



Implementation Success Story ICW Group

In February 2016, ICW Group successfully launched SIMS Claims in a big-bang deployment across its entire workers' compensation (WC) operation.

In this case study, we spoke to members of both the ICW Group and Systema Software teams to discuss the scope of the project and key factors that drove its success.

Project Kickoff: Implementing SIMS Claims

When ICW Group first selected SIMS, the company had been experiencing significant growth in its WC line of business—and continues to see expansion in this area.

In SIMS, it found a claims system that was scalable, would adhere to WC regulatory requirements across all states, and would optimize claims processing in order to ensure excellent customer service.

ICW Group's implementation of SIMS began in July 2014. "This was a very sophisticated project," said Danny Smith, COO of Systema Software. "ICW Group has a complex IT environment. It planned to deploy to 250 users, with many interfaces to multiple systems, and to facilitate significant automation throughout its claims operation."

"At the start of the project, we spent extensive time understanding our business objectives, gathering requirements and mapping them to SIMS," said Pam Boutsaboualoy, business implementation manager at ICW Group.

In this phase, the teams developed a detailed roadmap, divided the project into five iterations (or phases), and outlined the deliverables that would be accomplished at the end of each iteration.

A Hybrid Methodology to Project Management

Interestingly, the companies subscribed to two different project management methodologies. Systema typically used an iterative milestone-based approach, while ICW Group followed an agile model.

Key Strategies for Successful Implementation

- Chose the right system in SIMS Claims
- 80/20 rule to limit project scope
- Hybrid implementation strategy
- Systema's initial roadmap served as framework throughout the project
- ICW Group's agile ceremonies kept teams focused and on same page
- Acceptance criteria for key project deliverables ensured satisfaction
- Demo business value along the way
- SIMS City served as a command center, co-located ICW Group resources and created a singular focus
- Support from executive management at both companies
- Testathon eliminated issues that could create possible delays or disruptions
- Both teams had the flexibility and adaptability to get the job done

“We ended up using a synthesis of Systema and ICW Group methodologies,” said Casey Phipps, senior project manager at ICW Group. “I served as the SCRUM master, and united the teams under a common approach. I ensured deliverables were traced back to the roadmap, and essentially made sure the project ran on time and according to budget.”

“When a hard deadline needed to be met, we used a milestone-based approach,” said Kenny Popst, director of client implementations at Systema Software. “For example, when ICW Group required development in the core SIMS product, we followed this approach because product releases have a set deadline. In addition, the end of each iteration represented a hard deadline for key criteria, so the milestone-based approach came into play here as well.”

Once the roadmap was developed and the project was underway, the companies transitioned more toward ICW Group’s agile methodology.

“There were several advantages to using agile to manage day-to-day operations,” said Phipps. “First, performing all of the agile ceremonies—such as stand-up meetings, sprint planning sessions, demonstrations, and retrospective analyses—kept our teams focused and on the same page. Together, we fell into a regular cadence with two-week sprints, which were the time increments we used to push deliverables forward.”

“At the end of each two-week sprint, we received demonstrations of key deliverables. These demos brought about ‘ah-ha’ moments, both in terms of seeing business value and benefits, as well as seeing the need to make adjustments in the next sprint,” said Boutsaboualoy.

“Psychologically, the demos provided a real lift in terms of being able to see progress along the way, especially for such a big project,” added Amanda Granger, vice president of workers’ compensation claims at ICW Group.

“We adopted a lot of ICW Group’s agile approach for this implementation,” said Smith. “In hindsight, it was a good decision because we became more familiar with this methodology. We operated within ICW Group’s agile framework and tool set, while staying true to our initial estimate of time and resources for the project.”

Five Iterations and the Testathon

The project had five iterations or phases. Iteration 1 focused on analysis and building a detailed roadmap. Iteration 2 focused on data conversion. Iteration 3 established payment interfaces, including Mitchell, Jopari, DataCare, and SAP check printing.

Iteration 4 and 5 focused on implementing the larger, more complex connectors, including interfaces to CMS for mandated Medicare reporting and to HealthTech for transmitting first reports of injury (FROI) and subsequent reports of injury (SROI) in multiple jurisdictions.

“Systema’s pre-built interfaces were helpful,” said Phipps. “In some cases, we could use the connectors right out of the box. In other cases, Systema’s interface got us 50-70% of the way, and then we tailored the interface to meet additional requirements.”

In a last informal phase, the companies tied up deliverables from iterations 1 through 5. “We also initiated a testathon, in which we brought our power users and business community together to test SIMS over a number of weeks. This helped iron out any potential issues

prior to go-live, and we also performed a load test on the system,” said Phipps.

The ICW Group Team

“The ICW Group team was incredible to work with and extremely committed to the project’s success,” said Smith. “Several members, including the project manager and business analyst, were dedicated full time, which helped to drive progress and ensure we met key milestones over the project’s various iterations.”

“Our internal project team consisted of high-octane overachievers who had a get-it-done mentality,” said Boutsaboualoy. “Team members were not attached to specific roles. Instead, they all had initiative and drive to jump in and get things done where needed.”

Big Bang Deployment

A big-bang deployment was used. “It wasn’t an option for us to do a phased release or cutover. We had to deploy to everyone all at once on the same day. We also wanted to ensure there wouldn’t be any disruptions to business,” said Phipps.

The team elected to deploy over the President’s Day weekend to provide more time and to ensure absolutely no issues would arise that would affect their operations.

“The bar was set incredibly high, with no room for error. It was essential that we took the time to ensure everything would work right,” said Phipps.

The Go-Live Experience

“For a project of this size and complexity, we were very pleased at how smoothly everything went,” said Granger. “On the day we went live, wearing my claims-examiner hat, I thought everything about SIMS felt right and made sense. Our claims examiners arrived that day, logged into the new system, and honestly, no one missed a beat. The transition was that simple and straightforward, which speaks to the success of our partnership, this project and our selection of the right system in SIMS.”

According to David Hoppen, ICW Group’s chief operating officer, “during our first week using SIMS, I received an email from a relatively new claims examiner, who essentially thanked me for investing in the new claims system. This examiner came on board at the tail end of the old system and struggled to ramp up. When we switched over to SIMS, he said he found the new system much easier to use. It was confirmation that SIMS would be able to deliver the ease-of-use and efficiency gains we anticipated for our examiners.”

“We have a complicated IT landscape,” said Phipps. “Initially, we used the analogy that this project was like a heart transplant, but in reality, it was more akin to replacing every major organ all at once. For a project of this magnitude, it was an extraordinary accomplishment to have such a seamless launch with minimum issues.”

Key Factors for Success

“From the start, we used an 80/20 rule as the guiding principle to limit the scope of our project to the capabilities absolutely necessary to go-live,” said Boutsaboualoy. “We used a very detail-oriented process, but in the end, the 80/20 rule was invaluable to ensure timely, on-budget success.”

“The initial project roadmap served as an important framework from the beginning and throughout execution,” said Phipps. “Each deliverable (at the story level) came with specific acceptance criteria that needed to be met to ensure all ICW Group parties were satisfied.”

“The agile model relies on a co-location of resources,” said Phipps. “We established ‘SIMS City’ as a command center where we could make quick decisions and gather for instant meetings. At times, it was intense, but the advantage was we were all singularly focused on the project and its objectives.”

“Another key factor for success was support from executive management at both companies,” said Boutsaboualoy. “This project was deemed a #1 priority, so when decisions needed to be made regarding resources, we got the support we needed.”

“The testathon was also critical to wiping out any issues that could have created a delay or disruption,” said Phipps.

Since going live, ICW Group has also experienced standout benefits for its business environment. Through the use of this new claims platform, the business has realized tremendous value through the SIMS payment processing features including Quick Pay, Invoice Document Assignment payment and Batch Payment approval. ICW Group also experienced significant productivity gains with the management of inbound documents attached to various areas of the claim. These documents are then accessible in both the attached area of the claim and within its own attachment module of the claim. The system’s intuitive user interface (UI) and ease of use have also promoted efficiencies.

Systema’s Role

“We leaned heavily on Systema’s expertise, as their team members knew SIMS best with years of experience and best practices from prior implementations,” said Boutsaboualoy. “Systema’s team also helped keep the project on track and ensured that our goals were attainable.”

“Systema’s team provided support with every facet of the project,” said Phipps. “They were instrumental for proper configuration, significant development and testing. They were also responsive to change, provided quick turnaround on issues, and made enhancements on the fly. Their team was a great complement to ours.”

“Systema did an excellent job matching their team to our organization,” said Granger. “At times, it was hard to tell who was an ICW Group or Systema employee because everyone worked well as one unified team.”

Planning for SIMS Day 2

The launch of SIMS was a success. “Selecting SIMS was the most important piece of the project. We knew the system would fit our needs, not only today, but also as we continue to grow and expand our business,” said Boutsaboualoy.

With the implementation now complete, ICW Group is not resting on its laurels. Instead, they’ve started planning for SIMS Day 2, a project that will focus on optimizing the business value obtained from the system.

“We hope to drive even greater benefits in the next phase of our SIMS enhancement project,” said Hoppen.

“We have a lot planned for Day 2,” said Phipps. “In terms of scope, it’s almost as big as Day 1. We’ll enhance reserve management, increase automation with business rules, expand our intake process to customers, improve document management, develop custom reports, enhance existing connectors and establish new ones as well. We’re also looking forward to rolling out the new user interface of SIMS, along with the new mobility features offered in the 2016/R2 release”

About Systema Software

Systema Software, LLC, provides flexible, comprehensive solutions and services to the insurance industry. SIMS Claims is an innovative, award-winning claims administration system, which is highly praised by clients and well recognized by industry experts as a leading claims solution. Together, our team of Big 4 consulting and industry veterans, experienced software developers, and project managers deliver an architecturally strong enterprise platform, designed for superior speed, scalability, and performance. With advanced technology and focused customer service, Systema Software has experienced phenomenal growth and success, earning high rankings on the national Inc. 5000 and local Fast 100 lists of fastest-growing private companies. For more information, visit us online at www.systemasoft.com.

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