Integrating benefits:
A game changer for UKG® users

How HR Connect enhances the productivity of
HR teams using UKG Pro® and UKG Dimensions®

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Introduction

Picture this: You go online to your favorite hotel website to book a room for your vacation. The site takes your information and says it will let you know whether a room is available … *in a couple of weeks*.

We wouldn't accept that lag time from a hotel site, but that's pretty much the situation HR departments have faced when dealing with employee benefit companies.

Throughout the employee benefits and leave administration process, the exchange of information between employers and insurance companies provides nothing like the instant, accurate results we are used to everywhere else, here in the digital age. But that's just begun to change.

Long in use in other industries, **application programming interface (API) technology** promises to do for the insurance business what it's done for other sectors of the economy. Unum HR Connect, a first-in-the-industry API connection, integrates leave and absence administration with an employer's UKG Pro® and/or UKG Dimensions® systems, for quick, easy, seamless and secure information exchange.

Unlike other APIs, Unum's integrations offer ease and accuracy through every level of benefits administration to go beyond simple syncing and provide a higher level of benefits automation.

Today, when employers use HR Connect to integrate their Unum services into their UKG system, the result is a game-changing experience for HR leaders and staff.

Not only does it mean time savings and productivity increases in such areas as **leave management**, **evidence of insurability** (EOI) and **billing**, it helps companies make the most of their UKG investment.

How did we get here?

A short history of benefits administration and technology

The digital revolution of the 1980s and 1990s made everything easier, including benefits administration. Goodbye paper documents, mail and fax — hello, digital document storage and email. From that time until now, many industries have reaped the benefits of ever-changing and improving digital technology to make operations faster, better and more efficient.

But the benefits and leave-management industry has lagged behind. Many insurers still rely on manual paper processes, causing headaches for HR teams. For those that have implemented technology solutions, many are outdated, such as electronic data interchange (EDI) files. EDIs are basically electronic spreadsheets that customers fill out and send to their insurance carrier or leave management service providers with information that influences who is covered, how much premium is owed and how absences are tracked and managed (see graphic, "HR Connect: The missing link" on page 4). This legacy technology has major advantages over paper processing, but still has two main drawbacks:

1. The files require a lot of **redundant**, **error-prone**, **manual data entry** when transferring information from one system into another.

2. There is still a **big time lag**, meaning changes do not take place in real time, with many time-consuming repercussions.

Meanwhile, other industries were moving forward with API-enabled communication. Instead of sending data from one organization to another for entry into both of their systems, **APIs enabled the two systems to actually connect**, so that changes made in one system or data set could be automatically and immediately reflected in a corresponding system or data set. It sounds simple, but it actually requires enormous investments of time and money to write the code that allows complex systems to talk to each other securely in real time.

Giant tech companies like Google and Salesforce now use APIs to deliver faster, easier experiences for their customers. With HR Connect, Unum has become the first carrier selling ancillary benefits, like disability, life and supplemental health, to provide an API connection for UKG Pro and UKG Dimensions customers.

> **Unum's HR Connect API technology is helping UKG Pro and UKG Dimensions users save time, reduce administrative headaches and work more efficiently. It's changing the way benefits get done.**

HR Connect: the missing link

HR Connect is a suite of API-enabled connections that transfer information between Unum and UKG users easily and in real time.

Employer's UKG Pro and UKG Dimensions systems

Employee information

- Address/contact information/age
- Class or group
- Pay
- Hiring date
- Dependents
- Coverage elections

Changes during the billing month

- New employees
- Newly covered employees
- Terminated employees
- Dependent changes
- Salary/class changes

- Employee address/contact information changes
- Coverage adds or drops

HR Connect

- Automatically sends **leave and absence** data to employers' UKG Dimensions system and populates pay code on time card

- Automatically requests **evidence of insurability** from employees when needed and provides quick coverage decisions, doing away with paper forms and long wait times, then sends to employer's UKG Pro system

- Automates today's manual **billing process** — removing the need to pull reports from UKG Pro and reconcile bills every month

Unum's benefits platform

Leave and absence

- Leave requests
- Leave approvals
- Leave extensions
- Actual return-to-work dates

Evidence of insurability

- Online EOI applications
- Immediate coverage decisions

Billing

- Monthly premium based on employees covered
- Billing history, including payments and adjustments

Leave and absence management

HR Connect eliminates manual data entry for leaves and absences, so timekeeping and payroll are always in sync

The old world: Manual data entry for multiple employees and process points

When an employer decides to outsource leave administration to an insurance carrier, the carrier typically handles the complex process of intake, eligibility determination, compliance and approval of an employee's leave request — all of which must be in accordance with federal regulations and state laws, as well as company policies.

Employees typically interact with the carrier, which then relays to the employer information about who's on leave, why they're on leave, and when their leave will end.

Before APIs, information was normally conveyed to the employer through emails and periodic reports. This process typically resulted in vast amounts of manual data entry for HR. HR would need to go into its system and make an entry every time an employee requested leave, every time leave went into approved status, every time a return-to-work date was set, every time that date changed, and then when the leave was actually over and the employee returned to work.

The lack of a systematic process left the door open for errors. And when you consider that a larger organization can have dozens or even hundreds of employees on leave at any given time, the magnitude of the effort becomes clear.

Some organizations used EDI files as a way to partially automate the process. Yet setting up one of these files was expensive and the updates were generally at least a day old by the time the employer received the file from the carrier. Without the ability to analyze the organization's employee-absence status in real time, everything became more difficult, from planning for staffing to budgeting for payroll.

> **When an organization has dozens or even hundreds of employees, managing leave and absence manually leaves the door open for errors.**

Staying compliant with today's state leave programs and FMLA regulations can be complicated. Unum has the experience, technology, and services to give you the answers you're looking for—so you can meet your responsibilities and support your employees.

Download Guide

HR Connect: Automatic updates and payroll sync

HR Connect automates the leave/absence process to eliminate manual effort, facilitate employee scheduling and ensure accurate payroll. Here's how the process works when Unum is the leave and absence administrator for an employer using UKG Dimensions:

1. An employee notifies Unum that they are requesting leave. Maybe they're having a baby and will be out on maternity leave. Maybe they're going out on disability leave due to an injury. Notification is entered into Unum's system and is instantly reflected in the employer's UKG Dimensions Leave Module. HR can see when leave is requested, pending and approved, so managers can plan for staffing changes.

2. Unum applies the company's leave policies and applicable laws to review the leave request. It decides whether the request is approved or denied. This decision is entered into Unum's system, and UKG Dimensions gets the news immediately. The decision also comes with an estimated length of time the employee will be away from work.

3. The employee goes on leave. After the employee confirms their leave date, it is automatically updated in the UKG Dimensions Leave Module. As a result, the work schedule shows that the employee is on leave, so alternative staffing arrangements can be made. And the employee's time card shows the correct hours worked during the pay period, so payroll is accurate with no need to go back and reconcile later.

4. Over time, the estimated length of leave can change. Maybe the baby's due date turns out to be later than first thought. Maybe a seriously ill employee is not recovering as quickly as predicted. Unum is constantly in contact with the employee and learns of these changes promptly. The new information is entered into Unum's system and reflected in the employer's UKG Dimensions system in real time.

5. The employee's leave is over and the employee comes back to work. This information is automatically recorded in UKG Dimensions, so the schedule shows the employee is available and pay can be resumed.

6. Throughout this process, the employer has a clear view of every employee's current leave status, without the burden of continual manual updating. If the employee is taking intermittent leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), HR Connect can play a valuable coordination role by indicating the approved time frame for intermittent leave.
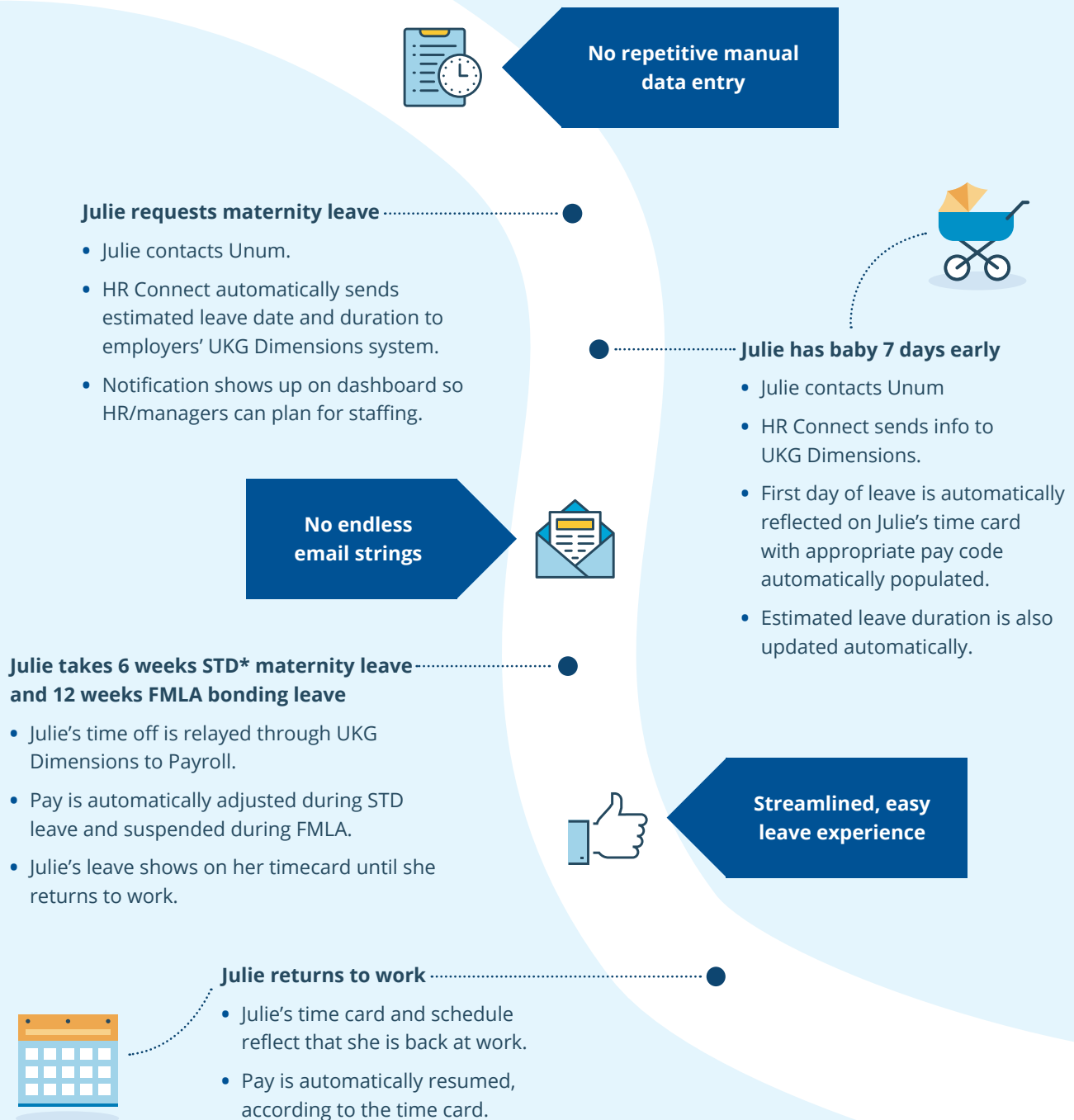
Some customers find that HR Connect cuts time spent managing absences by as much as 80%
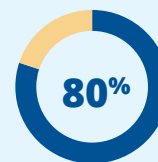
Source: Unum internal data, 2023.

Scheduling and payroll made easy with HR Connect and UKG Dimensions

Julie's absence

No repetitive manual data entry

Julie requests maternity leave
- Julie contacts Unum.
- HR Connect automatically sends estimated leave date and duration to employers' UKG Dimensions system.
- Notification shows up on dashboard so HR/managers can plan for staffing.

Julie has baby 7 days early
- Julie contacts Unum
- HR Connect sends info to UKG Dimensions.
- First day of leave is automatically reflected on Julie's time card with appropriate pay code automatically populated.
- Estimated leave duration is also updated automatically.

No endless email strings

Julie takes 6 weeks STD* maternity leave and 12 weeks FMLA bonding leave
- Julie's time off is relayed through UKG Dimensions to Payroll.
- Pay is automatically adjusted during STD leave and suspended during FMLA.
- Julie's leave shows on her timecard until she returns to work.

Streamlined, easy leave experience

Julie returns to work
- Julie's time card and schedule reflect that she is back at work.
- Pay is automatically resumed, according to the time card.

Evidence of insurability

Unum HR Connect takes this once burdensome task off the HR department's plate

The old world: Chasing paper and playing the waiting game

For many benefits, like life insurance and critical illness coverage, employees can apply for a standard coverage amount without having to answer health questions. But if they want to apply for more coverage — an extra $50,000 life insurance benefit, for example — they may need to provide health information, also known as evidence of insurability (EOI).

This step in the application process can be onerous for HR professionals. Even today, it can involve determining who needs to provide EOI, passing out paper forms, checking to see who's returned the paper form, reminding applicants to return their forms, repeating the checking/reminding steps a few times, sending the paper forms to the insurance carrier and then waiting weeks or even months to hear whether employees were approved.

Clearly, this can turn into a time sink for HR, especially in large companies with a lot of employees needing to provide EOI. The delay in receiving paper forms coupled with the inconvenience of filling out and returning them also deters many employees from following through with their applications and getting the coverage they want.

Finally, since premiums depend on the amount of requested coverage, not knowing who has been approved for what level of coverage — and for what effective date — makes it difficult for HR to keep enrollment data, payroll and billing up to date and in sync with the carrier's records.

HR Connect: A quick, easy process that HR doesn't have to oversee

HR Connect keeps HR from being the EOI middleman. When an employee requests EOI-level coverage, HR Connect automatically recognizes the need for answers to health questions. Employees are notified in UKG Pro that they need to provide EOI, and then complete their applications online, without ever having to deal with a paper form. Since Unum's benefits are integrated into the UKG Pro system, the employee only needs to answer the medical questions, without having to fill in repetitive information, like name, address or coverage requested.

With HR Connect, most applicants will receive immediate approval or denial decisions. And those decisions are then automatically communicated to UKG Pro, keeping everything in sync for payroll, billing and claims. The ease and immediacy of the process help employees finish their applications, so they can receive the coverage levels they want.

> **With HR Connect, most applicants get immediate EOI decisions.**

Billing

HR Connect helps eliminate errors and ensure accuracy, while including more information in billing details

The old world: Time lag and frustration

In the best of situations, EDI files are sent to the carrier once a week (often they are sent monthly or biweekly). It's HR's responsibility to go into their system, extract the necessary information and enter it into the necessary places. These files are used to create the company's bill.

But think of what can happen in just one week. New employees can be hired. Employees can leave the company. Babies can be born. Adult children can age out of coverage. People can decide to drop coverage, or add it if they have qualifying life events, like the loss of a spouse's coverage.

The carrier uses its most current information to create that month's bill. But since the information is typically out of date, the bill will not be accurate. Bills are often mailed, making them even more out of date when they arrive.

To keep the company's accounting precise, HR must reconcile the bill with up-to-date information from its own system, costing the department hours of valuable time. Pretty much every month.

HR Connect eliminates up to 90% of common errors that can occur without automation

90%
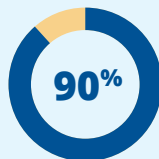
Source: Unum internal data, 2023.

HR Connect: A vastly improved experience

HR Connect's API-enabled connections do away with this critical lag time.

With HR Connect, pulling enrollment reports out of UKG Pro is a thing of the past. Instead, data is gathered directly from UKG Pro.

No more errors, no more reconciling — employers just review their bill and quickly pay online, the same as with any other transaction in the digital age.

In addition, HR Connect makes it easier for customers to filter and view bills in ways that work for them, and to see billing and payment history — important for accounting.

Integrating EOI really pays off when it comes to billing and invoices:

- Coverage is immediately confirmed for most employees through our EOI portal and reflected in both the carrier's and the employer's systems.
- Premium deductions are accurate, both for individuals and for the company as a whole.
- When the first bill comes, the errors that previously had to be discovered, discussed and corrected never happen in the first place. In fact, HR Connect eliminates up to 90% of common errors that can occur without it.[1]
- HR saves hours of time, effort and frustration — and the department can focus on more important things.

Conclusion

Consider your UKG investment— and Your costs

Employers have invested tens of thousands of dollars in their UKG systems for one simple reason: to make it easier to run their business, now and as they meet the challenges of the future. Integrating benefits with UKG Pro and Dimensions and streamlining key benefits administration processes is another way to help make that investment pay off.

Ancillary benefits are a relatively small part of an HR person's responsibilities. But when outdated or even manual procedures are in use, it can take up a disproportionate amount of that person's time.

To understand the potential gains from HR Connect, do a productivity audit. How much time and what amount of resources are being spent on managing absences, chasing EOI forms and reconciling bills in your organization?

Understand where you are today. That way, you can convince leadership when you need to switch to a benefits provider that can change the way your benefits get done.

> Security is our top priority. We use industry-leading security and data-management practices, so your private, confidential information stays safe and secure.

About Unum

At Unum, we help the working world thrive throughout life's moments. We help millions of people gain affordable access to disability, life, accident, critical illness, dental and vision benefits through the workplace — benefits that help them protect their families, their finances and their futures.

About HR Connect

HR Connect by Unum is an API-enabled connection that directly integrates benefits administration into your UKG Pro and/or Dimensions system, eliminating common errors and saving HR professionals hours of valuable time every month.

By replacing manual, file-driven processes with automated, real-time information sharing, HR Connect simplifies administration and delivers a better benefits experience.

Get a free demo of HR Connect for UKG Pro and UKG Dimensions today

Better benefits at work.™

unum.com