

SEIU ULTCW

SEIU United Long Term Care Workers Use Captricity to Advance Dignity Campaign for Low-Wage Workers



The Challenge

The SEIU ULTC provides healthcare options to low-wage workers in the Los Angeles region. Just before the start of school every fall, the organization hosts “Fresh Start,” an event that gives community members and their families a great start to the new school year. The event includes free backpacks for all the kids, free haircuts, face painting, health screenings and food.

The event, which has been co-sponsored by the LA Dodgers, has become a huge draw, and the union gets the word out widely over radio, through its internal call center and via ads on local television, including Univision, the Spanish-language network.

This year, the IT department decided to create a web signup form so they could get a sense of attendance and capture critical membership and community information that they needed for the campaigns and services they run.

20,616 people attended the event. Only 234 pre-registered on the web.

These somewhat startling numbers point to the realities of serving a broad community of primarily low-wage workers who often have little ready access to technology. At the same time, the SEIU was interested in devising faster and more effective ways of collecting important community data.

“We are very membership-driven, and we collect a lot of information about our members in order to serve them better,” said Yohan Ruparatne, Director of IT for the SEIU. In particular, they were interested in capturing information for their “Dignity Campaign,” which focuses on lifting up communities by increasing access to healthcare, creating good jobs and improving overall quality of life.



In many situations, paper-based forms remain the best way to collect information. This is particularly true when serving low-resource communities with unreliable access to technology.

The Solution

The IT group began by designing a simple form, asking people for basic demographic data and four additional questions that focused on employment, health insurance and whether or not they wanted information about affordable healthcare, and if they would be willing to receive a text message from the union.

Volunteers and outreach workers met every incoming bus of participants and collected the information. The forms were passed to a central, on-site location where scanners were set up to scan the forms that were sent to Captricity for processing. By the next morning, all of the data collected from 5,000 forms was ready for the organizers to use.

The ability for the eight directors working on the Dignity Campaign to have the data from a Saturday event waiting for them on Monday morning was unprecedented—and it was critical to the momentum of the campaign. “One thing that was clear to me is that paper is not a bad thing. It is the least common denominator. There are too many variables with technology solutions. With paper, you can remove all the variables. Everyone can write. Everyone has a pen,” said Rugaratne.

Why Captricity

Captricity's web-based platform enabled the SEIU to scan forms on site as they received them. The system's capacity to achieve almost perfect accuracy—even with the handwritten data—was a critical decision point. The ability to quickly and easily define the fields for extraction and perform rapid review of the results was another key decision point for the team. “My first instinct was to go paperless, but that does not work for this population. Using a paper form is not as sexy, but it works. A tool like Captricity makes a big difference,” concluded Rugaratne.

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