

WINNER

OVERALL INTEGRATED STRATEGY

CASINO NOVA SCOTIA AND HOTEL

CASINO NOVA SCOTIA AND HOTEL HIT THE JACKPOT with its flexible benefits plan. The organization (which consists of one casino and a hotel in Halifax as well as a second casino in Sydney, N.S.) had a traditional health benefits plan for 17 years. The move to a flex plan last year was an overwhelming success considering that about 95% of all eligible plan members enrolled online and on time.

J.P. Girard, manager of compensation and benefits, Casino Nova Scotia and Hotel in Halifax, spearheaded the plan change and communications strategy. "I thought a flex plan would better suit the needs of the workforce," he says, noting members are young (the average age is 30 years old) and transient.

The positive employee feedback in surveys conducted before the plan was launched reveal his instinct was right.

The multimedia communications campaign for the flex plan was launched last October. A series of posters was designed to pique employees' interest. Then members received promotional postcards with their pay stubs.

The theme of the campaign was the *Full House Flex Plan*. It was designed to target both the hotel and casino workforce.

"In the casino industry, a full house is a winning hand and in the hotel industry it means fully booked. These are both ideal states," says Sue Millingen, communications practice leader with Krieger & Associates in Toronto. The firm worked with Girard to design the campaign.

All materials featured the 'Full House' text as well as simple and colourful imagery that supports this theme. "It was really quite clever how it worked for a hotel and a casino," says Girard.

Millingen says they played on the concept of a flex plan as "creating your own package or creating your own hand."

The second phase of the campaign consisted of on-site information sessions about the plan and enrolment process. Employees were given a package that included a benefits-at-a-glance booklet as well as an enrolment kit.

About 900 employees were eligible for the plan, including some part-timers. The enrolment period spanned eight days and was conducted entirely on software that members could access through computer kiosks.

The kiosks were available around the clock at the organization's three locations. Between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. human resources staff and representatives from the sponsor's insurance provider were on hand to guide employees through the software program and answer any questions about the flex plan.

"The rollout was smooth and strategic," says Girard. "It kept employees waiting in anticipation of what was coming next. We never lost the crowd."

The success of the strategy is evident in the high enrolment rate and the fact that employees now have a greater sense of the value of their benefits. "Before, with blanket [benefits] coverage, they [members] really didn't have a concept of what we were offering and what their benefits were for," says Girard.

— Kathryn Dorrell



FINE POINTS

IMPETUS: The introduction of a new flex benefits plan that required enrolling members online.

CHALLENGE: Communicating the concept of flexible benefits to busy and young employees who work different shifts.

OUTCOME: Online enrolment is estimated at 95% and employees have a greater appreciation of their benefits.

JUDGE SAYS: "Nifty integration into the business of the organization. Attractive packaging and use of colour in materials."