

Airline Seat Company

To maintain a competitive edge, Airline Seat Company expands flight offerings and improves customer service with Verastream Host Integrator.



Overview

Airline Seat Company (ASC) offers travel services to destinations in Europe, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and the Far East. It manages a range of travel needs, including plane tickets, hotel and villa accommodations, car and motor home rentals, and cruises. Focused on retaining a competitive edge, ASC decided to enhance their travel systems in two ways:

- Expand ticket sales to include all major airlines (rather than booking only Canada 3000 flights).
- Build a fully integrated self-service website for customers (rather than relying solely on a call center).

The company used OpenText™ Verastream Host Integrator to make this challenging systems development project a success.

“Using Verastream Host Integrator, we can now give customers up-to-the-minute flight availability, pricing, and customization options via the web.”

THIBAUT BARADAT
IT Manager
ASC

Challenge

ASC’s legacy reservation system, ATOP, made implementing the plan virtually impossible. Used by 50 percent of the industry’s travel agents, ATOP is an online reservation, administration, and accounting system that runs on Digital VAX computers. At ASC, ATOP is linked to the following back-end systems:

- ASC banking system.
- Canada 3000 reservation system.
- Galileo, a leading provider of electronic distribution services for the worldwide travel industry.
- FareSearch, an Anite product that holds contracts between ASC and the airlines.

While ASC sales agents could connect directly to the Canada 3000 flights reservation system, the ATOP interface to the Galileo and FareSearch systems was complex and rigid—effectively shutting out other carriers. “Sales agents were taking 15 to 25 minutes to book flights, and customers can’t wait that long,” said Thibault Baradat, IT manager at ASC. “We knew we needed to reduce that time to less than a minute.”

In addition to being complex and inflexible, ATOP was not integrated with ASC’s website. Every day, ASC staff used a web-based

At a Glance

■ Industry

Travel/Hospitality

■ Location

United Kingdom

■ Challenge

A legacy reservation system was making it nearly impossible to expand flight offerings and improve customer service.

■ Products and Services

Verastream Host Integrator

■ Success Highlights

- + Created 24/7 online flight reservation system.
- + Sold more airline tickets.
- + Increased bookings, including customized bookings, via the web.
- + Cut search time for scheduled flights from 20 minutes to 30 seconds.

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application to update flight prices and availability on the site. Customers wanting the latest travel info had to call sales agents, who then accessed ATOP to retrieve and validate the required data.

This process forced customers to make their travel arrangements during business hours rather than at their convenience. Once a customer made a reservation online, the details were forwarded via PGP email to sales agents who manually entered them into the ATOP system. Not only was this time consuming, but customer information was often lost because ATOP did not provide a field for storing information such as email addresses and first names.

Solution

The first solution ASC considered was a proprietary product from Anite, maker of ATOP. Commonly used by travel services, this product provided a front end for web applications, but it had drawbacks:

- It was not built on open standards, so system customization or integration projects would be problematic.
- It was built on a noncomponent-based architecture that required a one-time rollout rather than a less risky phased deployment.
- Customer information would be stored and controlled by Anite, making data analysis difficult.
- It did not allow customized online bookings.

Given these limitations, Baradat decided to search for an open-architecture solution that

would give ASC the greatest flexibility. After we did an on-site proof of concept, Baradat was convinced that Verastream Host Integrator was the right choice. Along with all the benefits of an open architecture, Verastream provides load-balancing support for easy scalability, making it a perfect fit for Baradat’s future needs.

ASC used Verastream Host Integrator to build a graphical front end to replace the complex interface of the Galileo application. In addition to reducing training time and costs, it allows ASC to sell tickets for any airline. Equally important, sales agents can now find tickets for scheduled flights in about 30 seconds.

ASC also used WebObject support for Java to develop a web-based front end that provides the integration between ASC’s portal service and ATOP. The new application, which uses the Verastream ESAPI interface, provides HTML to the Internet and XML to ASC partners.

Results

With such a vast array of current information at their fingertips, ASC customers can now make and customize their travel plans online, in real time. And important customer information, received via the web and by phone, is now saved.

“Using Verastream Host Integrator, we can now give customers up-to-the-minute flight availability, pricing, and customization options via the web,” concluded Baradat. “This is definitely a competitive advantage for us.”

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