

Revamped airline booking system helps grow online revenues

Overview

Customer Profile

A leading Asian international airline flying over 1 million passengers monthly to over 90 global destinations.

The Challenge

Build critical business features and scalability into the existing Internet Booking Engine (IBE) to improve user-friendliness and increase customer satisfaction.

The Solution

Infosys simplified and automated the interface of the IBE with back-end systems. In addition, the IBE was re-engineered on J2EE platform to include additional features and made scalable.

The Benefit

The re-engineered IBE, combined with an intuitive and user-friendly interface, resulted in measurable increases in customer satisfaction. A surge in online booking revenues resulted as customers began using the new system

A leading international airline headquartered in Asia-Pacific offers a self-service suite of functions to its customers through its Internet Booking Engine (IBE). However, increased competition and growing consumer demand for enhanced business features mandated restructuring the IBE. The client partnered with Infosys, which simplified and automated the interface and enriched the IBE with a suite of user-friendly functions and features. With enhanced customer satisfaction, the client experienced a surge in online revenues.

Situation

A leading global Asia based airline offers a self-service suite of functions to its customers for booking tickets through its Internet Booking Engine (IBE). Increasing competition and growing consumer demand for enhanced business features made it necessary to restructure the IBE to improve customer satisfaction and grow online revenues.

Limitation of existing IBE

The existing IBE had several shortcomings:

- **Lack of user-friendliness**
The application's graphical user interface (GUI) required improvements to increase user-friendliness for customers.
- **Lack of critical business features**
Crucial features — an availability calendar, search itinerary by miles — essential to ensure smooth itinerary planning for customers were lacking.

- **Higher distribution costs**

The existing booking process required long response times to process customer requests. As a result, customers opted to use travel agents using GDS (Global Distribution System) interface. This increased the airline's ticket distribution costs.

- **High maintenance and low scalability**

The IBE's inherent design led to high costs, required high maintenance and restricted product upgrades essential to compete in the changing business environment.

- **Manual processing**

A centralized automated redemption process was necessary to ensure faster processing, reduce errors and increase cost savings.

To address these limitations, the airline's IBE required restructuring. The purpose was to provide customers with a feature-rich, user-friendly online experience. An enhanced online booking process would also improve competitiveness.

Infosys Approach

As the customer was central to the solution's effectiveness, Infosys aimed to simplify the booking process, reduce response time and enable easy access to information.

Infosys re-engineered the IBE along the following lines:

1. A business process study was conducted to optimize the booking process. Infosys simplified the interface with the back-end ticket-booking product to reduce communication costs and minimize booking expenses.
2. Infosys suggested effective session management using WebSphere HTTP session to overcome performance and data-storage overheads. Additionally, the new design of the IBE was re-engineered on J2EE platform to ensure low maintenance costs and high scalability.
3. Infosys' functional team collaborated with the client to offer an effective user-interface (UI) design compatible with both Windows and Macintosh environments. The design, compliant with global usability standards, ensured that end-users spent minimal time on the booking process. It also reduced the number of customer queries and helped minimize support costs.
4. Infosys seamlessly integrated eight internal back-end systems running on different hosts and set up a centralized automated redemption process. This reduced manual processing, resulting in significant cost savings.
5. The application was designed to accommodate language compatibility in English, French, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean and Japanese. The application could also be rolled out in any language with minimal effort – the rollout in French was completed in less than one person-month.

Benefits

The enhanced booking process required customers to take fewer steps to complete transactions. The restructured IBE was user-friendly with added business features.

Benefits from this upgrade included:

tripled at the end of the first year.

- Increased redemption booking:** Data indicates that redemption bookings have grown by over 300% annually. Almost 60% of bookings were from first-time users.

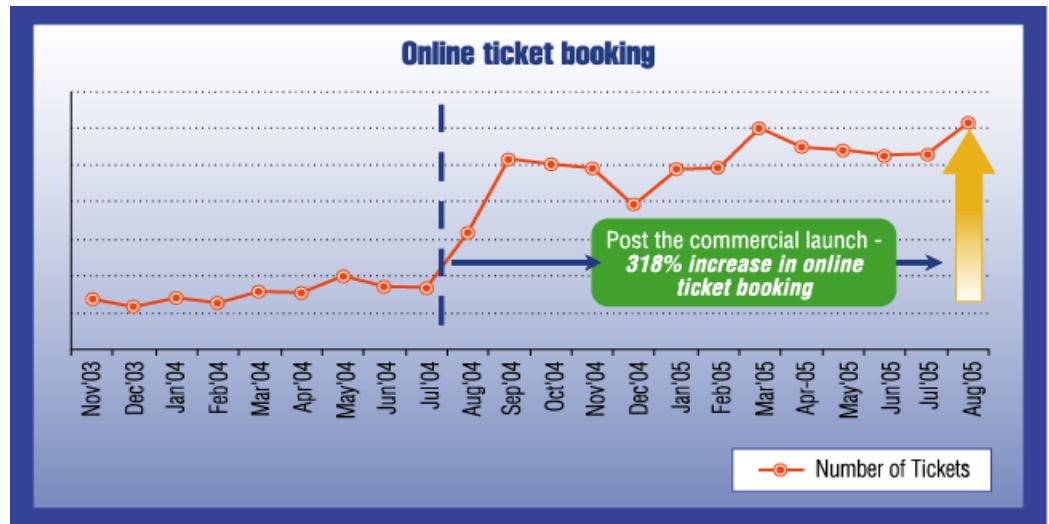


Figure 1: Online ticket bookings trend following IBE re-design

- Enhancements of existing features and the addition of a suite of new features.** This resulted in measurable increase in end-user satisfaction. End-users felt that the new site was well-crafted and worth recommending to friends.
- Cost savings:** With the growth in online bookings, enquiries to the eService center (call center) decreased by 13% (as of October 2004), resulting in significant cost savings to the airline.
- Growth in online revenues:** Online bookings grew 41% immediately after the launch of the updated IBE (Figure 1) and

After experiencing the success of the revamped IBE, the client has embarked on a large and comprehensive e-commerce strategy and has chosen to partner with Infosys on strategic components of this initiative.

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