

Idearc Media 2008 Enrollment Campaign

PartnerComm Team

PartnerComm Inc./Idearc Media

Arlington, Texas, U.S.

Need/Opportunity / In November 2006, Verizon spun off its print and online yellow pages business, and Idearc was born. The name was a combination of “idea” and “arc,” which symbolizes how the company connects buyers and sellers across multiple media. Idearc’s multi-platform advertising solutions include Verizon® Yellow Pages, Verizon® White Pages and Superpages.com. Headquartered in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, U.S., Idearc provides sales, publishing, and other related services for more than 1,200 distinct directory titles in 35 states and the District of Columbia.

As a newly independent company, Idearc faced some daunting tasks. First, it needed to establish its identity, both externally in the marketplace and internally among its 7,400 employees. While ad campaigns focused on the innovation and energy of the young start-up, the general feeling was that the internal culture was still a holdover from Verizon: rule-driven and paternalistic. Idearc wanted to synchronize its internal identity with its external brand and ensure that internal communication evoked the same aspirational goals.

Secondly, the company needed to streamline benefits plans and vendors. From an administrative and cost standpoint, it was not feasible for Idearc to continue to offer 118 medical plans and 14 dental plans as Verizon had. Idearc had to consolidate plan offerings, while retaining the value and choice that employees had come to expect. There was concern that employees might view some of these changes as takeaways (for example, the elimination of HMOs in certain areas). The challenge was to clearly explain the changes and what employees could expect, while reassuring them that their benefits remained above market. Idearc needed to educate employees about the competitiveness of their benefits in relation to other companies their size and in their industry (which Verizon had not done).

Finally, Idearc wanted employees to actively enroll rather than accept default coverage. Because the plans were new, it was critical that employees carefully reviewed their options and chose the right coverage. The company also wanted to aggressively promote online enrollment. In the past, only management employees had enrolled online; union populations had enrolled via phone. But Idearc felt confident that most employees would prefer the online method and would take advantage of the planning tools available on the web site.

Idearc turned to PartnerComm Inc., a firm specializing in human resources communication, to help them develop a communication strategy for their first open enrollment campaign.

Intended Audience / Idearc's population is 52.4 percent female and 47.6 percent male. The average age is 43.

Idearc has approximately 7,400 employees. Approximately 1,600 employees are based in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas area, and the remaining employees are spread all over the U.S. Idearc has a large sales force, with 3,000 multi-product sales representatives and 125 Internet-only sales representatives. Because many of these employees work from home when not on the road, benefits materials would need to be mailed to them.

Idearc also has several large union populations, totaling approximately 2,000 employees. Although these employees have Internet access at work, they had not been required to enroll online in the past; thus, the communication needed to promote the benefits of online enrollment and clearly walk employees through the process.

Goals and Objectives / The overall goal was to convey the value and quality of Idearc's benefits and explain the rationale behind the new approach to benefits. The communication team also needed to give employees detailed information about what to expect for 2008 and to outline the steps they needed to take.

Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Get at least 75 percent of employees to actively enroll rather than accept default coverage.
- Have at least 90 percent of employees enroll online.
- Get at least 50 percent of employees to use the online tools.

Solution Overview / The solution included the following steps.

Crafting the Strategy

The team employed the following techniques:

- **Separating action from information.** They kept their messages clear by separating time-sensitive enrollment instructions and detailed benefits information into different brochures.
- **“Chunking” copy.** The team utilized bulleted lists, call-outs, charts, and large numbers to create an easy-to-follow hierarchy, increase readability and make information easy for the reader to digest.
- **Designing with simple, colorful graphics.** They used bold, bright colors combined with a clean layout (marked by a generous use of white space) to increase visual comprehension.

Creating a Look and Feel

Because the new company wanted to build brand recognition among its employees, they asked PartnerComm to complement the external brand. To create consistency, the team limited themselves to the colors and fonts in the existing style guidelines. But they also created a tagline, “Ideas at Work,” to distinguish internal communication. This tagline played off Idearc's name and had a double meaning: ideas at the physical workplace and the power of good ideas at work. PartnerComm developed “good ideas” sidebars that highlighted smart tips—solutions to help employees save money, save time and get the most from their benefits.

The team used photography sparingly to keep the key messages uncluttered and simple. For covers, they chose slice-of-life photos that conveyed a healthy lifestyle, exhibited liveliness and warmth, and echoed the bold colors in Idearc's design style.

Gaining Buy-In

Idearc built a business case for the benefits changes by holding train-the-trainer sessions with HR benefits partners. They also staged face-to-face meetings at the largest locations and broadcast a webinar for management employees.

Key messages woven into the presentations included:

- For 2008, we are pleased to offer a competitive benefits package—one that’s better than that of many other companies our size in both plan design and company subsidy.
- We have streamlined our plans and providers to a number that is manageable for a company our size.
- Even with the consolidation of plans and selection of new vendors, you will still be able to choose from a broad range of plans.
- Take action to get the benefits you need.

Developing the Communication

Because Idearc has several union populations with different benefits, it was necessary to develop separate versions of the communication pieces. Key messages included:

- As a result of our spin-off, we’re taking a new approach to benefits.
- The good news: You won’t see big changes to your level of benefits.
- You’ll still get the same quality and value you’ve come to count on.
- You’ll need to actively enroll to ensure you get the benefits you want.

Communication Pieces

Timing	Communication	Audience(s)	Distribution	Description
September	Letter from HR SVP	Managers	E-mail	The letter from Georgia Scaife, the senior vice president of HR, provided the business case for benefits changes. Managers were asked to familiarize themselves with the new providers and plans so they would be prepared to enroll and to answer employee questions.
September	Change mailer	All employees	Mailed to homes	The change mailer gave employees a first glance at the upcoming benefits enrollment. The piece included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rationale for the changes. • A quick comparison of the new health care plans. • Tips for a smooth transition. • Key dates to remember.
Early October	Poster	All employees	Posted at locations	Bright fall colors and an engaging seasonal photo grabbed employees’ attention and provided details on how to learn more about their benefits.
Mid-October	Enrollment kit	All employees	Mailed to homes	The enrollment kit included the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pocket folder that housed all materials (on the flap was an enrollment checklist that outlined important steps) • A personalized worksheet that listed all available benefits and the default coverage employees would receive if they didn’t actively enroll • A quick-start guide that walked employees through the online enrollment process • An enrollment guide that provided benefits overviews, including “Benefits at a glance” charts and “good ideas” call-outs with handy hints • A health plan comparison chart that compared the plan features of available medical plans

Timing	Communication	Audience(s)	Distribution	Description
Late October	PowerPoint presentation	Employees in the largest locations	Face-to-face meetings	The PowerPoint presentation included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Idearc is making changes. • What these changes mean. • Details on plan options. • Tips on how to get the most from Idearc's benefits. • How to enroll. • Key dates to remember.
Late October	Webinar	Management	Online	Employees who were unable to attend a meeting could watch this recorded webinar, which included messages from Katy Harliss, president, and William Gist, director of benefits, as well as the PowerPoint presentation.
Late October	Web site	All employees	Online	The team developed graphics for the online enrollment tool to provide a consistent look and feel with a seamless interface.

Implementation and Challenges / One of the major challenges was the complexity of the plan transition. Benefits plan details were not yet finalized when the team began working on communication, which resulted in multiple rounds of edits. In addition, the negotiation process for some unions took so long that their enrollment period had to be pushed back. This delay necessitated a reprint for pieces with time-sensitive information. However, the team had designed several of the pieces to fit on a digital printing press (which is more cost-effective for smaller quantities than a large offset press), so they were able to save on printing costs.

Another challenge involved Idearc's disparate, scattered populations. Because this was a year of major change, the company wanted to reach employees through multiple media: print, online and face-to-face meetings. However, it was not feasible for Idearc to conduct meetings at all of its locations. As a solution, they decided to hold meetings at the largest locations and then develop a webinar that was available to everyone.

The communication budget for the project was US\$275,000, including writing, design and printing costs. PartnerComm successfully stayed within budget. From the initial planning meeting to distribution, the campaign was executed over a span of eight months.

Measurement/Evaluation / The following table summarizes the results achieved by the project.

Objective	Results
Get at least 75 percent of employees to actively enroll rather than accept default coverage.	A total of 95.8 percent of employees took an enrollment action.
Have at least 90 percent of employees enroll online.	Of those who actively enrolled, 96 percent enrolled online.
Get at least 50 percent of employees to use the online tools.	Eighty-eight percent of employees used at least one online tool.