



# Provide seamless citizen support amid COVID-19

How the State of Tennessee uses Zendesk  
to modernize the constituent experience





Since the start of the pandemic, over [40 million American workers](#) have filed for unemployment and the number continues to grow. The volume and volatility of the market places immense pressure on unemployment agencies who are working around the clock to process claims and manage staggering volumes of inquiries.

While the volume of inquiries remains unprecedented for unemployment offices, the State of Tennessee experienced similar problems in 2013.

That year, leaders from the State of Tennessee outlined the key areas they were looking to improve, their results, and how their organization is adapting given the current circumstances.

Read on for a summary of the key takeaways and learn how government agencies can update their systems to maximize productivity and efficiency.



# Problems government agencies face with their support solutions

In the years following the economic downturn of 2008, the State of Tennessee's Department of Labor saw a large spike in the number of unemployment claims filed. They saw tens of thousands of delayed claims in terms of processing and payment, hundreds of thousands of support calls, and an extremely unhappy public. In 2013, the state took a hard look at their current system and identified Zendesk as a solution.

## **Disjointed data sources**

Without a complete view of the customer journey from start to finish, agents at the State of Tennessee's unemployment office did not know who was requesting help and didn't have the context to understand what they were specifically asking for and how they could best assist, resulting in processing delays and poor service.

## **Inability to scale on top of an antiquated system**

The State of Tennessee was built on top of 50 year old technology, the COBOL System, and while the department had great staff, they had insufficient seasoned employees with the knowledge and necessary skill sets to provide timely and consistent service.

## **Analyzing real-time data on inquiries was impossible**

The State had no way to collect and analyze claimant data as the system was not able to show data on where claimants were getting stuck or confused. The team had to rely on anecdotal data to show how long it took the department to initially respond and resolve a claimant's issue.



# What government agencies should look for in a solution

As the State of Tennessee researched support solutions, they identified their key needs:

## **1. Flexibility to integrate with existing technologies**

In an effort to move quickly and avoid ripping and replacing, the solution would need to seamlessly integrate with the technologies the state was already working with and not disrupt workflows.

## **2. Claimants should be able to engage with the department whenever and wherever they want and through whichever channel.**

Promoting communication and access to support through multiple channels was critical to the State of Tennessee when looking for solutions.

## **3. Tracking the customer journey**

Seeing previous conversations from a claimant and another agent in a single view was critical to understanding their customers.

## **4. Efficiently provide answers through self-service as much as possible**

Empowering their customers to find the answers themselves would relieve agents' inboxes.

## **5. Provide real-time information about their claimants**

The state wanted to identify how they could better serve their citizens and if they were satisfied with the service they were providing.



# Why federal, state, and local governments use Zendesk

## Why the State of Tennessee chose Zendesk

Modernizing while mitigating frustration is crucial during these volatile times. The State of Tennessee was able to go live with Zendesk in less than 30 days, onboarding not only the Department of Labor, but six other departments in the state.

### **Seamless integration**

Zendesk seamlessly integrates with your UI or unemployment insurance systems. With the chat functionality, Zendesk can provide timely information to your claimants at a critical point of their claims filing process or while they certify for their weekly claim.

Little to no IT staff is needed to integrate Zendesk, allowing unemployment offices to move quickly. Additionally, administration staff, claim agents or call center staff can immediately contribute to the overall process changes needed to make systems more efficient and effective.

### **Single source of truth**

The ability to collect all your claimant-related data is critical to keep the context, claimant information, and past conversations in a single place. With Zendesk Explore, leadership can stay informed with real-time dashboards, which can be automatically sent to managers and other leaders.

Zendesk collects relevant information such as:

- Subject of the request
- First-reply time
- Full resolution time
- Total and unique number of requests
- Customer satisfaction

Effective unemployment offices are able to make real-time decisions and updates to their websites to curve confusion and frustration from citizens looking for information.



### **Scalability on-demand**

When needed, it can be imperative to hire third-party resources or add temporary hires to meet an influx of demand. When scaling a workforce, reducing onboarding time is vitally important.

The State of Tennessee was able to reduce their agent onboarding time from six to eight months to less than a week with Zendesk Guide.

While seasoned staff are incredibly valuable when training, it is a productivity challenge when they stop what they're doing to pass along their knowledge to new cohorts.

Zendesk Guide helps capture seasoned employees' knowledge into articles that can be fed not only to agents, but also to customers. As more and more of these employees retire, unemployment offices need to ensure their vast knowledge doesn't walk out the door without capturing it.

### **Mitigate claimant confusion and decrease ticket volume**

When claims spike, either due to a pandemic or an economic downturn, the ability to communicate while someone is navigating a claims application or notifying them that a change has been made, is critical to an unemployment office's success.

With Zendesk's omnichannel solution, the State of Tennessee was able to provide timely information and minimize confusion by enabling communication through multiple channels whether it be social media, email, chat, calls, and web forms.

With Zendesk Chat or Answer Bot, information that claimants need to create a successful filing can be queued up with a chat widget. Both tools will help to instantly solve more tickets for your team, saving both time and money. If a customer still needs assistance, a warm handoff is easy to facilitate.



# Results the State of Tennessee saw with Zendesk



## Increased CSAT

Customer Satisfaction increased  
**35%** First touch resolution



## First touch resolution

**90%** of customers received satisfactory answers on the first attempt



## Reduced onboarding time

It took less than a week to onboard temporary agents and increase capacity during peak seasonal periods.



## Reduced costs

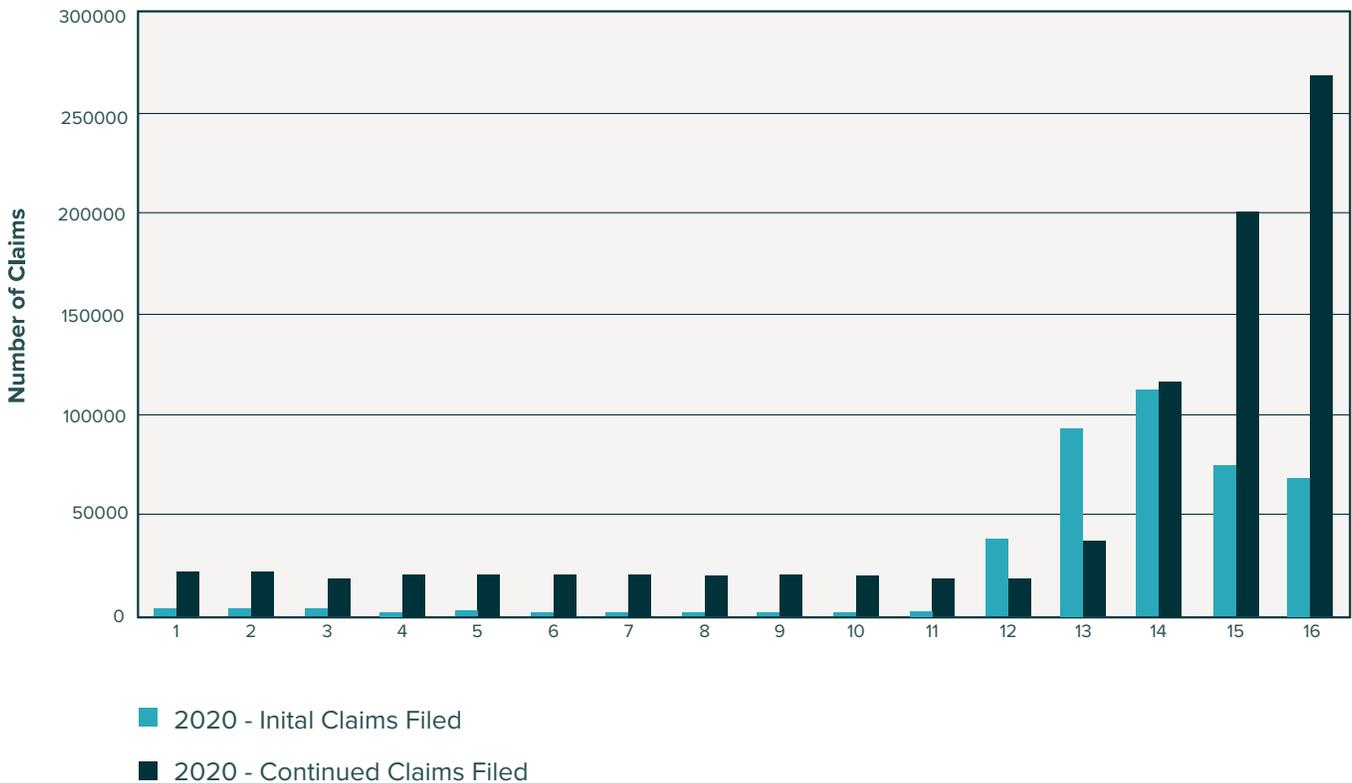
The average cost to serve customers dropped from **\$35 to \$1.07**. Saved over **\$250k** annually on proprietary IVR systems.



# Results the State of Tennessee saw with Zendesk

As the State of Tennessee researched support solutions, they identified their key needs:

2020 Initial and Continued Claims by Week





Up until mid-March, the State of Tennessee was seeing less than 300 claims. From the week of March 21st, initial claims increased to 30k and went up to 116k in a four week period. That is a 3400% increase from last year, and a 2100% increase from the 2008 and 2009 recession.

As tickets come through multiple channels, the state relies heavily on automation within Zendesk to bulk resolve common issues. This still gives individuals the opportunity to reach back out, and helps agents avoid responding to a similar issue thousands of times.

The State of Tennessee relies on Zendesk's reporting functionality to identify problem areas to address, whether it be a confusing flow, or a resource their citizens aren't able to find.

Tickets are up to 63,000 weekly, and in spite of huge ticket volume, the State of Tennessee has been able to maintain a customer satisfaction score of 80%.



# Zendesk's commitment – helping government with rapid response

## **How does Zendesk serve government agencies?**

Zendesk is an easy to use software as a service that allows you to engage customers, employees, and citizens to enable them to either serve themselves or have conversations with them. The Zendesk solution lets unemployment offices do

this at scale so you can have a small team that can work quickly and efficiently to go through a large number of questions.

Zendesk is committed to helping government agencies rise to the challenge of urgent events, stay productive, and serve constituents from any location.

[Learn more about Zendesk for Government](#)