

ascend

Taking your airline to new heights

JET STREAM

A conversation with Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, the chief executive officer of Jet Airways.



Special Section

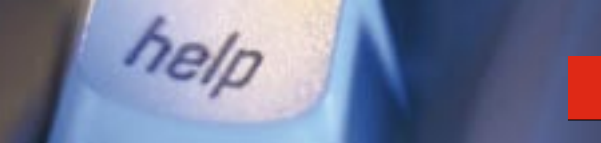
FUELING UP

A look at the rising cost of fuel and its effect on the industry.



INSIDE

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One Stop

Choosing a single information technology provider presents higher levels of software integration, streamlined user training and increased productivity.

■ By Lynne Clark | *Ascend Staff*

In November 2004, the International Air Transport Association introduced an industry modernization program known as Simplifying the Business.

Since then, considerable momentum has built behind the task of simplifying the very complex processes that govern how the air transport community fulfills the passenger-journey and freight-delivery processes. Airlines, particularly, are being challenged to partner with information technology providers to identify ways that technology can enhance operational effectiveness and save money.

Technology providers have responded enthusiastically by developing innovative software suites with tools that greatly enhance and streamline interfaces between airline operations and airports, passengers, and freight customers. From electronic ticketing and Web booking to fuel conservation, airlines can choose from among a number of radically new applications that herald potential savings of billions of U.S. dollars a year.

An Integration Shopping List

A growing number of software solutions promise to help airlines better market their schedules, sell seats, serve customers and operate efficiently. Shopping for the solution that best fits the needs of a particular airline can be almost as complex as simplifying the business. What should airline decision makers look for when shopping for a technology partner? Experts advise buyers to take a big-picture approach and evaluate vendor products on four key factors:

- Technology base,
- Product design,
- Sales and procurement process,
- Service and support.

Technology Base

Decision makers should look first at the underlying technology base on which the product is designed.

"From an architecture perspective, you want to look at software that can be built and deployed in components versus an all-or-nothing approach," said Vinay Dube, vice president of marketing solutions for the *Sabre Airline Solutions*® business. "And you want to look at development processes that are compatible with an airline's decision-making process. Meaning, that if an airline knows exactly what it wants, it can look at a software vendor that has a waterfall technique. Basically, the airline works with the vendor to identify the need, and the vendor designs the system and delivers it. End of story."

Some airlines can make those types of decisions. Most, however, have a good idea about what they want, but also want the flexibility to adapt processes along the way. These airlines benefit by choosing a provider that takes an "agile development" approach to product design. Agile development builds on a common technology platform and develops congruent components as project needs evolve.

The advantages of agile development technology are threefold:

- Lower total cost of ownership,
- Significantly higher reliability and quality of the system,
- Faster time to market.

Product Design

A well-designed suite of integrated tools should have seamless data interfaces between products, well-defined business workflow processes, and intuitive software.

The goal is to choose a system that enables airlines to spend less time sorting through data and more time making decisions that impact the bottom line.

Data Interfaces

The most integrated tools speak the same language that passes data between systems and facilitates decision-making processes.

"For example, I need to make an inventory decision," Dube said. "To make the best decision, I need to know what my prices are and the strength of my schedule. That means I need pricing, scheduling and revenue management systems to interface. Once I have that information, I can make a decision."

Business Workflow

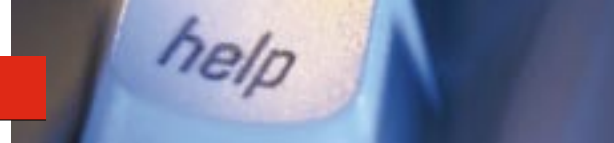
It's not enough, however, that data is passed between systems. It must be done efficiently.

"You shouldn't have to click 12 buttons to get access to the data you're looking for," Dube said. "You shouldn't have to close one system to bring up another system. A well-designed product has data interfaces that understand an airline's workflow across multiple decision-making processes."

Intuitive Software

A product should be usable so training time is minimized. It should have a consistent look and feel with an intuitive graphical user interface.

"When you upgrade Microsoft Windows, you don't send your entire workforce to training," Dube said. "You just upgrade, and if something has changed, you can figure it out because the new functionality in the new version is very intuitive to figure out and use."



Sabre Airline Solutions archive

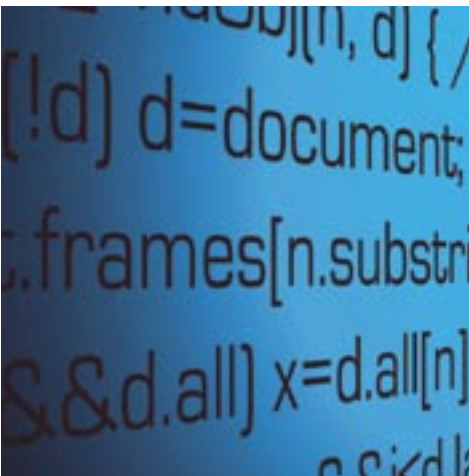


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Airlines around the world are being challenged to find the right technology partner to help realize operational efficiencies across the board. From flight operations and resource management to revenue management and passenger solutions, a single IT provider can help airlines achieve maximum performance.

Service and Support

Another benefit of one-stop shopping is better service. Airlines installing multiple systems from multiple vendors can run into a coordination nightmare, especially when installation of one system depends on installation of another.

Employees are best served when training classes are consistent, especially if they move between departments. It can be confusing when one vendor uses Web-based training, another uses visual aids and another uses cases studies.

One-stop shopping also means employees know who to call for support. It facilitates a seamless and consistent customer service experience.

“The bottom line is that airlines should look for software vendors whose products, people and processes provide them with a consistent and compelling integrated value proposition and user experience,” Dube said. **F**

Sales and Procurement

There is a distinct benefit to buying multiple systems from a single vendor rather than purchasing multiple systems from multiple vendors. The reason? Consistency and faster time to market. The procurement process is slowed down considerably when you have four and five different vendors with dif-

ferent sales representatives, different work orders, and different terms and conditions.

Airlines save time and money by going to a single vendor that can explain the sales and contracting process.

“One-stop shopping expedites procurement and, ultimately, product implementation,” Dube said.

Lynne Clark can be contacted at wearelistening@sabre.com.