

A MAGAZINE FOR AIRLINE EXECUTIVES

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A Conversation with ...

Brett Godfrey,
CEO, Virgin Blue

INSIDE

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Getting Its Money's Worth

ATA Hones in on Key Ways to Get the Most for Its Investments

■ By Steve Hodges | Ascend Contributor

In an environment where every dollar is crucial, ATA Airlines strives to incorporate better business processes into its operations in order to get the most return on its investment. The airline, which continues to push the frontiers of technology, recognizes the benefits of technological advancements to facilitate these initiatives and the need to remain at the forefront of the industry in order to compete effectively.

collection and business processing solutions — where change would make a significant financial difference.

Considering the strict time restraints ticketing and gate personnel are under to service customers quickly and efficiently, passengers owing additional money for change fees may be overlooked during check in, resulting in a substantial loss of revenue. ATA realized it could take advantage of an opportunity

Sabre ACS™ airport check-in system, ATA improved its collections by more than 15 percent, and it's improving steadily.

Through this option, a change fee alert is automatically displayed for passengers owing additional monies. The alert, which is automatically populated with the change fee information contained in the passenger name record, is lifted once the fee has been collected. For passengers already holding a boarding pass, a gate reader will not accept the boarding pass if additional monies are due. Check-in cannot be completed until the change fee has been collected or waived for special circumstances. In addition, passengers standing by for alternative flights owing fees cannot be placed on the standby list until the fee has been received. Fees that are waived or overridden are reported for analysis by management.

"A policy is only as good as its enforcement and tracking of exceptions, and the *Automated Change Fee Collection* option guarantees that we don't leave money on the table, alienate our customers who have special circumstances or put an added burden on our customer service personnel," Baker said. "That's honestly different!"

A second initiative for the airline involved upgrading the graphical user interface of its reservations system to perform functions for processing reservations, ticketing and automated ticket agent check out.

ATA wanted a GUI that would provide



Sabre Airline Reservations provides increased security features to airlines such as ATA that use its reservations systems.

(Photo by Art Brett)

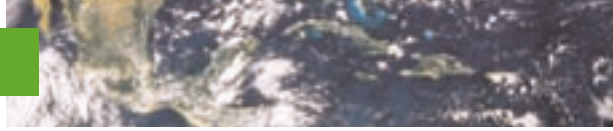
"The rate of change in our industry has accelerated dramatically in the last several years, causing us to rethink most of our business processes," said Glen Baker, vice president of information services at ATA. "This acceleration has motivated us to be even more creative in looking for ways to provide great service to our customers while achieving greater business efficiency."

As part of its analysis of its operations, the Indianapolis-based carrier recently identified two areas of its reservations operation — change fee

to automate the process of identifying change fee charges to ensure they are administered correctly and consistently when they apply and to enable them to be waived when customer circumstances warrant.

"Process consistency and customer service flexibility are guiding principles for ATA's mission to be an 'Honestly Different Airline,'" Baker added.

After implementing the *Automated Change Fee Collection* option, a value-added enhancement to the *Sabre® Passenger Reservation System* and the



easy access to information and give its passenger service professionals the ability to quickly satisfy customer requirements. The objective was to build in easy-access features without sacrificing productivity or usability.

“ATA improved its collections by more than 15 percent, and it’s improving steadily.”

To accomplish its goals, ATA upgraded its existing 16-bit system to a 32-bit system based on the *Sabre® Qik™* business processing solution. This system is designed to improve productivity by 4 percent to 8 percent, improve flight

segment conversion rates by 1 percent to 3 percent and reduce new-hire recruiting expenses by up to 30 percent. It also reduces host transaction volumes up to 20 percent and telephone costs by 4 percent to 8 percent.

The upgrade resulted in the airline replacing approximately 500 older PCs throughout its Indianapolis and Chicago reservations offices, along with upgrading old routers and circuits. The benefits of the new system, however, more than justified the replacement expense, airline officials said.

The benefits are more than monetary; with several changes such as the dual screen display, pop-up windows and menus, the upgraded system minimized complex processes enabling agents to

work more efficiently.

“We were able to improve agent productivity, reduce call times and simplify training,” said Sylvia Phillips, quality assurance and customer services training at ATA. “Training our staff on the new *Qik* solution is much easier.”

Upgrading its reservations functionality is just an example of countless ways ATA has attempted to take advantage of technology in order to remain a strong industry competitor. Improving all facets of its operations remains a priority as the airline continues seeking ways to get the fastest return on investment, securing its financial stability long into the future. ■

Steve Hodges is a Sabre Airline Solutions account director.

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News on New and Improved Products and Services from Sabre Airline Solutions

product

Release 10 of the *Sabre® AirFlite™* suite of planning and scheduling solutions

description

An integrated suite of Sabre Airline Solutions’ core planning and scheduling systems.

benefits

Release 10 of the *AirFlite* solutions combines the functionality of the core planning and scheduling systems including flight scheduling, profitability forecasting and analysis, fleet assignment, and slot management.

features

■ **Usability** — the new release offers intuitive user interfaces that model the

popular features of today’s mass-market applications, including “drag-n-drop,” versioning, undo/redo, and cut and paste to other desktop applications.

- **Performance (Speed)** — provides real-time performance, while not compromising the features of a multi-user database environment. Performance is especially critical for schedule retrieval, editing and incremental forecast evaluation.
- **Scalability** — larger customers with many analysts can run the system in a networked, multi-user environment. Smaller clients who do not want to invest in expensive servers and network software can run the system as a stand-alone on a Windows PC. Even clients who run extensive networks in the office may have analysts who need to bring a laptop home loaded with a stand-alone version.

- **Platform Independence** — to support our clients’ current hardware, the system runs on both the UNIX and Windows operating systems.
- **Transparency** — the new system is a “glass box” rather than a “black box.”
- **Maintainability** — the new architecture lends itself to efficient development and problem resolution. For internal projects, this leads to lower costs. For external customizations and change requests, this improves time to market and competitive pricing.
- **Integration** — the breadth of this suite is one of its strengths. The integration is centered on the schedule data. The system uses a schedule-centric approach in which all of the modules access the same schedule data and write updates to a central location. All of the products run graphically in the same application space. ■