliver an increasingly competitive benefits package, aiding in employee retention and talent attraction.

"I look forward to our continued partnership with Benefitfocus," Dilallo says, "because they understand our goals and provide us with the necessary tools to assist our employees in learning about our benefit offerings."