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Source: Maria Health

Maria Health pools small businesses through an online marketplace



Maria Health provides health insurance for small businesses in the Philippines. In the country, 99% of companies are small businesses. Many already access the government health scheme ? PhilHealth ? but often require a more comprehensive coverage.

Small businesses find it difficult and expensive to get health insurance to cover their employees. Insurers tend to avoid them, as larger businesses with more workers are seen as less risky and are cheaper to service. To make matters worse, many small businesses do not have the expertise to negotiate with providers and often give up during the time-consuming process of collecting quotes.

Maria Health's core innovation is to pool small businesses through an online market place to allow them access to health insurance. Business owners apply, specify the coverage they would like, and are given full support to enrol their team through the [online marketplace](#) [1]. Companies with just five employees then have the opportunity to join an existing pool of companies. Through strategic partnerships with HMO providers, Maria Health is able to extend to these small companies the same quality healthcare, same benefits, and competitive rates to small businesses that normally large companies enjoy. This pooling mechanism both stabilizes the risk for the health insurance providers and brings down the price for small businesses.

All promotion is carried out digitally. This is essential to Maria Health's business model, which avoids all use of in-person sales or promotion. Mobile penetration is extremely high in the Philippines, and smart phone penetration is expected to rise from 40 percent in 2015 to [70 per cent by 2018](#) [2]. Furthermore, the Philippines is known as the "social media capital of the world", with especially high levels of Facebook use. Maria Health is taking advantage of this with a platform designed to be accessed directly via mobile phones and by connecting with small business owners on Facebook.

The company is in early stages, currently serving around 500 members. Keep an eye on its progress [here](#) [3].

Source URL: <http://www.impactinsurance.org/emerging-insights/ei124>

Links:

[1] <https://www.mariahealth.ph/>

[2] <https://www.ericsson.com/res/docs/2015/mobility-report/emr-nov-2015-regional-report-south-east-asia-and-oceania.pdf>

[3] <https://mariahealth.ph/>