

Life insurers adopt tech to deepen penetration

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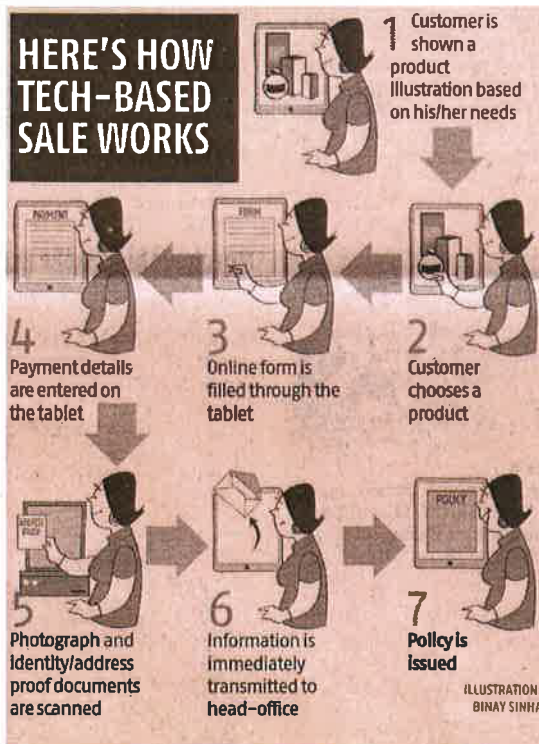
Life insurance companies have started using tablets to not only give an overview of products to customers, but also to carry out sales.

Tata AIA Life, for instance, has introduced five applications — Protection Gap calculator, Retirement Gap calculator, Child Need Planner calculator, Child ULIP plus Term Plan Combo calculator and ULIP Plus Term Plan Combo calculator — free for Android and iPhone users. These users can calculate their insurance needs free, by downloading the applications and entering the information. After the process is completed, the user is given an option to visit the Tata AIA website and choose the appropriate product to match his/her needs.

Sachin Joglekar, senior vice-president and chief agency officer, Tata AIA Life, said the company had introduced eLife-enabled tablets. "It will allow our customers to engage with the company with ease, by making the entire buying experience of life insurance simpler and enjoyable. So far, we have awarded more than 300 tablets. We are also encouraging our premier agency channel members to purchase tablets as an investment towards doing more business; some of them have already purchased tablets on their own," he said.

Industry experts say while the number of insurance policies purchased online, as percentage of total sales, is only in a single digit, most consumers research online. With the launch of need-based applications, the tendency to purchase the product is high, say officials.

HERE'S HOW TECH-BASED SALE WORKS



To introduce technology-based sales interventions, bank-led insurers are also looking at bancassurance partners. Rajesh Relan, managing director and country manager, PNB MetLife India, said recently, the company had launched a pilot for the bancassurance channel with iPads. Soon, it would kick off a pilot with for its agency strength as well.

"For the bancassurance channel with PNB, we have launched a unique branch-in-branch model, based on the Met Smart system, and over 5,000 PNB ranches have been enabled with this system," he said, adding this had cutting edge advantages in customer service and came with new over-the-counter business

and customer service capabilities.

At Tata AIA, eLife is an application designed for their premier agency force and works on the Android operating system. Using this application, agents can manage customers' needs and provide them suitable solutions. To customer, it provides real-time engagement with the company and makes the experience of buying insurance products hassle-free.

Joglekar said using the eLife application, premier agents could manage their diaries in a digital format, using an integrated customer-relationship management module. Also, they could conduct a financial need analysis of customers by capturing

their key details. "We are also in the process of launching e-based insurance products for customers who are traditionally difficult to access due to geographical issues. These products are being engineered suitably to address unique customer profiles," said Joglekar.

Others insurers have also embarked on similar initiatives. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has digitised processes and introduced the 'Sell Online' platform, in which technology has been incorporated into the sales process. Under this initiative, tablets have been issued to distribution personnel to sell policies in an efficient manner.

Puneet Nanda, executive director, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "All our technology initiatives are developed around the objectives of delivering superior quality service and an engaging and smooth on-boarding experience. For us, technology has been the catalyst to provide richer customer experience, while increasing productivity and efficiencies. Additionally, it can enable us to have a footprint in geographies hitherto untapped."

With insurance policies set to be digitised through repositories, insurers have said providing information about policies, policy payments and policy issuances can be carried out in an e-format.

According to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority's annual report for 2011-12, insurance penetration, which surged consistently till 2009, slipped for the consecutive second year to 4.1 in 2011, compared with 5.1 per cent in 2010. Insurance penetration is the ratio of insurance premium to gross domestic product.