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Taking your airline to new heights



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Checking In

New check-in technology using a single, robust platform enables airlines around the world to manage end-to-end check-in and departure control operations with precision and ease.

■ By Mavis Borg Conti | *Ascend* Contributor

During the first 50 years of scheduled passenger travel, the airline industry was slow to evolve; however, technology and a need to be more efficient and economical quickly took over.

Advances in self-service solutions, such as online bookings and Web, kiosk and mobile check-in, have been an explosive force in the travel industry. These advances have caused airlines to build highly desirable self-service tools while reaping the rewards of lower employee costs. The impact of the global recession compelled airlines to find new and innovative ways to generate revenue, at which time ancillary services, such as baggage charges and seat fees, became a necessity for new revenue streams.

All these advances led to a pioneering decision by *Sabre Airline Solutions*® to invent a new check-in system.

For many years, *Sabre Airline Solutions* supported two airline check-in systems — *SabreSonic*® Check-in on the ACS platform and *SabreSonic* Check-in on the ACSI platform. The two systems traditionally targeted different global markets — ACS has been widely used by airlines in the Americas, whereas ACSI was designed for international carriers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa as well as Asia/Pacific.

Sabre Airline Solutions has made a multi-million dollar investment to merge the best of both check-in systems to create a single, robust system. With this investment, *SabreSonic* Check-in paves the way to service all airlines worldwide, from the small, niche, boutique carrier to the mega-international airline.

The upgrade of the *Sabre Airline Solutions* departure control system incorporates both *SabreSonic* Check-in and *Sabre*® *AirCentre*™ *Load Manager*, making this an industry-leading airport and passenger processing solution.

The advanced *SabreSonic* Check-in simplifies and improves product management, development and delivery practices. It supports foundational check-in, boarding and load control functions; offers enhanced passenger recognition and service; and promotes operational efficiency.

The flexible, configurable technology promotes increased revenue-generating opportunities as well as ensures operational integrity, delivering industry and security-compliant applications on the most reliable, stable platform.

The *SabreSonic* departure control system is truly groundbreaking in terms of its graphical user interface, its ability to handle large volumes of passengers and aircraft schedules, and its unique ground-handling capabilities. New features within the upgraded solution include:

- Complete integration with reservations, ticketing, inventory and customer profiles;
- A single unique seat map with an easy-to-use graphical user interface for reservations, check-in and load control;
- One source of data for all flight schedules;
- Real-time updates to PNR and inventory;
- New seating features, such as tier-preferred seating, zone boarding and adjacent seat blocks;
- Intuitive GUI that guides check-in agents through workflows and reduces training costs;
- Merchandising functionality based on business rules that enables airlines to collect fees, such as baggage and standby, as well as delivery of fare families and bundled services;
- Self-service processing tools such as Web check-in, self-service kiosks and mobile check-in using both SMS and browser-based check-in;
- Airport tools including a check-in PDA device with a mini boarding pass printer for roving agents and a dynamic boarding application integrated with the check-in system for gate agents;
- Improved data sharing across all customer touchpoints.

With government mandates and more advanced technology on the rise, *Sabre Airline Solutions* programmers and developers are freed to concentrate on a single best-of-breed check-in system, thus avoiding unnecessary replication that previously took place with two systems and bringing enhancements to all airlines in a shortened timeframe.

Development of the new check-in system began in November 2008 after receiving feedback from airlines about precise functional requirements necessary for running their day-to-day operations. Via survey of all ACSI customers, a priority of project enhancements was determined.

For example, gender and mandatory bag weight were considered imperative for all ACSI customers and were among the first enhancements to be developed in the new check-in solution. Workshops were held in Bangkok, Moscow and London to help define requirements and form development and customer support plans.

Since then, programmers, designers and developers have worked hand in hand to ensure all necessary features of the two current systems have been combined to suit a niche carrier, such as *Bearskin Airlines*, a launch customer for the new check-in system that implemented the solution in July (see related article on page 6).

“Since we first learned that we were a launch customer for the project, we

have been impressed by the potential of improving our agents' productivity and customer service at all our locations," said Dave McCarthy, project coordinator and training manager for Bearskin Airlines. "Throughout the project, we have received great support from the Sabre Airline Solutions team. The Interactive Pilot phase provided excellent product instruction and super supporting documentation in training our folks for this conversion. We were also successful with our testing of the product. We've been more than ready to make the conversion happen and be on the new platform."

The SabreSonic Check-in upgrade project comprised teams from Sabre Airline Solutions marketing, training, development and delivery. Experts from around the world, including Dallas, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; London; Malta; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Bangalore, India; worked directly with airlines to ensure the new check-in solution was designed with every region and culture, as well as government regulations, in mind.

"I am keenly aware of the importance of this project and the effort involved for our partner carriers to be successful," said Karen Davis, project manager for the SabreSonic Check-in upgrade initiative. "The check-in system is the heart of an airline's operation, and our goal is to partner with each airline worldwide to achieve a smooth conversion and transition to the new platform."

Carriers on the ACSI platform will migrate from their existing check-in system to the upgraded SabreSonic Check-in. Current customers seamlessly benefit from the upgrades. Migration is being carried out in four stages, depending on the complexity of each airline's individual requirements as well as the availability of carrier-critical features. Carriers will also need to convey their readiness for the migration in terms of training and delivery resources. All migrations are expected to be completed by the end of 2012.

The SabreSonic Check-In departure control system meets and exceeds the standards required with its core TPF-based solution and open-systems interface that provides unsurpassed reliability and availability for all airlines that use the technology.

A user community of more than 60 airlines make the new SabreSonic Check-in the world's largest by volume of passengers boarded. **F**

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