

Air China Enhances Sales and Customer Service with Avaya Intelligent Communications Solutions

Challenge

As the competition in aviation industry is becoming severe, Air China, the leader in the domestic aviation industry, hopes to revamp its call center with advanced communications solutions to improve service and increase revenue. The popularization of the eticket provides airline companies with a good opportunity to enhance direct sales.

Solution

Air China adopts Avaya contact center solution which is based on IP communications technology, to establish nationwide uniform telephone sales and service centers in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu first. The system can be expanded easily with business growth.

Value Created

- Improving the revenue of telephone sales and service center by 300%.
- The nationwide uniform customer service number is improving the service of the Air China and providing a consistent brand experience.
- Establishing an advanced expandable communications platform for the future development of Air China.

Call centers, as the main means of customer service, have been adopted by many airline companies. Air China started planning its own call centers long ago. At that time, its call centers were invested in and funded by local offices to deal with ticket booking. These regional call centers each specialized in one service and therefore operated independently and had separate management. This weakened the service level and therefore the brand image of Air China. Thus, Air China hopes to solve this problem effectively on its own.

Meanwhile, globalization has resulted in increased competition in aviation industry. Many airline companies have focused on advanced technologies to facilitate service innovation and enhance sales. The birth of the eticket has changed face of air ticket sales. Compared with an ordinary ticket, the eticket enjoys prominent advantages, such as payment online or by bankcard instead of payment in person at a ticket office. Also a boarding pass may be obtained with an ID card at the airport instead of the need for ticket delivery beforehand. In China, the paper ticket will be completely replaced by the eticket by 2008.

The popularization of the eticket has provided a good opportunity to explore the marketing potential of call centers. After an in depth investigation, Air China has found that the popularization of the internet and the eticket has been changing the buying patterns of passengers. Call centers are becoming important channel for direct sales, and the replacement of existing regional customer service centers by a uniform, nationwide hot line will enhance the service of call centers and improve customer satisfaction. Therefore, Air China has now focused its call centers on sales and services. *“Air China is one of the first domestic airline companies in China with definite sales function of call center,”* said Ms. Huang Feng, Senior Manager of Air China Telephone Sales Service Center. *“As a domestic leading airline company, Air China has always been considering how to change the call center from previous ‘cost center’ to a ‘profit and innovation center’. Based on our study of new technologies and market, we’ve reoriented our call center. How to reach this goal*

with advanced intelligent communications technology is a challenge to us."

After scrupulous evaluation of the communications solutions of several companies, Air China has finally chosen Avaya's customer contact center solution. As Ms. Huang Feng said, there are three reasons for Air China to choose Avaya.

Firstly, Avaya provides total solutions that meet the requirements of Air China. As a global leading provider of call center solutions, Avaya provides Air China with a comprehensive solution, including Avaya S8710 Server, ACD (Automatic Call Distribution), Avaya Interaction Center, Avaya Interactive Response, and Call Management System, thus meeting all the requirements of Air China. All of these products also support Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) and Session Initiation Protocol (SIP).

Secondly, according to the business needs of Air China, Avaya has strengthened the safety and disaster recovery backup with multilevel disaster recovery solutions. Air

“The new system has made us more intelligent in handling customer inquiries and fulfilling transactions. As a result, the Center has become a strategic asset that greatly boosts our sales and client services ability.”

— Ms. Huang Feng,
Senior Manager, Air China
Telephone Sales Service Center

China has established its telephone sales and service centers in Beijing, Chengdu and Shanghai. The Beijing center is the headquarters, and the Chengdu center is the backup center. As the centers undertake both sales and services, the system is required to be highly secure and readily available. A problem at any one center shall not affect the other centers. The total solution provided by Avaya includes S8710 dualserver hot backup, ESS corporate workouts, and CTI website load and backup mechanism.

Thirdly, as many users of Avaya are airline companies, Avaya has accumulated rich experiences in this field and possesses strong consulting capacity in planning and establishing telephone sales and service centers for Air China.

Construction of Air China's telephone sales and service center was divided into three stages. The first stage began in June 2006 and was finished with the successful establishment of the Beijing Center on August 26. After its completion, during the second stage, the Chengdu Center was established on February 8, 2007 and the Shanghai Center was established on March 31st. By this date all of their frontend software was based on the new platform. The third stage will start during August and September in 2007. The Beijing Sales Service Center will relocate and will focus on the improvement of marketing services.

Improving the revenue of telephone sales and service center by 300%

Since Air China adopted the advanced intelligent communications solutions of Avaya in August 2006, the monthly income of its telesales service centers has

increased by nearly 300%. The center in Beijing recorded sales of air tickets worth over one million Yuan a day.

After the completion of the new system, customers that dial 4008100999, the service hot line for Air China, can be routed to the agents with the right skills seamlessly, no matter where the clients make the call. Customers can get timely and personalized services from Air China's 300 agents in Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu, including flight bookings, seat upgrades, VIP services, or consulting.

With the new system, Air China is also able to save agent fee, and build up customer profile data, thus laying a solid foundation for subsequent marketing and service activities.

Along with the rapid development of telephone sales and service center, Air China has listed ebusiness in eight development strategies for this year, with hopes that telephone sales and service center will become an important channel for direct sales.

The nationwide uniform customer service number is improving the service of the Air China and providing a consistent brand experience.

The nationwide uniform customer service hotline 4008100999 has replaced the previous "Air China Booking Center" and has enhanced the service level. The centers in Beijing, Chengdu and Shanghai have highly trained sales and service agents to ensure standard and high quality service. Compared with before, the reliability of service has been greatly strengthened.

Based on the customers' information and activities recorded in the service centers, the agents can provide passengers with personalized and comprehensive services.

Statistics have shown that first class and business class passengers account for 40%-50% of the total revenue of an airline. Therefore, methods to provide these passengers with more personalized services are key in enhancing customer loyalty and sales revenue. The telesales service centers of Air China also analyze and provide a series of special services according to the suggestions and information of these customers. A prime example of this is the meal ordering service for first class passengers. The passenger can search and order the meal through the system when buying an air ticket, the customer service representative of the telesales service center then confirms relevant requirements and special service with the passenger before passing them to the food company. Finally, the food company sends the meal already marked with the seat number and name of the passenger; saving money on the costs of food while at the same time providing better service.

Besides improving the service in ticket booking and boarding, the centers also provide pickup and drop off services. The passenger chooses a vehicle according to the seat class; then, the telesales service center passes the information to the relevant departments; the company then contacts the passenger through the call center and confirms the time of departure. In this way a vehicle will be waiting for the passenger at the designated time and place and another value adding service has been included to strengthen loyalty.

Through a nationwide uniform customer service hot line as well as standardized

and personalized services, Air China has enhanced its service and provided customers with a quality and consistent brand experience.

An expandable communications platform for the future development of Air China

Since its establishment, the telesales service centers of Air China have been developing rapidly. Taking the Beijing Telephone Sales and Service Center as an example, according to the plan, it would receive 5,000 phone calls at peak times every day; but already the actual number of phone calls has reached 13,000 peak time calls daily. Additionally Air China is preparing for establishing another center in Guangzhou.

In view of the future development of Air China, Avaya has established an open and expandable call center platform by integrating advanced technologies in IP communications and contact centers. The platform enables Air China to easily establish new centers and add new agents as its business grows.

As a leading domestic airline company, Air China has put forward high requirements for the development of telephone sales and service centers. Its short term goal was to develop the leading customer service center in the domestic aviation industry. And according to these standards Air China this year has already been awarded the Best Call Center in Chinese aviation industry. Its long term goal: to rank among the world's top customer care centers of all airline companies.

"The new system enables Air China to rank top among the customer service

“ Since Air China adapts Avaya's intelligent communication solution, our telephone sales is increased by 300%. Now we can promptly response customer's need and provide travelers convenient, fast and reliable service. ”

— Ms. Huang Feng,
Senior Manager, Air China
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centers in domestic aviation industry, and promotes us to further implement service innovation and active marketing and improve customer service so as to ensure the best service to domestic and oversea passengers by Air China as a partner of the Beijing Olympics in 2008.” Ms. Huang Feng said, “In the future, we will continue to expand new system, implement more applications and deepen the integration of communications system and background application so as to provide passengers with more convenient and better service.”

Learn More

For more information on how Avaya Intelligent Communications can take your enterprise from where it is to where it needs to be, contact your Avaya Client Executive or a member of the Avaya Authorized BusinessPartner program, or visit **“Do Your Research”** at www.avaya.com.

All statements in this Case Study were made by Huang Feng, Senior Manager of Air China Telephone Sales Service Center

APPLICATIONS

- Avaya Automatic Call Distribution
- Avaya Interaction Center
- Avaya Interactive Response
- Avaya Call Management System
- Avaya Communication Manager

SYSTEMS

- Avaya S8710 Server
- Avaya ESS Server

ABOUT AIR CHINA

Air China was established in 1998 with a registered capital of 6.5 billion RMB yuan, and currently has 23,000 employees. On December 15 of 2004, Air China went public in Hong Kong Stock Exchange (0753) and London Stock Exchange (AIRC). On July 26 of 2006, Air China went public in the A stock market of China. For more information about Air China, please visit www.airchina.com.cn.

ABOUT AVAYA

Avaya is a global leader in enterprise communications systems. The company provides unified communications, contact centers, and related services directly and through its channel partners to leading businesses and organizations around the world. Enterprises of all sizes depend on Avaya for state-of-the-art communications that improve efficiency, collaboration, customer service and competitiveness.

For more information please visit www.avaya.com.