

Pekin Insurance Improves Speed- to-Market with Guidewire and Smart Communications

> **A core modernization project, combined with an enterprise-scale customer communications management platform, is helping Pekin improve every aspect of its distribution efforts.**

Pekin Insurance is about to celebrate its 100-year anniversary. The Pekin, Illinois, insurer offers its customers personal, commercial, and life insurance products in 24 states.

With its motto of going “beyond the expected,” Pekin prides itself on being more than an insurance company, providing innovation and excellence in products and services in order to deliver on the promise of financial protection and peace of mind for its customers.

Like many insurers, Pekin Insurance recognized that, to address growing market trends and remain competitive with larger carriers, the company would need to upgrade its core technology and infrastructure to meet the digital requirements of its internal operations and its external customers.

Considered a super-regional carrier and an independent-agent-focused company, Pekin identified digital transformation as the path to enable direct-to-consumer business, one of the major advancements shaping the insurer’s strategy.

“We have been here for 100 years, and we want to be here for another 100 years,” says Subhasis Mukherjee, Pekin’s Vice President and CIO. “So we thought through market trends very seriously and addressed them largely with technology.”

One such trend is in distribution, notes Mukherjee. “While Personal lines is turning into more of a commodity, Commercial lines is still an agent-driven business, and changes in distribution are impacting the market,” he says. “The other trend, of course, is technology itself, and the digitalization of insurance by many of the insurtech companies is redefining the engagement model for customers: in this case, our end customers as well as our channel customers.”



Pekin Insurance

Headquarters

Pekin, Illinois

Operations

United States

Business Lines

Personal

Commercial

Workers’ Compensation

Employees

1,370

Website

www.pekininsurance.com

Products

Guidewire InsuranceSuite

Guidewire Predictive Analytics

Cyence

Hyland OnBase

Benefits of SmartCOMM Integration with Guidewire Products

- **Increasing engagement to ensure consistent branding and messaging across all communication channels**
- **Creating a new product and entering new lines of business at a much faster pace**
- **Enabling agents and claims handlers to use SmartCOMM directly from within their Guidewire ClaimCenter environment**



Navigate what's next.

A Modern Approach

When the company embarked on its PIVOT (Pekin Insurance Virtual Overall Transformation) initiative, it chose the Guidewire platform to modernize its infrastructure, simplify processes both for internal users and agents, and help drive speed to market.

Replacing its 35-year-old homegrown legacy mainframe systems, the company, working with Guidewire's PartnerConnect Consulting partner Deloitte Consulting LLP, began to evaluate how it could find partners that would embrace cloud-based computing and seamlessly integrate with Guidewire to supply a number of ancillary solutions that would round out its new ecosystem.

These partners would need to live and breathe Pekin's stated goals around communications ease of use—supporting business users and gaining more transparency. For example, Pekin looked for a solution provider that could solve the company's challenges related to creating insurance-related document templates, which previously took more than three weeks to create from scratch.

Pekin also wanted to ensure compliance and governance to centralize all forms/documents and template versions for compliance and consistency.

Increasing Engagement

Consistency was also a factor related to multi-channel communications, and so the insurer sought to increase engagement to ensure consistent branding and messaging across all communication channels and empower its organization to deliver each customer's documents via their preferred delivery channels.

Further leveraging the Guidewire PartnerConnect Solution program, Pekin chose Smart Communications' SmartCOMM solution to deliver a best-in-class, enterprise-scale customer communications management platform.

"SmartCOMM was a big play for us," says Mukherjee. "Our main criterion was that the solution could easily integrate with Guidewire, but it also really helped us on our forms and letters. It related to our speed-to-market plans—meaning the speed at which we created and maintained them—which we needed to become more of a digital insurer."

Pekin's success in integrating SmartCOMM enables the company to create a new product or even enter a new line of business at a much faster pace, because document owners can edit and approve content for different channels, enabling business users to make content changes to preapproved templates.

Considering the size of the project, notes Lisa Rogers, Pekin's Senior Manager of IT Programs, the integration of SmartCOMM went very well. "It's ongoing," she says. "It's a fairly large integration and would have been way more difficult had we just implemented on the mainframe side of the house."

The benefits of a streamlined integration can be traced to partners working together to accelerate a successful implementation, notes Dave Whitesell, Assistant Vice President of Pekin's IT Group. "Guidewire gave us the accelerators that we could share with our strategic partners, which were very good in the sense that they were exhaustive and very thorough," Whitesell says.



Smart Communications

Headquarters

London, UK

Operations

United States, EMEA, APAC

Business

Customer Communications
Management

Employees

400

Website

www.smartcommunications.com

Product

SmartCOMM

Guidewire Product

Guidewire InsuranceSuite



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Pekin was able to leverage the prebuilt, verified SmartCOMM accelerator—one of the many *Ready for Guidewire* accelerators that Smart Communications has made available for Guidewire InsuranceSuite to joint customers.

Importance of Partnerships

With Guidewire as the foundation, Pekin's digital platform is one of several interrelated alliances relying on each other, all working together toward a common goal.

For Whitesell, the value of partnerships cannot be overstated. "The vendors that we may use, or our other partners may use that interact with our agents, and in turn, interact with us, those companies know Guidewire as well," says Whitesell. "So they're always thinking, 'Oh, you have Guidewire. Here's another capability you can have,' or, 'Here's what we're building that Guidewire can consume very nicely.' And that gives us an advantage so we don't have to discover everything or build everything."

With the SmartCOMM implementation, this is playing out in myriad ways. For example, Pekin's agents and claims handlers can use SmartCOMM directly from within their Guidewire ClaimCenter environment to create targeted and relevant personalized communications for customers, using free text or preapproved text, branding, and content. When new policy quotes, additions, or changes are made, or when policy renewal quotes are to be issued from Guidewire PolicyCenter, the appropriate personalized communication and documentation is generated using SmartCOMM, quickly and simply.

Pekin also now has integrated control over its communications. Draft documents with personalized and targeted messages are seamlessly integrated with Guidewire approval workflow, so senior managers can review and approve all documents before delivery. Since implementing SmartCOMM, the customer has realized a 67% reduction in its document generation process. And when producing a formal document, what used to take the insurer nearly three weeks can now be accomplished in one. Finally, with Guidewire and its new digital ecosystem now in production, Pekin's releases are three times faster than in the past.

Fulfilling Pekin's stated goals around communications ease of use, supporting business users, and gaining more transparency, the insurer can now reduce the time and effort required to create new templates by using SmartCOMM's browser-based template authoring, which offers a user-friendly interface and access to shared content, style sets, layouts, and data. Because each template is multi-channel, multi-brand, multi-jurisdictional, and multi-language, insurers can eliminate hundreds of old templates.

Leveraging Trends for Success

Mukherjee reflects back on the trends in distribution and technology shaping Pekin's digital journey. "In all of this digitization, the biggest play is around ease of doing business with our customer, knowing our customer better, and pre-empting or anticipating their needs—not only for insurance, but also everywhere that we can play a role in their lives," he says. "And behind all of this is: How do we collect data? Pekin's traditional form of data collection is submissions and forms."



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Rogers adds that agent and customer experiences, combined with internal user experiences, are the number one measure that Pekin uses for success. The new system enables the insurer to adapt its communications efforts and respond quickly to customers and to agents when dealing with policyholder requests. "It helps us accelerate our growth and identify potential opportunities to make their experience better," she says.

Whitesell notes that partnerships like the one with Smart Communications have allowed the company to enter new markets, states, or jurisdictions with new coverages faster and more efficiently. For example, 11 months into its digital journey, Pekin launched two products in one state. Within the next six months, it successfully launched the same set of products across five additional states. "They know we are a Guidewire customer, and they're trying to help us grow as well," says Whitesell.

Now that the company has modernized its core systems, data, and platform as part of its PIVOT program, Pekin will focus its goals on sustaining its growth. "We want to improve our posture when it comes to customer engagement, channel customers, and agents," says Mukherjee. "We have a foundation that can help us leapfrog into the digital transformation era."

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–Subhasis Mukherjee, Vice President and CIO, Pekin