

Delta Air Lines Improves Passenger Experience with Mobile Devices Managed by AirWatch

The Client

Founded in 1928 in Monroe, Louisiana, Delta Air Lines provides air transportation for passengers and cargo in the United States and around the world. Through its regional carriers and partnerships, the company serves 333 destinations in 64 countries, and it operates a fleet of 700-plus aircraft, as well as maintenance, repair and cargo operations. Delta serves six continents through more than 4,900 flights per day for its customers. Delta is a founding member of the SkyTeam airline alliance along with other large airlines, including Air France, KLM and Alitalia.



The Challenge

In 2012, Delta Air Lines experienced some challenges with its fleet of mobile devices in the field. Many of the devices lacked Internet connectivity, preventing devices from connecting to Delta central communication centers for communicating while in the air. For flight attendants, this meant credit card processing was delayed until aircraft reached their destinations, leaving Delta vulnerable to invalid credit card swipes and shrinkage.

“We wanted to replace legacy devices and move to real-time credit card processing,” said Darrell Haskin, director of IT for Delta. “In addition, we wanted to build the foundation for implementing two-way communication with our onboard crew.” Delta had three main objectives for adopting an enterprise mobility management (EMM) solution: replace legacy devices with modern smart devices; implement real-time credit card processing and validation; and enhance communication channels between crews and Delta communication centers.

The Solution

Delta reviewed multiple EMM solutions in the marketplace through analyst reports, proof of concept tests and requests for proposals. After shortlisting a select few, Delta chose AirWatch[®] by VMware[®] to manage its in-flight mobile devices and enable its cashless cabin initiative.

Solution Overview

- Client: Delta Air Lines
- Industry: Transportation
- Geography: Global
- Features: MDM, MAM, MCM
- Devices: 20,000



To adapt to the increased usage of credit cards for payment for in-flight amenities and services, such as food and select beverages, Delta required a platform that could process credit cards more efficiently than its legacy devices. With AirWatch, Delta is able to deploy and secure cellular-connected Nokia 820 Windows devices to flight attendants, enabling them to process credit cards in real-time. "Prior to using AirWatch, we couldn't process credit cards until after we landed and put devices in a cradle," noted Haskin. "This prevented us from verifying if credit cards were valid before passengers left the aircraft."

Flight attendant devices can also track sales, incentives and activity using internally developed applications. This enables flight attendants to monitor food and beverage levels that require restocking once the plane lands. Another added benefit of mobile devices on the aircraft is the ability to sell items that could not be sold before, including upgrades to Economy Comfort, for passengers already on board.

With AirWatch, Delta has enhanced communication with its flight crews through smart devices. This allows Delta to keep flight attendants informed of newly available operating systems to keep devices secure. Because the airline is able to use more advanced smart devices with AirWatch, flight attendants are able to access corporate email on their devices for the first time and stay informed no matter where they are in the world. "AirWatch provides the communication platform we did not have with our legacy devices," said Haskin. "For the same cost of 4,000 legacy devices, we now support our 20,000 flight attendants with smart devices that have greater capabilities."

Up Next

Delta plans to begin swapping Nokia 820 devices for the advanced Nokia 1520 "phablet." With a larger screen, the 1520 will also be loaded with an electronic version of the flight attendants' five-pound flight manual secured within AirWatch[®] Secure Content Locker[®]. Similarly, pilots will soon be able to carry an electronic copy of their 40-pound flight manuals with them, furthering the goal of reducing carbon emissions due to weight on board the aircraft.

Delta is also building internally developed applications to equip flight attendants with personalized passenger information, including meal preferences and SkyMiles status, to provide a more personalized customer experience. Delta also plans to support employees with two-way communication systems to provide flight attendants with important information, such as status updates about connecting flights for passengers.

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– Darrell Haskin
Director of IT
Delta

