



[5 Questions to Ask Your Broker About Healthcare Reform](#)

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Small business owners are conflicted about where they stand on health insurance reform, a new survey shows.

In fact, according to the survey conducted by Discover Small Business Watch, 55 percent of small business owners favor repeal of the health care law. Meanwhile, 47 percent of small business owners who provide health insurance to their employees said they are considering discontinuing offering health insurance due to the cost.

On the other hand, 51 percent of small business owners who offer health insurance to their employees say they are not considering discontinuing the insurance.

This confusion only adds to businesses' difficulty in figuring out just how to wrangle with the implications of health care reform.

Adam Bruckman, president and CEO of Atlanta-based Digital Insurance, has been involved with Capitol Hill discussions with industry leaders, serving as a subject-matter expert on the Government Affairs subcommittee of the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers.

Bruckman suggests business owners take control of health insurance reform by being proactive and asking their insurance brokers questions that will help make important decisions as health care reform rolls out.

He shared a few must-ask questions with BusinessNewsDaily.

Does your firm have health care reform expertise and resources?

Ask how the firm stays abreast of continually changing regulations related to health care reform and what tools and materials are available to clients. Do they generate information or pass along content compiled by others? Ideally, your agency has invested in resources to offer immediate online access to information about reform, as well as other state and federal regulations impacting employers. In addition, a series of communications, training and webinars may be available. Some brokers have assumed leadership roles in the insurance industry. What role has – and is – your broker playing in this process?

Do you receive compliance assistance?

Liability reduction is becoming one of the most desired services brokers can deliver. Besides meeting regulatory requirement, this produces an additional benefit: staying compliant with IRS regulations can have a big impact on health insurance deductions come tax time. Brokers with appropriate expertise can assist with:

- Employee benefits compliance review for HIPAA and document compliance
- Plan document filing and discrimination testing
- COBRA and state continuation assistance
- Health care reform compliance

- Online access to regulatory issues by state

Do the employee health benefits you provide qualify my company for tax credits?

Tax credits may be available to small businesses that provide health insurance to employees. Ask your broker if you qualify. By using a proprietary tax calculator, we can find about 12 to 15 percent of our clients are eligible. While accountants certainly can help businesses assess whether they qualify for this tax break, proactive insurance advisers will arm their clients with this information.

Does your firm suggest innovative solutions that can save your company money today?

In response to rising premiums, many businesses have raised deductibles or have eliminated health insurance altogether. There are many more options to consider, and a good broker can advise you about innovative ways to lower costs.

Before taking drastic measures, learn how many carriers your broker represents and whether customized plans are available. Your adviser should collaborate with you to determine if you have the right plan and incentives in place. Brokers should ask lots of questions to ensure your policy addresses your budget and the needs of your group. An analysis helps you get the most from your plan and best value for its features.

Other options to consider that produce tax advantages for businesses and/or employees:

- High Deductible Health Plans (HDHP) with Health Savings Accounts (HSA)
- Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)
- Dependent Care Accounts (DCA)
- Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRA/105)

What resources exist to educate my employees about becoming healthy consumers?

Premiums already are high, and many argue that prices will rise further under health care reform. Educating employees about wellness and preventive care – as well as how to become better health care consumers – is the best way to ultimately reduce costs. Sophisticated insurance advisers already offer such resources, although smaller businesses don't often have access to online information and health risk assessment tools. Advisers that offer employee hotlines are also unusual, but a hotline can be a tremendously helpful tool for companies that lack human resource staff to troubleshoot problems for their personnel. While it may be difficult to locate an adviser who delivers these advantages, they do exist and are among the most worthwhile assets to seek.

A good adviser holds the key to a healthy, affordable benefits program. Find out whether yours is prepared to transform into a more consultative role, ensuring you get the most affordable prices today – and are well-positioned for the future.