

A MAGAZINE FOR AIRLINE EXECUTIVES

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ascend

Taking your airline to new heights



SkyTeam:



Caring More About You

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SkyTeam

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additional storefront

UP IN THE AIR

By Paul Feheley | *Ascend* Contributor

Boosting customer service and operational efficiency

Technology such as *Sabre® Qik® Solution* enables airlines and other travel-related companies to paint the illusion that successful customer service — and profitable, efficient operations — are as natural as a smile.

“All the things you probably hate about travelling — the recycled air, the artificial lighting, the digital juice dispensers, the cheap sushi — are warm reminders that I’m home,” said Ryan Bingham, a modern road warrior portrayed by George Clooney in the 2009 blockbuster hit movie “Up In The Air.”

“Up in the Air” offers a fictional view of modern-day air travel, portraying carriers as powerful, on-time machines with:

- Smiling gate agents,
- Pleasant first-class attributes,
- Slick technology.

The ideal does exist, although real road warriors would say it doesn’t exist every day.

But as more and more carriers and travel-related companies invest in the “slick” technology it takes to deliver consistently on the promise of on-time arrivals, smiling gate agents and a pleasant travel experience, fiction comes closer to reality. Importantly, the technology also reduces costs and increases revenue.

A “Qik” Solution To Complex Processes

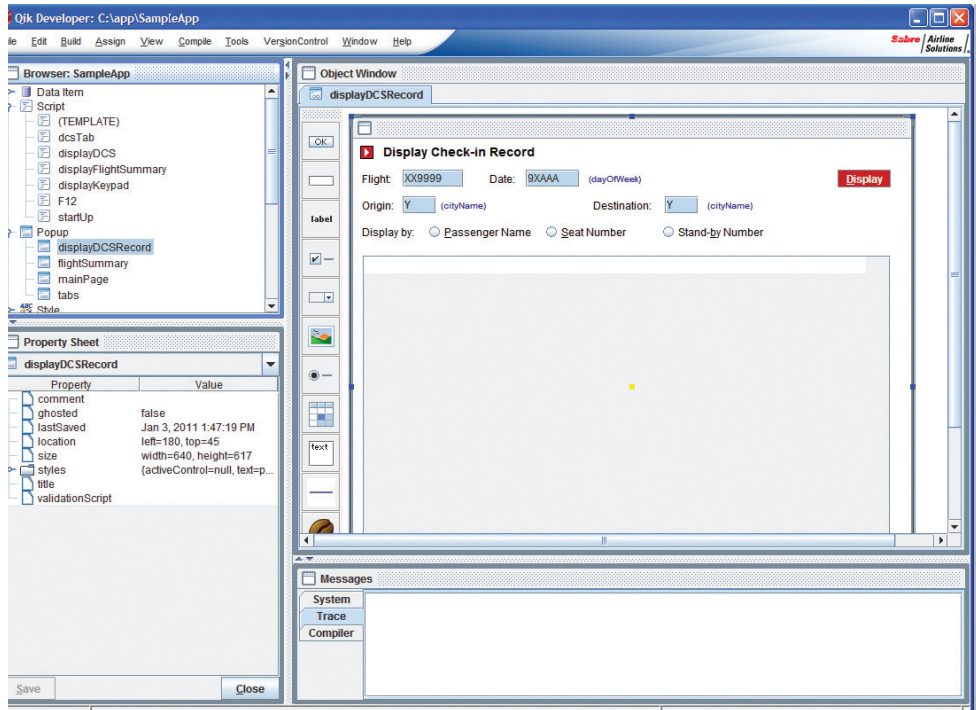
Today, more than ever, companies in the travel industry are seeking to simplify operations to reduce costs and remain competitive. They do so while striving to increase revenue and maintain high-quality customer service. In a business environment that demands change, frontline personnel must have immediate access to the right information to win and keep a customer’s business.

In addition, the need to reduce costs — especially through reductions in data entry and process errors — is imperative. However, as new initiatives are put in place to achieve these goals, companies face the challenge of readily accessing data that snakes across multiple databases, operating systems and platforms. Automated offline processes are necessary for a company to increase sales and revenue, improve operational efficiency, cut costs, and raise customer service levels.

That’s why many airlines turn to the Sabre Qik Solution. The solution offers a combination of latest technology and process, application development, and interface design consulting. This enables companies to create and deploy effective applications. The combination facilitates better customer service and meets specific business needs at the lowest possible lifetime cost.

Qik Benefits

The Sabre Qik Solution is widely considered the industry pacesetter for the creation of intelligent user interfaces. It includes software and a variety of professional services preferred by more than 300



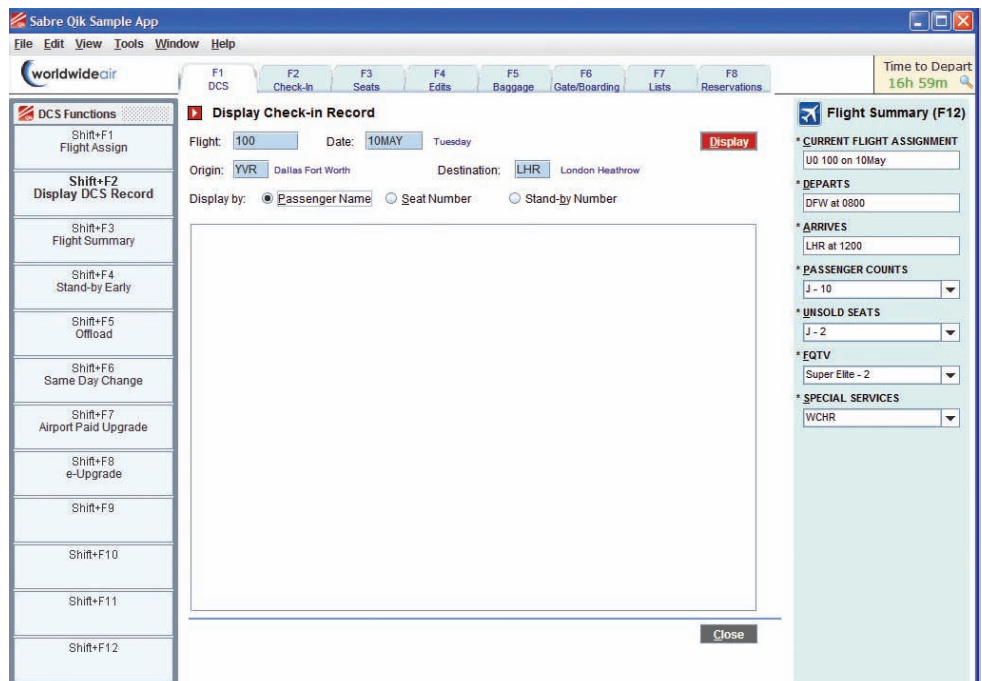
Reduces Time And Costs The Developer Tool significantly decreases processing time with fewer errors as well as reduces time and telephony costs.

travel companies worldwide for call center/reservations, ticketing, check-in, ramp/weight and balance and many other business functions.

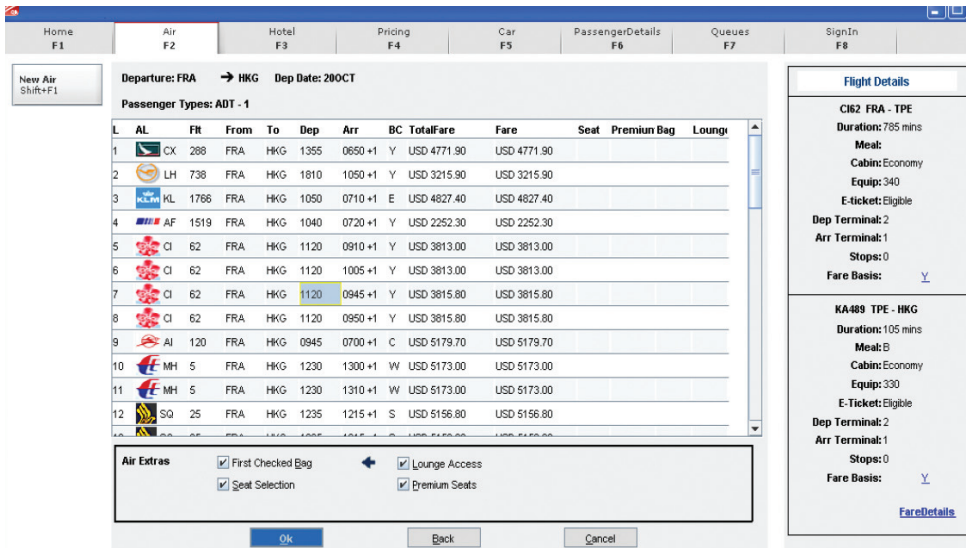
In fact, it is the tool used to create the Interact interface, the highly configurable, workflow-driven SabreSonic® Customer Sales

& Service user interface for reservations centers and airports.

Because the solution is customizable, the benefits vary by company. However, all would agree the technology is a profit enhancer when it comes to productivity, training costs and overall cost reduction.



Airport Application The tabs in the runtime screen provide easy access to basic airport functions such as check-in, seating and boarding.



Airline Availability Display The tabs in a reservations application provide easy access to basic reservations functions such as selling air, car or hotel segments, pricing the itinerary or adding passenger details.

Increased Productivity

By integrating specific business processes and rules into the *Qik* applications, users are presented with decisions based on their company's specific business rules. The *Qik Solution*:

- Simplifies complex procedures,
- Eliminates the need for users to consult job aids,
- Reduces error frequencies,
- Automates multi-step processes.

The solution facilitates the integration of Internet and intranet content into business processes by presenting a single, focused user interface. The end results are increased productivity, improved accuracy and higher sales conversion rates.

When British Airways needed to increase productivity and customize how ramp and airport agents work, it looked to the *Sabre Qik Solution* to deliver the right information to its agents at the best time to serve customers.

"The *Sabre Qik Solution* met important needs as we moved our current customer systems forward, and is an integral part of our service-oriented architecture and multi-channel strategy," said Mike Croucher, head of IT architecture and delivery for British Airways. "What we like best about the solution is that it's a truly innovative tool that is completely configurable and simple to use. We can customize how agents work by delivering the information they need most at the right time to best serve our customers."

Reduced Training Costs

Training users to operate complex native host systems is both labor and time intensive. As a result, users focus more on how to operate the system than on

providing customer service. By delivering graphical user interface front ends, or intelligent user interfaces, that are easier to use than traditional host systems, the *Qik Solution* significantly reduces training time and increases productivity. Instead of memorizing system commands, users can focus on customers.

In addition, when data from multiple systems is required, the solution seamlessly integrates the data. This eliminates the need for users to switch among systems by using multiple access procedures. According to airlines that have recently implemented the system, its use has reduced new-hire training by as much as 50 percent while increasing employee productivity.

Reduced Costs

Sabre Qik Solution performs local error checking, retains host reservations information and combines host transactions, all significantly reducing host communication costs. Customers that use the suite of tools report seeing a return on investment in as little as three months.

Expanded Sales Solicitations

The *Qik Solution* lets companies create applications that provide easy access to data and present the data at the appropriate time during the user's workflow. This enhances the effectiveness of sales personnel by improving information accessibility and providing more up-sell opportunities.

In addition, sales prompts are used to assist frontline employees in closing the sale. Finally, the applications eliminate the need to memorize or search for seldom-used transactions, such as those required for car hire and hotel booking.

Enhanced Job And Customer Satisfaction

By doing away with long data entry formats and streamlining job functions, the *Qik Solution* eliminates the need to gather relevant data from multiple data sources and applications. The solution instantly pulls together the information. This enables employees to serve customers better, faster and with fewer mistakes — increasing the number of satisfied customers.

A "Qik" Tour

The *Qik Solution* offers components that complete the end-to-end business management technology solution.

Developer Tool

The Developer Tool, a component of the *Sabre Qik Solution*, enables companies to more cost-effectively integrate data and systems into their intelligent user interface. As a result, the right information is accessible to the right customer-facing employees at the right time via a flexible technical platform.

The Developer Tool is used by *Sabre's* own development teams, airlines, call centers, tour and travel agencies, government entities and other travel-related companies around the world. It supports two scripting languages, a variety of graphics formats and a fully graphical screen painter. The flexible, powerful tool enables developers to quickly create graphically rich applications specific to the travel and transport industries.

Users report the tool's intuitive user interface framework and the option for developing interfaces for automated repetitive tasks have significantly reduced processing time with fewer errors. It has also reduced time and telephony costs.

Peripheral Manager/Multitask Manager

Peripheral Manager, another component of the *Sabre Qik Solution*, allows for effective communication with airline backend systems. It also supports interaction with the many and varied physical devices required to run airline back office, airport, reservations, and other locations. Printers, scanners, card swipes and gate-boarding devices can be incorporated into a company's end-user solution using Peripheral Manager.

To round out the software suite, Multitask Manager, another component of the solution, allows for sophisticated control and management of "robotic" applications created using the *Qik Solution*. Robotic applications automate manual tasks and free up employees, thus increasing efficiency and accuracy while saving labor costs.

Multitask Manager gave *Travelocity*® the ability to create its own solution whereby 98 percent of bookings are ticketed automatically.

"The *Qik Solution* is the life blood of our mid-office system," said Rob Mabry, senior manager for *Travelocity*. "Every booking made on our website is routed through our *Sabre Qik* applications running on the

Multitask Manager system. Of those, 98 percent are ticketed by robotics and never require human intervention.

"We also have more than 2,500 users in call centers around the globe managing customer contacts with customized versions of Turbo Sabre® desktop application and other Sabre Qik tools. These applications support both the Travelocity leisure business and its corporate brand, Travelocity Business®. It's an incredibly flexible application development environment that has allowed us to support a dynamic business with more than a million tickets a month with a small team of developers."

Consulting Services

The Developer Tool, combined with the power and flexibility of Sabre® Qik® Professional Services, provides a complete solution with rapid returns. This transcends a typical technology solution with an off-the-shelf application development environment. Incorporating industrial engineering and business processing expertise allows efficient solutions designed to meet the unique needs of many diverse customers.

The solution is backed by technical expertise of architects and developers. This ensures that it remains ahead of customer and travel industry needs. Customers enjoy 24-hour and 365-day online and telephone support for their development teams as well as various community offerings to interact with fellow Sabre Qik Solution users.

"One of the key differentiators for our Sabre Qik Solution is the fact that it's been engineered from the ground up to be

reservations and departure control systems 'agnostic,'" said Ellen Ehrlich, senior vice president of SabreSonic Customer Sales & Service for Sabre Airline Solutions. "So not only do our SabreSonic airlines derive great value in the Qik Solution such as the Interact interface they use in reservations and airports, but non-SabreSonic carriers globally can also see similar benefits regardless of what reservations or departure control system they use. This also gives the extra benefit of a unique and very strong Qik Solution user community comprising not only SabreSonic airlines but other airlines and affiliated companies worldwide using virtually any reservations, DCS, frequent flyer or other back-end solution from Sabre Airline Solutions or other vendors."

Custom Solutions Delivered

The scope of a solution using the Qik Solution and the Developer Tool crosses a broad range of functionality and delivers unique benefits to each company. For example, company "A" may use a Qik solution that completes a single automated task, such as a quality control check before ticketing.

Company "B" may utilize a Qik solution for its call center interface that incorporates computer telephony integration functionality, access to multiple CRSSs and a productivity-focused workflow.

Company "C" may use a Qik solution as a CRM enabler to pull information from multiple data sources, access multiple host systems, use automated tasks, interact with third-party applications and integrate Web content.

Southwest Airlines called on Sabre Qik Solution when it wanted to rapidly enable Web service and redesign the look and feel of its existing application.

"The Sabre Qik Solution enabled us to rapidly move forward technologically by transitioning from legacy formats to services," said Southwest Airlines. "Our new intelligent interface is more visually appealing. But more importantly, it allows our staff to be more productive. This new application has positioned customer service and support for the future."

As seamless as it looks, the "Up In The Air" experience is a fine-tuned symphony of technological triumphs performed from the moment a ticket is booked until a bag is delivered. And that's what Ryan Bingham and countless other travelers are counting on. So too, are the thousands of airline industry professionals who depend on loyal, repeat customers for their survival. ■

Paul Feheley is a principal of the Sabre Qik Solution for Sabre Airline Solutions. He can be contacted at paul.feheley@sabre.com.

+count it up

2020

The year by which industry research programs aim to achieve a further 50 percent fuel and CO₂ savings and an 80 percent reduction in oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), according to enviro.aero.

3.5 liters

The amount per 100 passenger kilometers modern aircraft achieve in fuel efficiencies, according to enviro.aero. The next-generation aircraft (Airbus A380 and Boeing 787) use less than 3 liters of fuel per 100 passenger kilometers (78 passenger miles per U.S. gallon), exceeding the efficiency of any modern compact car on the market.

8

The percentage by which the European Union is committed to reducing its emissions from 1990 levels by 2012 under the Kyoto protocol. The E.U.'s emissions trading scheme is Europe's principle mechanism to achieve its Kyoto targets.