

A MAGAZINE FOR AIRLINE EXECUTIVES

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CEO, Virgin Blue

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An Integrated Operations Control Center Helps Propel WestJet

■ By Elayne Vick | Ascend Contributor

WestJet has come a long way in a short time. With its rapid expansion and 24 consecutive quarters of profitability, even during an industry downturn, the Canada-based low-fare carrier has proven to be one of the industry's top performers during the last few years.

“A key contributor to WestJet's performance has been its integrated operations control center . . .”

Since its founding in 1996, WestJet has grown to become the second largest carrier in Canada and the most successful low-fare carrier in the country's history. In 2000, WestJet was the second most profitable airline in North America, just after Southwest Airlines.

Like Southwest, Calgary-based WestJet uses a single fleet type of Boeing 737 aircraft. Founded with the idea of providing low-fare travel across western Canada, WestJet initially served five markets with its original three Boeing 737-200s. Since then, WestJet has continued to expand throughout the country, now serving 26 markets including an eastern hub in Hamilton, Ontario.

WestJet reached a milestone in 1999 when it completed its initial public offering of 2.5 million common shares of stock, providing the necessary capital for the expansion of the company. In its seven years, the airline has grown its fleet by more than 1,000 percent to 37 aircraft and currently plans to add up to

77 additional next-generation Boeing 737 aircraft while it retires its fleet of 21 737-200 aircraft.

A key contributor to WestJet's performance has been its integrated operations control center, which has helped the airline maximize its operations efficiency and user productivity.

By unifying its operations functions, WestJet has achieved key goals including:

- Maintaining on-time flight operations in a safe and efficient environment,
- Minimizing ground time through more efficient flight planning and improved aircraft movement control and monitoring,

through increased flight cycles.

With a staff of 60 — including dispatchers, crew schedulers, load planners and operations coordinators — WestJet's OCC brings together vital components needed to form the central nervous system of the airline.

By bringing the various operations areas together, WestJet maximizes its ability to run smoothly, a goal of any airline. Analysts in the OCC are able to have a full view of the airline's overall operations rather than being limited to their individual areas of responsibility, enabling them to be more proactive in problem solving.



WestJet, the most successful low-fare carrier in Canadian history, has maximized its efficiency and user productivity by unifying its operations functions into an integrated OCC.

- Controlling costs through reduced fuel consumption,
- Improving personnel productivity,
- Enhancing aircraft productivity

Technology plays a major role in unifying the OCC.

WestJet selected components of the Sabre® Flight Control suite for small,



medium and low-cost airlines to provide the integrated tools — including Sabre® AirOps™ Flight Planning and the Sabre® FliteTrac operations control and flight following system — that help bind the OCC together.

“We use Sabre Airline Solutions systems to increase our operations coordination, improve our flight planning and more effectively communicate with airports and aircraft,” said Michele Derry, director, operations control for WestJet. “Our operations team uses Flight Planning and the FliteTrac system extensively.

The combination of these two products has been an excellent tool for our OCC.

“Flight Planning is a major component of our dispatch system, enabling optimization of flight planning by utilizing cost index planning, fuel tankering and analysis, and contingency planning,” Derry said.

All cities served domestically by the airline have access to the FliteTrac system via Citrix, which enables employees at varying locations to view data in the FliteTrac system. ACARS communicates directly with the FliteTrac system to populate times, fuel, aircraft parameters and any other pertinent data. This data can also be entered directly into the FliteTrac system.



In addition to these flight operations products, WestJet takes advantage of Sabre Airline Solutions expertise in maintenance and crew management. By providing minimum equipment lists and configuration deviation lists information on the flight release, the maintenance

control module of the FliteTrac system can help determine the restrictions that must be applied to particular aircraft for dispatch. For enhanced crew management, WestJet uses other components of the Flight Control suite: the Sabre® CrewTrac® crew scheduling system tracks crew assignments while the Sabre® CrewQual® crew qualifications and training records system helps

satisfy the regulatory requirements for maintaining the training records of various airline personnel.

With its past successes, WestJet has laid a strong foundation for continued prosperity. Through its proactive use of technology, the airline is poised to continue its outstanding record. ■

Elayne Vick is a marketing advisor at Sabre Airline Solutions.

Introducing the Sabre Flight Control Suite

Low-cost as well as small- and medium-size airlines have unique needs that often times require specific, tailored affordable tools that provide the right functionality without unneeded extras.

Like WestJet, many of these carriers utilize a special suite of tools — the Sabre® Flight Control suite for small, medium and low-cost airlines. In the past few years, Sabre Airline Solutions has targeted airlines of all sizes, refining function-rich systems to address a smaller market demanding a leaner, more affordable PC-based

solutions. Many of the products in the suite were added when the company acquired David R. Bornemann Associates, a small privately held firm specializing in aviation software products since 1978.

Now integrated into the Sabre Airlines Solutions portfolio, these products are used by more than 70 airlines around the world, providing quickly installed “off-the-shelf” flight operations and crew products.

The Flight Control suite includes:

- Sabre® CrewPlan® flight crew planning system,
- Sabre® CrewTrac® crew scheduling system,
- Sabre® CrewQual® crew qualifications and training records system,
- Sabre® FliteTrac operations control and flight following system,
- Sabre® AirOps™ Flight Planning,
- Sabre® AirOps™ Load Planning.

For more information on this product suite, please call 480 948 1955 or send an e-mail message to david.bornemann@sabre.com.