

THE RIGHT PARTNERS

The right partners can help manage costs.

Though the partners are geographically distant, the partnership between Unitrin Direct and Trumbull relies on close interaction. Trumbull, based in Connecticut, provides a specialized service referred to as subrogation for Unitrin Direct. Brian Crumbaker, Unitrin Direct Senior Vice President, based in California, explains this specialized service:

"When our policy holders have accidents that are not their fault, they still turn to Unitrin Direct as their insurer. Unitrin Direct settles their claims and then we 'subrogate' against, or seek recovery from, the responsible parties. By handling it this way, Unitrin Direct provides service and peace of mind for our customers. In many cases the actual process of recovering the money back from the responsible party takes a different skill set than claims adjusters have. Claims adjusters are used to the settlement process, which is different than subrogation recovery process which requires an understanding of a different set of laws."

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~ Kay Womble, Trumbull

Crumbaker continues, "We could have developed our own associates to do subrogation recovery in-house, but, given the scale of Unitrin Direct, we felt we should look for a partnership with someone who specializes in this practice. Ideally, the right partnership would allow us to take advantage of a better subrogation recovery process, while giving ourselves flexibility for growth. We have achieved this balance through our partnership, which allows us to focus on our business and Trumbull to remain focused on subrogation recovery."

"In all our interaction, we figure out how to make it worthwhile for both parties. For the subrogation recovery, we've agreed on what is an appropriate cost and built in an incentive," says Crumbaker.

Kay Womble, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Trumbull, concurs. "When we constructed the agreement, we built incentives into the contract. We wanted to build a relationship that went beyond the normal vendor relationship, to drive results and set the bar for continuous improvement."

Womble indicates that geographical distance has not been a hindrance. Trumbull staff had to build the interface onsite at Unitrin Direct, but once that was complete, most of the work is performed remotely. "Everything processes electronically," she says. "Technology allows us to understand who is the best person to handle a type of file. The system meters results and once we see who is getting the best results for a particular type of situation, we can assign the files to that person. We can also apply what they are doing as best practices across the team."

Womble says that the partnership with Unitrin Direct makes good business sense for Trumbull. "Any time you have a good relationship like this and positive results, it always impacts what you can do in the marketplace."