

MSMEs told to practice basic cyber-hygiene

FILIPINO micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) should practice basic cyber-hygiene to protect themselves against most cyberattacks, according to an industry expert.

"For MSMEs, basic cyber-hygiene begins with your business, especially if you have fewer than five people," Samuel V. Jacoba, founding president of the National Association of Data Protection Officers of the Philippines (NADPOP), said on the sidelines of a recent *BusinessWorld* cybersecurity forum.

"Secure your devices by keeping your software basic. Software should be licensed," he said, adding that system patching and software updates should be performed consistently once available, as these help fix critical security vulnerabilities.

About four in 10 cyberattacks in 2023 targeted small and medium enterprises (SME), according to a 2025 global report by BD Emerson, a US-based cybersecurity and consulting firm.

These attacks resulted in average total costs as much as \$7 million for SMEs. The report also found that 60% of small businesses shut down within six months of a cyberattack, and 75% said they could no longer continue operations if hit by ransomware.

Global tech giant Microsoft Corp. said practicing cyber-hygiene prevents 99% of cyberattacks, adding that businesses should adopt these habits to safeguard themselves against threats and ensure continuous operations.

Microsoft said every organization should adopt stronger login protections such as phishing-resistant multi-factor authentication. It also

recommended practicing a "Zero Trust" approach — assuming no system is safe until verified — by validating every transaction and asserting least-privilege access, among other measures.

Microsoft likewise advised using modern anti-malware tools to detect and block threats, keeping systems updated and protecting sensitive data through proper classification and access controls.

Apart from practicing proper cyber-hygiene, Mr. Jacoba said MSMEs should attend cybersecurity-related forums because these help them learn strategies to further protect themselves against cyberthreats.

Grounded in the desire to help MSMEs and organizations strengthen cybersecurity, NADPOP's initiative CyberBayan, launched last year, will be relaunched this year.

The program aims to boost the country's cybersecurity posture and digital workforce through online training covering topics such as data privacy, governance, risk and compliance.

"In 2026, we're going hyperlocal," Mr. Jacoba said. "We want to set up a nationwide network of local communities protecting, supporting each other and learning together how to safeguard our organizations."

This year's iteration will focus on MSMEs and organizations in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Southern Luzon.

CyberBayan aims to train 1.44 million Filipinos over the next five years, helping boost the country's cyber and digital workforce, he said in an earlier statement. — **Edg Adrian A. Eva**

Xure targets 500 sellers as it expands collector marketplace

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
Reporter

XURE, a mobile marketplace for collectors, is seeking to expand the number of sellers and appraisers on its platform, betting on growing demand for a legitimate, tech-driven market-place tailored to serious collectors.

"For 2026, we are targeting approximately 500 accredited Xstores composed of both local and international sellers," founder and Chief Executive Officer Joseph Sarmiento said in an e-mailed reply to questions.

"As we expand our auction formats and enhance seller tools such as timed auctions, live auctions, and pre-selling mechanics, we expect continued adoption from independent collectors and established retailers seeking a more trusted, collector-focused platform," he added.

The company aims to drive growth in its user base and gross merchandise value by expanding collectible categories, strengthening referral and incentive programs and rolling out improved auction formats, Mr. Sarmiento said.

Since launching in 2023, Xure has recorded more than 5,600 registered users. It is among six startups selected for the 13th cohort of the IdeaSpace Startup Accelerator Program, backed by MUP Group.

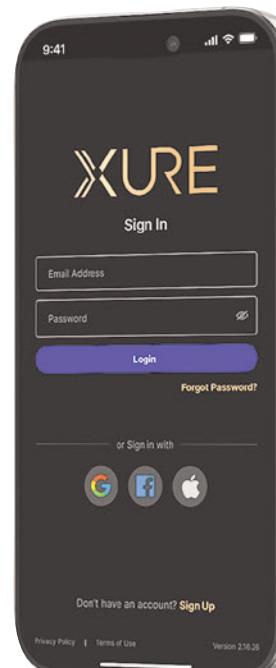
The platform offers Xstore, which lets users sell collectible items through the mobile app, and Xpert, which supports people building net-

works in authentication and appraisal services.

Xure aims to address common issues in online collectible trading, including lack of trust in peer-to-peer transactions, counterfeit or misrepresented items and fragmented buying and selling channels.

"Many transactions today still happen in informal chat groups and online communities where there is limited protection and transparency," Mr. Sarmiento said.

Unlike traditional marketplaces focused mainly on listings and transactions, Xure allows users to record, share and manage their collections within the app for sale or appraisal.



"Instead of being a generic marketplace, Xure integrates community, trust, confidentiality and commerce into a structured digital infrastructure designed specifically for serious collectors," he said.

Its Xchange feature supports timed auctions, pre-order mechanics and best-offer negotiations to better reflect how collectibles are traded in practice. Buyers can also view authentication or appraisal details directly within the platform.

Collectors can follow one another, build their profiles and discover rare items.

Inspired by practices in the art world, Xure lets users remain anonymous or hide pricing information within their "Virtual Closet," giving collectors control over how visible their holdings are.

The company is also integrating artificial intelligence-driven price analysis and smart pricing recommendations to help sellers benchmark fair market value based on transaction data and market trends.



BSP
from S1/1

However, the BSP has not auctioned off the 28-day term deposits for over five years to give way to its weekly offerings of securities with the same tenor.

Meanwhile, the central bank began offering only a 28-day tenor for the BSP bills before adding the 56-day bill in 2023.

In November last year, the BSP stopped issuing the 14-day TDF, leaving only a single seven-day tenor. Since then, it has also limited its auction for the BSP bills to just the 28-day papers.

Mr. Abenoja told this paper that the central bank initially opted to decrease its monetary operations amid the anticipated high demand for liquidity during the holiday season.

In its monetary policy report (MPR) for December 2025, the BSP also said this was done to "rationalize the number of liquidity facilities and concentrate on tenors that would enhance monetary policy transmission."

As of mid-November 2025, the BSP's monetary operations have absorbed P1.5 trillion in liquidity from the market. Of this, 42.4% was siphoned off through BSP securities, 34.6% from overnight reverse repurchase agreements, 17.6% via the overnight deposit facility, and 5.4% through the term deposit facility.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said they are gradually shifting away from the issuance of short-term papers to manage

liquidity as they want to boost activity in the money market.

Mr. Abenoja also noted that short-term rates are now near the central bank's target policy rate, indicating that the existing instruments are effectively transmitting monetary policy.

"So, as long as you see money market rates — for example, those from BVAL (Bloomberg Valuation Service) or IBCL (Interbank Call Loan) — remain close to the policy rates with corresponding term premia, if it's longer than the overnight (rate), then the scale of the operation, the volume and the instruments being used could be appropriate," he said.

Still, the BSP deputy governor added that they could auction off the longer tenors again if they find gaps in monetary policy transmission.

According to the latest MPR, the interest rates in both facilities had fully reflected a total of 175 basis points (bps) in rate cuts.

The BSP has so far delivered a cumulative 200-bp rate cuts since it began its easing cycle in August 2024, which brought the benchmark policy rate to an over three-year low of 4.5%.

The Monetary Board will have its first policy meeting this year on Thursday. A *BusinessWorld* poll of 16 analysts showed that they are expected to trim the policy rate anew by 25 bps to 4.25%.

DA
from S1/1

"That means if there are payouts in the first year, they will be covered by the program. Of course, private insurers tend to hesitate, especially in the agricultural insurance business, because they may fear having to pay out large claims right away," Mr. Dela Cruz said.

A portion of the budget will also cover partial premium subsidies for selected farmer segments and startup and operating costs.

Meanwhile, Mr. Dela Cruz said a pool manager will be selected to oversee the scheme's operations, including supervising a technical support unit that will handle underwriting, marketing, claims assessment, financial management, and organizational functions.

"Options currently being explored for the pool manager include the National Reinsurance Corp., PCIC, or a private sector insurer," the World Bank said in an earlier project document.

Personnel from the PCIC and participating private insurers are expected to be assigned to

the technical support unit, which will serve as the operational arm of the pool.

The DA is also setting up an agri-risk management office that will study appropriate subsidy levels and guide risk analysis for the program, including determining how much premium support may be provided to eligible farmer segments.

Mr. Dela Cruz said preparatory work is ongoing, including drafting product designs, forming committees, and preparing terms of reference, but full implementation will depend on the approval of the program manager.

"Since it's a program loan, it has to be approved by the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development. Only then can we start the project," he said.

Mr. Dela Cruz said the government is targeting approval around June or July, with operations expected to begin soon after.

BusinessWorld insights

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