

Jurisdiction: Michigan Uniform Commercial Code Office

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Introduction and Overview:

In 2004, the Michigan Department of State, Uniform Commercial Code Office introduced a web application to interface with the internal information management system. UCC Online enables customers to file and search electronically at www.michigan.gov/sosucc. The Michigan Department of Information Technology E-Michigan Web Development Team, with architect Mahesh Thatavarthi, created the application. Feedback from customers and UCC Staff led to development of a second generation UCC Online, publicly unveiled in August of 2009. I am nominating the new UCC Online for this year's International Association of Commercial Administrator's Merit Award.

Description of the Innovation:

In nine months, original architect Mahesh Thatavarthi rewrote the UCC Online application from a Websphere Commerce Suite (WCS) platform to a Microsoft .NET platform. The internal UCC application is Microsoft Windows-based so the .NET platform allows smoother transmissions between the two applications. Total cost of the rewrite was \$102,000. Customer-minded objectives for the rewrite were greater reliability and ease of usage. Filing office objectives were financial savings and less UCC Staff intervention.

Results of Implementation:

UCC Online consistently processes 75% of all customer transactions. Customers appreciate the information boxes for password criteria, updated navigational instructions and improved connectivity with the internal application. The ability to return larger jobs through our servers increased with a change in hosting facility, enabled by the move from WCS. Larger jobs, from 60 MG to 150 MG, are now deliverable to the customer's UCC Online Order History.

The UCC Office also saves \$80,000 per year in WCS fees since moving to the .NET platform. Factoring the rewrite cost from August 2009, 100% savings will be realized in Michigan's next fiscal year which begins October 1, 2010. Moving the cost of future maintenance and hosting facility costs to a complete in-house solution increases the savings. UCC maintenance fees are now covered by the overall maintenance agreement between the Michigan Departments of State and Information Technology.

Benefits of the Project:

Customer service objectives and fiscal conservation objectives have been achieved with the new UCC Online. UCC Online administrators have several additional benefits. Increased administrative tool functionality allows quicker UCC customer notification when there will be a delay in completed job delivery due to scheduled or unscheduled downtime. UCC Staff can now reset customer passwords. Other new tools allow improved reporting for evaluating trends in customer usage. Finally, UCC Online handles 75% of all filing and searching transactions. With a one third reduction in staff in 2009, UCC Online technology enables UCC to stay within the statutory two-day, job processing turnaround.

Lessons Learned:

A better functioning web application has enabled our technical support team to identify problem areas more specifically. New validation procedures are being modified in response to a generic "failure to get fees" error that customers receive on the transaction verification page. UCC Staff now tells customers that certain punctuation errors in collateral data entry will result in filing submission failure. For example, an open parenthesis not accompanied by its closed counterpart will prevent filing submission.

There is another level of lessons learned from UCC Online. First version customers told us what they needed in a UCC web application. We incorporated their feedback, from 2004 to 2009, into the new Online design. Through partnering with our customers, Michigan now has an exceptional UCC web interface for filing and searching.