



Resultant

INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

Indiana Builds—And Builds Onto—Country's First Modernized Unemployment Insurance System

Indiana's modernized unemployment insurance system, UpLink, was successfully launched on January 19, 2014, making it the first system in the nation to launch all program areas at once with real-time accounting and processes. UpLink eliminated unsupported technology that was bringing significant risk to the Department of Workforce Development. Developed to meet current and future business needs, UpLink was designed to be modified in response to changing demands, policy, and federal and state law.



ABOUT INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development connects people and employers through engagement with continued transparency and accountability, while celebrating, valuing and prioritizing equity, inclusion and diversity. DWD supports citizens and the organizations who employ them by creating and administering workforce programs, paying unemployment claims, and collecting unemployment insurance premiums from employers.

SETTING THE STAGE

In March 2020, many states discovered exactly how unprepared and underpowered their unemployment insurance (UI) systems were for massive claims. Some needed to update technologies; some were in the process of modernization yet found their improvements were missing essential pieces and capacities. With the unprecedented levels of unemployment brought on by COVID-19, few agencies have time to seek solutions. Both the people operating these programs and the people using them have been squeezed beyond capacity from high demand and limited resources.

Agencies that deliver unemployment services largely rely on outdated legacy mainframes that are not only hard to maintain but require an inordinate amount of time and resources from technology staff. Even in states with UI modernization efforts, the enormous need brought on by the pandemic has revealed cracks, deficiencies, and all-out brick walls.

Indiana stands as the exception.



THE SITUATION

The depth and length of the Great Recession caught nearly everyone off guard. Much like today, states grappled with incredibly high volume, insufficient staff and tools to help them, and out-of-control fraud. Indiana was engaged in modernization, but the project hadn't yet launched. The damage control scenario the state was thrust into by the recession put on hold any chance of getting results from those modernization efforts.

Indiana had been struggling with this project since the early 2000s. Even with clear priorities established, complications arose with the vendor that led to contract termination. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) engaged a second vendor in 2006.

The project was under immense political pressure by the time DWD contracted Resultant to perform Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) services to help move the project transparently toward its goal.

Two massive undertakings had to be broached concurrently: getting traction on the modernization project while serving everyone whose employment was affected by the recession.

The state's antiquated systems were rapidly becoming unsustainable and were a constant drain on time and resources. DWD needed to achieve these outcomes:

- Modernize their UI systems and replace the outdated technology
- Provide new online self-service offerings to employers and citizens
- Create a comprehensive UI system with each business function centralized in a single application



THE APPROACH

The Resultant team worked closely with state executives, project team members, business resources, contractor project management, and technical resources to develop the buy-in the transparency effort required. With this collaboration, these outcomes were reached:

- Establishment of key metrics to accurately show the status of project efforts
- Development of dashboards enabling stakeholders to get clear details about progress
- Improvement of interactions between state and vendor project resources in order to repair project culture
- Thorough recommendations to improve processes and approaches in key areas of the software development lifecycle.

Through greater transparency, the team provided relief for claimants in the form of a quick-win online claim filing solution, making Indiana one of the first states to do so. However, the relationship between state and contractor continued to deteriorate and, by 2011, Indiana had yet to transition off the mainframe legacy system. In late 2012,

Resultant was asked to assume project management and successfully deliver the project that already had missed its target launch by years.

The real need was complete digital transformation. It demanded a holistic approach and needed to begin with the people most affected by the changes. Simply replacing an operating system would be inadequate because an OS impacts business processes, how staff work, and how claimants interact with the agency. Without a holistic strategy of digital transformation, OS replacement leaves gaps creating significant defects, performance issues, and unsustainability.

The Resultant team interviewed DWD team members and analyzed their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The project team reorganized with highly capable individuals in the most important technical roles. Together we zeroed in on the outcomes desired with an eye focused on the long term.

We didn't look simply two years ahead; we aimed for twenty. Nobody wanted to have to keep making constant radical changes to a system forever. Anticipating future needs, focus was on expandable capacity and processes that could grow as needs, demands, and DWD standards evolved.



The new team embarked on this strategy for modernization:

- Targeted the launch of a functional iteration that would support core business processes
- Put into place a concise project plan with clearly defined benchmarks, including 30-day milestones to track progress
- Repeatedly met each milestone and began rebuilding executive leadership's confidence in project success
- Gave daily updates to stakeholders, showing exactly what was accomplished the day before and what would be accomplished next
- Communicated long-term vision for stakeholder alignment: the system would go live with the knowledge that improvements and enhancements would continue in the years to come

THE OUTCOME

Indiana's modernized unemployment insurance system, UpLink, was successfully launched on January 19, 2014—nearly ten years from the project's original initiation, and only one year after Resultant took ownership of the project team. It was the first system in the nation to launch all program areas at once with real-time accounting and processes.

UpLink eliminated unsupported technology that was bringing significant risk to the agency. Developed to meet current and future business needs, UpLink was designed to be modified in response to changing demands, policy, and federal and state law.



THE IMPACT

Since then, many states have attempted to modernize their UI operations to integrate tax, benefits, and appeals into a single cohesive system. Indiana's experience proved the complexity involved and revealed the true magnitude of such an undertaking. Even with hundreds of millions of dollars invested to launch the integrated systems, success nationwide has been limited and not sustainable for the challenges of today and the next ten years.

Working with Resultant, the State of Indiana was the first to successfully modernize a system that integrated all components at launch. Additionally,

- **Claimants** now enjoy 24/7 online access and increased benefit accuracy and timeliness
- **Employers** have 24/7 online access to tax and liability information and benefit from near real-time transactions, eliminating processes that previously took multiple days to complete
- **Internal staff** have an increased ability to detect fraud, successfully complete collections, and stop improper payments
- **Indiana's UI program integrity** increased by 40%, moving their ranking of state UI programs by federal standards from 49 to 2

After ten years of modernization frustration, DWD now has a successful system for managing unemployment insurance. A strong relationship resulted from a project nearly written off as a failure. DWD continues to collaborate with Resultant to maintain and enhance the system. Together, we build more refined solutions in response to developing changes.

Best of all, Uplink handled the COVID-19 crisis with beauty and precision. It never went down, and the team smoothly added pandemic benefit programs and offered virtual experiences for their customers with ease.



THE RESULTANT APPROACH TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation is about creating a data-driven culture to make better, more informed, and more efficient decisions. It's a holistic approach including modernization strategy, outcomes assurance, culture change support, and user experience transformation. We're an unbiased advocate for client vision and consider ourselves a partner with everyone on the project: vendor, stakeholder, or team member. Our subject matter and data experts are deeply passionate about collaborating with you to build the extraordinary solution that will help your organization thrive. It doesn't matter where you stand right now in your modernization efforts; we will meet you where you are.