USDR Unemployment Insurance Employer Experience Interview Guide

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Goals

- Learn about how employers or their TSAs (third party administrators) interact with the Unemployment Insurance system, and their needs as a business in interacting with this system as well as supporting business goals.
- Understand employers' level of knowledge around how their actions affect UI claims or payments, and what impact they aim for.
- Understand if and how hiring and firing strategy is impacted by the UI system.
- Get a sense for employers' knowledge of STC (short-time compensation) aka work-sharing, and why they do or don't consider this an alternative to firing employees.

Intro

Hi [interviewee name], thanks so much for speaking with me today. I'm _____, working with US Digital Response which is a pro-bono group that helps governments establish and improve their digital services to support public need.

My team is working on improving the Unemployment Insurance system, and right now is focusing on the employer side of this system and looking at where there is a need to better support businesses and the work that employers have to do within the UI system. We really don't know a lot about this area yet, because it's gone pretty much unstudied and is different in every state, so many of the questions we ask might seem very basic, as we try to gain a foundational understanding of what employers and HR administrators go through when they interact with the Unemployment Insurance system. Our current goal is to create a sort of humans-of-UI style article featuring common experiences, and primarily a best practices guide that advises states on what to do and not do to support employers as well as those filing UI claims.

Do you have any questions so far? [clarify things if needed]
Great! First of all, I want to ask if it's okay to record this interview for internal use only, so we can refer back to it as needed.

Basics

1. Can you tell me about your role and company? **How long you've been there**, basics of your job, etc? (Company size, who manages HR stuff, how big is the HR team, location, industry)

2. Is your business reimbursable or a taxed employer?

3. Can tell me a bit about how you and your company interact with the UI system and what your part to play is in dealing with any part of that from taxes to claims to business strategy around hiring and firing? (If they use TPAs, learn about how that relationship works, what communication happens or how decisions are made.)

4. Can you walk me through the steps of [any UI processes they engage in]?

- Is UI dealt with internally or through a TPA?
- How much does management understand how UI affects the business/does hiring and firing strategy take UI into account; how closely does to HR/TPA person work with management to make decisions?
- Does the business have a sense for how their actions affect UI or claimants? Tell me about how business process affect UI or affect former employees.
- How do they feel about UI and claims filed?
- Walk me through any UI processes you have to do
- Do you have any processes in place for when employees leave the company, such as exit interviews or paperwork you send to them? What information is discussed/included?
- In more detail, can you show and tell me how you learn about UI claims filed and respond to them?
    - Painpoints? Things that worked well?
    - Does this work well for one or two people at a time? Would it work well for a larger round of layoffs?
    - How does this system integrate, or not, with other wage reporting you have to do?
    - How do you interact with the state department to respond to claims?
    - Have you experienced changes in the system? What were they, and how did they impact this work? (better or worse than before?)
    - What system(s) do you use to file UI taxes? Is this the system you use to receive or respond to claims? Is this the system you use to do other necessary reporting?
    - Are there multiple people interacting with UI work?
    - Do you use any supporting software to deal with claims or UI taxes, such as spreadsheets or accounting programs or a certain file program? Did you have to create this system just for UI? How did you develop and establish these systems/processes—trial and error, or advice from other employers/TPA, or advice from the state?

- Where have you gotten resources on how to do UI tasks and on the rules you have to follow?
- (if in a state with STC) Have you heard about work-sharing or partial unemployment or short-time compensation (STC)? Can you tell me what you know about this, and any discussions or decisions your company has made around it? (if TPA, how they talk about this possibility with clients)
    - Have you ever considered or tried STC?
    - Are there reasons you have or haven't done STC, or that you would or wouldn't do it instead of laying people off?
    - (If you've done it) Can you walk me through this process, broadly?

5. What % of claims are challenged, how they pick the challenges, and "win rate" of those challenges? Do they try to reject all claims or find "at fault" reasons to fire people?
6. Do they ever encounter data issues of incorrect names or date of birth?
7. Have you experienced any UI fraud? (even if not) is this something that you try to keep an eye out for or have any procedures around? (If so) how do you mark that a claim is fraudulent?
8. What kinds of fraud do you think you might encounter? What resources do you feel you have to prevent UI fraud? Whose responsibility is it to prevent UI fraud?
9. What part of the system would you change if you could wave a magic wand? (Or: what takes the most time? What part takes the most money? What part is the most error-prone or inconvenient?)

- Is there useful friction in the system? Harmful friction? Lack of friction that would be good? (Accepting all claims during covid with no oversight)

How has it changed with covid?

how do you check info is correct?