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No-Code Insider: Virtual Government Services

How Unqork empowers state and local agencies to deliver robust digital services to constituents—without writing a single line of code

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The Virtual Imperative

COVID-19 was an unprecedented event in recent times resulting in the widespread disruption of public services[1]. The pandemic highlighted the brittleness of outmoded systems which remain overly-reliant on manual checkpoints and in-person transactions. Yet, even before a global pandemic turned the world upside down, these highly "analog" systems were providing a disservice to vulnerable and underserved communities—the ones who are often most affected by mass-impact events such as COVID.

Many government processes still require in-person transactions for everything from license registrations and renewals to paying parking tickets. Travel to a physical location may be inconvenient for some but can be particularly hard on poor residents who, in addition to shelling out for transportation costs, are compelled to take time away from work and family obligations. These processes are even more burdensome for the **26% of American adults** who live with a disability, over half of whom have difficulties walking or climbing stairs.

The good news is that these challenges can, in many cases, be engineered around. Thanks to near-ubiquitous modern networks and widespread distribution of connected devices[2], many public services can be efficiently, securely, and remotely delivered to residents. The only challenge is the cost and complexity of building the digital infrastructure.

Digitally transformation is not for the faint of heart. Custom enterprise-grade software requires upgrading and integrating legacy systems[4], implementing air-tight privacy controls, and competing for scarce IT talent. Factoring all these challenges together, it's little wonder that enterprise-scale application development (regardless of industry) is such a painfully inefficient affair with **85% of projects going over schedule** and 70% of large-scale digital IT programs **failing to even reach their stated goals.**

[1] An analysis by The Century Foundation found that state unemployment systems were so overwhelmed by the sudden jump in claimants that by the end of April they were only able to successfully fulfill 47% of claims (which we should note was a marked improvement over March, when fulfillment only reached 14%).

[2] A 2019 Pew Survey found that 90% of American used the Internet, 73% had home broadband, and 96% owned a cell phone (81% owned a smartphone)

[3] Consider this year's strange rush on COBOL-literate programmers to update long-untouched government systems built on a mostly-forgotten language.

In order to circumvent these challenges, governments at all levels are increasingly embracing no-code. This new class of cloud-based development platform eliminates traditional friction points and accelerates the building of scalable, sophisticated solutions.

No-code offers a number of inherent advantages over other development approaches. For one, no-code platforms come “out-of-the-box” (or, out-of-the-virtual-SaaS box) with all the toolsets and sector-specific elements necessary to build and manage a robust application (e.g., front-end UX, workflow, rules engine, analytics, integrations, and maintenance). Since they’re all components of the same unified platform, everything just works together in instant harmony. This means agencies can devote all their resources to addressing residents’ challenges instead of technical ones.

Also, by eliminating the need to write code from the building process, no-code expands the scope of who is doing the development. In a no-code platform, users (or “**Creators**” as we refer to them at Unqork) build applications by drag-and-dropping configurable elements representing both user-facing features and back-end application logic. While modern programming languages (Java, Python, etc.) can take a year to learn and a decade to master, no-code can usually be learned in a month or two, which makes development more collaborative, and recruiting more flexible.

The Takeaway: No-code empowers state and local agencies to readily explore digital opportunities that would have been inaccessible just a few years ago. In this eBook, we’ll explore how no-code can help government entities inject operational efficiencies and provide services to all.

What Is No-Code?

Before we jump into the benefits of Unqork's Virtual Government Services, let's explore the technology that powers it: No-code.

No-code is a category of cloud-computing services that empower enterprises to develop, run, and manage applications on a single unified system. As the name implies, no-code also eliminates the need to write any code—indeed, it completely removes the presence of an editable codebase from the development process. That doesn't mean there's not any code anywhere in the system—no-code platforms simply provide an intuitive visual layer between code and creator, which brings many benefits. Let's take a more in-depth look:

How does it work?

When you are building an application with code, what you're doing is reproducing a set of commands over and over again. The commands happen in different ways in different parts of your program, but they are the same commands. What a no-code platform does is repackage these commands in a graphical form, allowing you to configure and manipulate them visually. The platform then executes those commands, the same as if they had been written in code.

By stringing together such commands, you can build your program without having to see any of the code or write any of it yourself.

The application is configured visually from start to finish, and it runs entirely from the platform after it's deployed. Changes are made by simply logging in and reconfiguring the visual interface.

What are the benefits?

No-code takes on the “heavy lifting” of development and frees companies to shift their focus and resources towards building operational efficiencies, perfecting the user experience, and enacting long-term strategies. By tapping into the power of no-code, organizations can realize:

- **Accelerated development:** No-code automates many high-volume development tasks so new applications can be built and deployed much faster. In many cases, applications that would take months or years to reach the market can be built in a matter of weeks, or even days.

- **The elimination of legacy code:** Code becomes legacy nearly instantly. With no-code, organizations only need to be concerned with building business logic; even if there is a technical change, the platform handles all that on the backend.

- **Ease of updates and maintenance:** Large enterprises can spend up to 75% of total IT budget maintaining existing systems. One of the reasons is the complexity of making a change in one area requires changes throughout the process. A no-code platform automates many of these cascading tasks and therefore reduces the complexity of making changes.

- **Business agility:** Whether it is a pandemic or disruptions of a smaller scale, no-code can provide organizations with a way to address events quickly.

Why Unqork?

Unqork is the first enterprise no-code platform designed for some of the world's most complex and regulated industries, including healthcare.

We are backed by some of the world's most disciplined investors, including Goldman Sachs, Capital G, and BlackRock. In just three years, our technologies have been adopted by dozens of global-leading organizations (including Goldman Sachs, Liberty Mutual, and the city of New York, just to name a notable few) with hundreds of applications in production around the world with multi-lingual, multi-currency, and local regulatory compliance.

Unqork is a completely unified enterprise SaaS platform, which means it provides all the components and capabilities related to crucial areas like **compliance** (up-to-date regulatory and enterprise rules engines for HIPAA, FATCA, CRS, UK CDOT, Dodd-Frank, EMIR, and MiFID II, etc.), **security** (native encryption both in transit and rest, custom RBAC capabilities, and crowd-sourced penetration tests), and **application management** (SDLC governance, application versioning, and module management).

All elements can be easily added to workflows and processes via an intuitive drag-and-drop interface. The application logic will always be maintained even as technologies evolve (e.g., when an updated version of a component is released)—Unqork takes care of all these changes "underneath the hood." As a result, organizations can focus all their development resources on overcoming business challenges instead of technical ones.

Virtual Government Services

As both resident expectations and demand for government services rise, previously in-person processes such as obtaining marriage licenses, benefits applications, vehicle registrations, grant applications, and many more must be virtualized while maintaining government's ability to validate information provided by residents. Virtualizing government services, however, often requires bespoke applications, complex integrations with legacy systems, and teams of expensive developers.

With Unqork, government agencies can rapidly develop and effectively manage custom resident experiences for each validation process—without writing a single line of code. Sophisticated multi-step workflows can be developed in days or weeks, instead of months or years.

Unqork's **Virtual Government Services** solution provides a unified platform that brings the entire resident journey into one seamless digital experience.

The application allows agencies to integrate configurable digital forms & service workflows; ID validation functionality; end-to-end application processing (including receipt, review, and approval), self-service appointment scheduling (including integration with government workers' calendars); and digital signatures.

Taken together, these features empower agencies to deliver services while reducing the reliance on in-person engagements and paper-based processes.

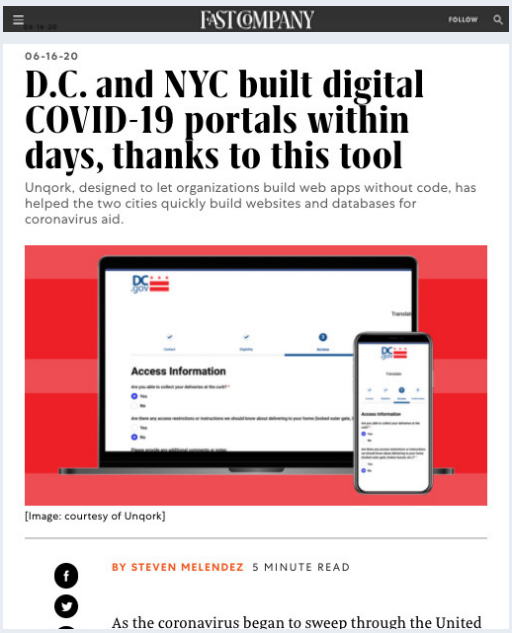
Solution Benefits

Accelerated Time-to-Market

Out-of-the-box identity validation, video conferencing, and document signature functionality that can be deployed immediately combined with the ability to customize the look and feel, intake questions, and integrations.

Custom enterprise software can take several months to go from ideation to implementation using a traditional approach, but no-code can accelerate the process to as little as a few weeks, and in some cases, a few days. The same efficiencies that make initial builds efficient can also be applied to future updates and upgrades. In a recent article in Forbes, James McGlennon, Liberty Mutual's CIO, said Unqork has proven "a minimum of three times faster and three times less expensive" than using more traditional methods to develop and maintain applications.

IN THE MEDIA



FAST COMPANY

06-16-20

D.C. and NYC built digital COVID-19 portals within days, thanks to this tool

Unqork, designed to let organizations build web apps without code, has helped the two cities quickly build websites and databases for coronavirus aid.

[Image: courtesy of Unqork]

BY STEVEN MELENDEZ 5 MINUTE READ

As the coronavirus began to sweep through the United

"Instead of relying on code, the platform for New York-based Unqork provides a drag-and-drop, flowchart-style interface to specify how forms should collect data and how back-end logic, like determining who is eligible for what kind of programs, should function. That means that people who are familiar with the ins and outs of government and corporate operations can often quickly build working digital tools themselves even if they don't have coding expertise."

— Fast Company, June 16, 2020

Public Health

By allowing residents to conduct critical business with the government from the comfort and security of their personal devices, agencies can protect residents from needlessly endangering themselves during regional disruptions (e.g., during pandemics or natural disasters). It also provides them a means to engage with services despite any individual personal or economic challenges.

Economic Recovery

When local governments invest in small businesses, they're investing in the economic wellbeing of their community. Optimized digital licensing processes make it easier for entrepreneurs to access necessary services, which can accelerate the process of getting businesses and individuals back to work.

Safety & Compliance

Paper-based tasks and manual checkpoints are easily disruptible. Unqork can help agencies become more resilient and ensure that mission-critical work can continue and the public is protected, even in unprecedented times.`

No-Code Flexibility

Unqork's no-code platform makes appending and amending solutions a simple drag-and-drop exercise. Agencies will be able to easily implement and scale updates to address evolving regulations/protocols, integrate new technologies, or meet resident demands.

Key Capabilities

Scheduler

Automate and streamline appointment scheduling by seamlessly integrating government workers' calendars with self-service scheduling hubs that are available to residents 24/7.

Workflow Optimization

Rapidly build and effectively manage dynamic multi-step workflows across numerous systems and teams in one centralized location.

Dashboard & Analytics

Bring data to life for internal stakeholders via tailored in-product dashboards that deliver comprehensive real-time visibility into their licensing pipelines, high-level KPIs, process bottlenecks, and more. Empower administrators to make iterative process improvements moving forward.

Enterprise Integrations

Seamlessly integrate any new solutions with existing legacy systems and databases as well as third-party services (e.g., payment processors, identity validation, calendars). Unqork empowers users to configure APIs visually so new systems can easily be integrated into your digital infrastructure.

E-Documentation

Automatically generate and deliver relevant personalized electronic documents to applicants directly within the application. Obtain signatures electronically and generate digital documents by integrating with popular third-party services such as DocuSign.

Video Conferencing

Incorporate seamless video conferencing into your applications to support personalized resident engagements or validate original proofs of identity.

Identity Validation

Scale the ability match user-provided information against trusted sources in real-time.

Success Story

The city of New York built a platform to virtualize its marriage license process in just 14 days.

Significant life events don't stop happening just because of social distancing. Among the many services disrupted by the pandemic, visiting the city clerk to receive a marriage license has been put to a standstill. Disrupting these legal recognitions can have a profound impact on a variety of financial, legal, and health matters. Government agencies needed to find ways to digitize critical licensing processes—of all kinds—in a way that allows them to be executed efficiently, securely, and remotely.

In mid-April of last year, NY Governor Cuomo issued an executive order allowing couples to apply for a marriage license online while also being able to receive a virtual ceremony. With the legal barriers removed, the city just needed to overcome the technical ones. Following the successes of its previous applications, the city's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) tapped the Unqork platform to help it digitize the marriage licensing process.

Project Cupid

The online marriage platform, known as Project Cupid, digitized the entire process from application to identity verification to online fee payments to license generation. Now, city residents can access the marriage license application directly from the city clerk's website. Couples can efficiently complete, upload, and submit identity verification documents; pay fees online via credit card, and schedule a video appointment with a clerk. The platform will then facilitate a 45-minute video session with a clerk who will ensure that all paperwork is in order and generate a marriage license—all without leaving the app.

Designing a hub of this complexity would have taken months using a traditional code-based methodology. Using no-code, the entire solution was designed, built, and deployed in just 14 days.

Conclusion

When it comes to delivering robust digital experiences to residents, the cost and risk of digital transformation has been too high for most local agencies. Unqork's enterprise no-code platform streamlines development and empowers agencies to rapidly build and effectively manage solutions without sacrificing quality.

Want to learn more about how Unqork can help your agency virtualize its services? Get in touch to schedule a demonstration from one of our no-code experts.