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Taking your airline to new heights

## LEAPS AND BOUNDS

*A Conversation With Pham Ngoc Minh, President and Chief Executive Officer, Vietnam Airlines, Pg 18.*



### Special Section



**Record Aircraft Orders**

38

10	American Airlines' fuel program saves more than US\$200 million a year
31	Integrated systems significantly enhance revenue
72	Caribbean Nations rely on air transportation

# Customer-Centricity Challenge

*When protecting your airline's most valuable asset — customers — it's critical to step back and look at your operation through the eyes of a traveler to ensure your airline remains aligned with customers' needs and expectations.*

■ By Ascend Staff

**S**urely, you, an airline executive, deserve a vacation every once in a while. It's your turn to take a breather, sit back, reflect and relax. However, if you lean toward being the stereotypical executive, it just isn't in your makeup to turn off your work. If you fall into that category, then why not take the customer-centricity challenge? What a perfect opportunity to exchange your airline executive hat for the very ordinary customer hat and, of course, sunglasses.

To be prepared for the customer-centricity challenge, you'll want to reacquaint yourself with the airline customer:

- Who are your customers? The best way to understand your customers is to check the customer data repository.
- How many of your customers are current loyalty members?
- What percentage of customers are actually redeeming loyalty miles/points for travel?
- How are the miles/points sourced? By travel or credit card purchases?
- How many customers have preferred car and hotel vendors? Of those customers who have provided preferred vendors, how many have provided associated loyalty programs?
- How many customers have provided service preferences when traveling on your airline?
- How does your airline compute customer value today? Glance at the number of customers your data repository contains and where they fall using customer value as the differentiator.
- What is the current buying pattern for each customer type? Are purchases on

the incline, in steady state compared to this time last year, in a decline or most concerning, have customers disappeared from the radar completely?

- List the airline attributes that provide value according to the customer.
- How many customers have valid e-mail addresses and have indicated that they would like to hear from you?
- Are your marketing campaigns and surveys customer centric? Are they provid-

ing value to the customer and to your airline?

Equipped with in-depth knowledge of your airline's various customer segments and their associated attributes, buying behaviors, customer value algorithms, campaign effectiveness and an understanding of your customer's perspective of real value, you are ready for the vacation hat and sunglasses. Challenge yourself to keep your real job on the shelf and experience your airline through the customer's eyes.



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**To ensure an airline is completely aligned with its customers' needs and expectations, airline executives should periodically step back and take a look at the overall operation from the customers' perspective.**



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**Logging your expectations prior to a trip and tracking your own encounter is an effective way to determine the type of experience your customers can expect from your airline.**

Journal your expectations prior to your trip and then track your unique travel events and your own customer experience. Chances are good that you will have an average customer experience, but pay close attention as your experience evolves, and try to determine if what you are experiencing has any weight on your loyalty to the airline. What is the probability of retaining you as a customer?

Knowing and understanding your customer is simple when utilizing the SabreSonic® Customer Sales & Service solution's fully integrated customer-centric portfolio. (see related article on page 50). This advanced technology provides the capability to identify and recognize your customers, collect and distribute customer information for operational decisions, and provide a holistic view of your customers to aid your airline in fulfilling its customer promises.

The Customer Insight option within SabreSonic® Res, the industry's first true operational customer profile, provides a continuous flow of passenger information throughout your airline's disparate operational systems. Customer Insight, accessible through Web services, stores complete customer information, including destinations, service and seat preferences as well as historical customer experience data. This information, along with an actionable customer value score is available at all customer service points, enabling customer-facing staff and automated passenger processes to better serve and understand customers as well as respond to service experiences. This customer-centric approach enables


your airline to shift focus from merely processing passengers to providing travelers with personalized customer service throughout their journey.

The Customer Data Delivery option offers detailed travel pattern information through passenger trip data. The data includes advance booking information on all active trip records created by your airline, travel distributors and other airlines, delivering only the data elements relevant to your airline's business needs and at a frequency determined by your airline. The customized delivery of travel patterns and behavior information can be used to improve customer service, optimize revenues and provide the foundation for additional marketing opportunities.

The Sabre® Traveler Loyalty System presents a scalable frequent flyer program that tracks frequent flyer accounts, manages bonuses and awards, offers promotional capabilities, and provides reports for marketing analysis. The system gives the precise level of service, security and convenience your passengers expect while offering opportunities to reduce costs associated with servicing loyalty program members.

Sabre® Customer Experience Manager, an integral customer management solution, provides the means to continuously monitor customer interactions. Customer feedback is directly routed to those accountable, enabling your airline to

rapidly resolve issues, make improvements and assure overall quality of products and services. Customer Experience Manager improves customer satisfaction, increases customer loyalty and retention, and ultimately enhances and sustains revenue.

Clearly, your customers are your most valuable asset. Gathering every possible bit of data about your customers and understanding how to effectively use it to enhance their end-to-end travel experience is one of the simplest ways to differentiate your products and services from your competitors and reap the benefits of obtaining and maintaining a loyal customer following. So sit back, enjoy your vacation and know your airline is in good hands with the most valuable, integrated technology in the industry. 

**For additional information about SabreSonic Customer Sales & Service solutions, please contact John Winstead, SabreSonic® Res product director for Sabre Airline Solutions at [john.winstead@sabre.com](mailto:john.winstead@sabre.com).**



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**Carriers that don't take the necessary steps to see their operations through the eyes of travelers are less likely to meet customer expectations and achieve a loyal customer following.**