Mississippi Windstorm Underwriting Association

Headquarters
Flowood, Mississippi

Operations
Coastal Area of Mississippi

Business Lines
Windstorm and Hail perils

Employees
30

Website
https://www.msplans.com/mwua

Product(s)
Guidewire InsuranceNow

Benefits

- Up and running quickly with 12-month implementation of a full suite, including integrations and migration of data

- Improved ease of doing business for agents, including faster training

- Quicker and more accurate quoting

- Freedom from system maintenance

- Easily integrated existing systems

- Savings in time and costs of mortgage notifications

Underwriting Association Improves Operational Efficiencies with Guidewire InsuranceNow

> FAIR Plan Maintains Optimal Service Levels Even During Extreme Volume Fluctuations

The Mississippi Windstorm Underwriting Association (MWUA) was established by the Mississippi Legislature to help provide an adequate market for windstorm and hail insurance for the coastal area of Mississippi.

Operated and managed by specialized staff of the Mississippi State Rating Bureau, MWUA, also known as the "wind pool", serves as the insurer of last resort for coastal property owners who are unable to obtain coverage in the open insurance market. MWUA covers about 31,000 residences in Jackson, Harrison, Hancock, George, Stone, and Pearl River counties, plus an additional 7,900 covered by the Mississippi Residential Property Insurance Underwriting Association, which can cover inland properties. MWUA, which operates as a non-profit, seeks the most efficient and cost-effective methods for running its operations. MWUA had been using a custom-created insurance management system for tracking its business, but the system proved expensive to maintain—from both a hardware and software perspective. The system lacked flexibility, and MWUA felt the system provider lacked a sufficient depth of insurance industry knowledge.

Navigate what's next.

"As we looked for an all-in-one (policy, claims, and billing) solution, we wanted something that was cloud-based so we wouldn't have to maintain hardware and software," says Joe Shumaker, Manager of MWUA. "We also wanted a solution that could scale up and down to accommodate the influx of field agents after major tornados and hurricanes."

Solutions

MWUA issued an RFP to find a new insurance management solution, and hired a company to help it evaluate the responses. "We had quite an extensive RFP detailing what we required and other features we would like," Shumaker says. "The respondents were narrowed to four finalists. We told them about the problems we had with our current system, and asked how they would handle things, and how their systems could be customized and grow. After hearing from the finalists, the decision was unanimous to go with Guidewire InsuranceNow."

Deployment of InsuranceNow, an all-in-one, cloud- based solution, was completed within 12 months, including importing existing policy data from the old application, integration "Deployment was as painless as can be," Shumaker says. "Rolling out our previous system in 2007 was nightmarish. I still have the big notebooks from our old system—covering the initial system designs, the complete system designs, and all the libraries that went along with it. Deploying InsuranceNow was so much easier."

InsuranceNow also enabled integration with other systems that weren't even attempted with the earlier solution. "We have integrated it with our accounting system, as well as with vendor systems," Shumaker says. "For example, we are saving substantial time with mortgage notifications because we were able to integrate the application with InsuranceNow, so everything is done electronically. This has cut the cost of our mortgage notifications tremendously."

Deep Insurance Industry Expertise

From the outset, MWUA sought a solution from a company that had deep insurance industry experience. "Insurance is a unique industry filled with specialized circumstances," Shumaker says. "It isn't like selling automobile parts or wholesale food. With insurance you have written premiums, earned premiums, pro rata cancellations, fully earned cancellations, just so many oddities, so much that is unique to the industry. For a company that's not in the insurance software business, it's almost impossible for them to grasp all of those aspects and do it efficiently. Guidewire is dedicated to P&C insurance, and its expertise shows through in its product and support."

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—Joe Shumaker,
Manager, MWUA

Navigate what's next.

Ease of Use

In addition to taking advantage of the technical knowledge and deep insurance industry expertise embedded in InsuranceNow, the organization has also benefitted from the ease of use of InsuranceNow's all-in-one design. MWUA's program is open to any insurance agent registered in the state of Mississippi, making extensive training programs impractical. "InsuranceNow is simple to use," Shumaker says. "It doesn't require the big thick manuals and weeks of training that some programs do. Agents can immediately understand the modern interface. We might stop by a coastal agency, show them how to get in, pull things up, and they're off and running."

Time Saved with Agents

Agents have discovered they can save time by submitting policies through the MWUA's InsuranceNow agent portal. The improved customer experience directly benefits MWUA, because it eliminates the time otherwise required to re-key information from printed policy applications. "We've found that agents doing electronic submissions via the portal are more likely to have the correct information required for an accurate quote, compared to paper-based submissions," Shumaker says. "Electronic submission saves time for the agents and saves time on our end as well."

Efficiency and Scalability of a Cloud-Based Solution

MWUA enjoys the efficiency and scalability it has gained from the cloud-based solution. The benefits are especially appreciated compared to its earlier solution that required on-premises hardware and software to manage and maintain. "I don't have the in-house IT staff required for an on-premises solution," Shumaker says. "And should something ever go wrong, I don't want to engage in a debate about whether the problem is with a company's software or with my local hardware. With a cloud-based solution, I don't have to maintain resources locally, and I have just one hand to shake, should something ever go wrong."

Navigate what's next.

Scalability is essential for the kind of disaster-related insurance that MWUA deals with. With an on-premises solution the organization would have to deploy resources to handle peak demands that may only be needed a few times per year or less. "We are almost 100% catastrophe-driven," Shumaker says. "During the season when a storm is threatening, perhaps a Category 5 hurricane is off the coast of Cuba, and it's heading toward the Mississippi coast, we will see increased activity." MWUA may go from an average of 200 users to 2,000 users as insurers, agents, and policyholders access the self-service portal to view policies, check coverage, and after the storm, check on claims status. "At the end of the day, our system needs to be up and running. It's our data and our policies in force, so we need to be able to control that, identify adjusters and field operatives, and provide the prompt, thorough and fair claims service that the claimant is expecting. InsuranceNow auto-scales to meet all of these needs."

Guidewire is the platform P&C insurers trust to engage, innovate, and grow efficiently. We combine digital, core, analytics, and AI to deliver our platform as a cloud service. More than 380 insurers, from new ventures to the largest and most complex in the world, run on Guidewire. For more information, contact us at info@guidewire.com.