

ICSGLOBAL SEES GROWTH THROUGH LINK WITH AUSTRALIAN UNITY

In a move designed to significantly increase membership and market share, Australian Unity, one of the country's largest private health insurers, has signed a three year contract with ICSGlobal to use THELMA to streamline service delivery to members.

The contract is expected to substantially accelerate the industry roll out of THELMA (Transactional Health Exchange Linking Multiple Applications).

Initially, Australian Unity will use THELMA to establish a system of electronic processing of private patient eligibility checks, electronic hospital claims and No Gap claims with the group's five largest hospital business partners.

According to Australian Unity's General Manager – Healthcare, Peter Kerestes, a joint strategy will then be developed with ICSGlobal to connect more than 1,000 other hospitals across the country servicing Australian Unity's members.

"With the addition of 50,000 new health insurance members last year alone and the subsequent additional demands on our back office systems, the agreement with ICSGlobal to utilise its THELMA service has come at a very good time," Mr Kerestes said.

"As one of the very few funds which has managed to hold rates on all tables, we are now looking to improve the bottom line through internal efficiencies, which is another area where THELMA will help add value to our organisation."

"From a marketing perspective, we are going to increase the promotion of our health insurance products, not only in our traditional market of Victoria, but also to the broader national market, with emphasis on South Australia and Queensland. It is imperative, in this context, that our distribution channels are consistent, so that a customer or provider of healthcare can deal with us on the Internet one day and fulfil another part of the transaction via telephone, through the call centre or at a retail office, the next" said Mr Kerestes.

"A single connectivity medium like THELMA will ensure Australian Unity maintains a consistent image nationally, delivered through one standard, single point of access to the Internet".

Another benefit of THELMA would be in the provision of information to maximise the effectiveness of Australian Unity member programs.

"For example, one of our key differentiators is the Member Support Program, which aims to get members out of hospital and back home with full and free approved professional health support as soon as practicable. Early notification of the intended admission through THELMA will give us plenty of time to make arrangements for the home support, which puts the patient's mind at ease" said Mr Kerestes.

Mr Greg King, Director of Healthcare for ICSGlobal, said that having an innovative health insurer like Australian Unity as a partner so early in its rollout program would accelerate THELMA's uptake in hospitals nationally.

“The business case for using THELMA is compelling just from a cost reduction perspective, with Return on Investment of between 5 and 40 times the cost of a transaction,” Mr King said.

“When you add up the savings nationally just from reduced paperwork, you are talking several billion dollars, which represents an enormous capital injection back into our national health system.”

THELMA is the first and only transaction exchange in Australia that has been designed for the entire health care industry. It offers hospitals, health insurers and medical practitioners a low cost, no risk technology solution to exchange business and transaction information securely over the Internet in real time, to cut administrative and technology costs, re-engineer tired healthcare processes and offer much improved patient care and member services (for further information visit www.thelma.com.au).

Mr King said the need for THELMA arose through the increasing amount and complexity of information required by the rapid uptake of private health insurance and new government initiatives such as No Gap / Known Gap.

“It is clearly not viable for a hospital to build and maintain a different type of B2B connection with up to 44 different health funds. The same applies to the health funds, with prohibitive costs associated with B2B connections to the many different business protocols, data standards and technology platforms that exist in such a huge and complex trading community. THELMA solves the business and technical problems that have hamstrung e-health in Australia for a decade.”

Tim Murray, Managing Director of ICSGlobal, said the contract with Australian Unity reaffirmed the need for THELMA in Australia’s health system and validated the THELMA business model.

“Australian Unity’s aggressive national strategy is a particularly exciting proposal for us because it will enable us to commence large scale health community ramping sooner than we expected. This will open up opportunities for bringing a wide range of new THELMA services to market and gives us confidence that THELMA will meet its Business Plan expectations of being cash flow positive within this financial year” Mr Murray said.

About ICSGlobal

ICSGlobal is a publicly listed boutique consultancy that specialises in leveraging true business value from investment in technology. We work with businesses to help them protect and enhance their competitive position using the Internet and other intelligent uses of information. ICSGlobal’s growth strategy is to use its consulting engine to build business lines with recurrent earnings. THELMA is the first such business. While we support new and existing clients in a range of industries, ICSGlobal’s principal focus now is the high-growth, inter-related industries of Health, Financial Services & Insurance.

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