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Benefits Brief - An employee benefits story angles guide

This is a timely guide to story ideas about non-medical group employee benefits. For specialist interviews or more details, contact Jacquie Hill at 816.881.8968 or jacquie.hill@assurant.com.

Story angle: April marks the first anniversary of Assurant Employee Benefits' Family Share Max dental plan. An industry first, the plan allows families to share dental coverage dollars and use them in the way that best fits their needs and budgets.

- A 2008 Omnibus survey found that the majority of families had one member that needed more dental work than the others during the previous year. Pooling dental benefits maximizes benefit dollars and reduces out-of-pocket costs.
- The ability to pool benefit dollars means families no longer need to delay needed dental care because of individual dental coverage limits.
- Family Share Max has proved very popular with both employers and employees, who see the value in the increased opportunity for utilization, particularly compared to plans that include a maximum rollover option. The plan currently covers more than 300 employer groups, enabling more than 40,000 individuals to make the most of their dental benefit dollars.

Story angle: May is Disability Insurance Awareness Month and in a down economy like the one we're currently experiencing, the income protection that group disability insurance can provide is more important than ever.

- The financial resources that many people have traditionally turned to when unable to earn an income, such as home equity or the sale of a home, personal savings and investments, cannot be counted on in an unfavorable economy.
- According to the Social Security Administration, 70 percent of the private workforce has no long-term disability insurance. In addition, 50 percent of the workforce has no private pension and one-third has no retirement savings.
- The good news: Group disability insurance is more affordable than most employers probably believe.

Story angle: The availability of the benefits they value can be key in attracting and retaining the employees that small businesses rely on to be successful.

- Seventy-seven percent of workers responding to a 2001 survey by the Employee Benefit Research Institute indicated that the benefits a prospective employer offered were very important in their decision to accept or reject a job. Yet the 2007 National Compensation Survey found that smaller businesses generally offer less extensive benefits than larger employers.
- Creating a comprehensive employee benefits package may seem daunting to small businesses that want to offer benefits but have not previously done so.
- Assurant Employee Benefits' ancillary group benefits are specifically designed to meet the needs of small businesses with at least 10 employees and offer the choice and flexibility typically provided to large employers.

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