



Marcum Creates Health Insurance Exchange

As it seeks to grow its healthcare practice and services, [Marcum](#) has launched a private health insurance exchange.

The Melville-based accounting firm's affiliate, [Marcum Financial Services](#), created the Marcum Benefits Marketplace, a private health insurance exchange for employers, employees and even individuals. Marcum is using the exchange, which went live on March 15 and is open to clients and the public at large, as another tool to attract business.

Geared to employers with up to 1,000 employees, the exchange includes tools to facilitate the comparison of policies and determine which policy most meets the needs of the clients.

"Choice is becoming more prevalent," Marcum Financial Services President Steven Brett said. "A single solution doesn't work for every employer."

Marcum is on a short list of firms that launched private exchanges targeting smaller businesses. Exchanges from consulting firms Mercer and Aon target firms with 1,000 employees, while Liazon, recently acquired by Towers Watson, targets firms with two to 50 employees for its exchange. Some other exchanges seek out companies with more than 10,000 employees.

Insurers see the exchanges collectively as a way of offering selection and comparison with greater ease over the Internet.

"We think it saves money," said Steven Logan, president of the New York market for Aetna. "It can streamline administration and allow employers to make the selections that make the most sense to them. And I think it helps employers control costs long term."

Exchanges, including Marcum's, typically offer more than health insurance, seeking to become one-stop shopping for other insurance needs, such as dental and group medical. Marcum can customize exchanges to serve as company portals for employees, allowing defined contribution plans where a specific amount is given to each employee for benefits, such as health insurance.

Logan said the shift to defined contributions is driving growth in exchanges, which facilitate that means of buying insurance.

"If the employees want to pick a richer plan with additional benefits, they can do that with the employer contribution and their own money," Logan added.

Insurers are rolling out their own exchanges as well, designed to showcase their products to companies and consumers, bypassing consultants entirely.

"We developed our own exchange that we can offer to our customers and look to customize an exchange that works best for them and their employees," Logan said.

Marcum worked with insurers and tech companies to create its marketplace, where it will be compensated by fees from employers, employees and insurers.

"The genesis of this was trends and our clients and prospective clients indicating this would be a useful tool for them to have," Brett said.

He added that Marcum can provide analytics, research and reports to help employers understand how and whether they're complying with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

"We have clients utilizing it; it's been working," Brett said. "It's starting out as the basis being health insurance and ancillary benefits. We'll include wellness features and things on the retirement plan side."

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